Activity Guide

Child's Calendar

ABOUT THE STORY
In this Caldecott Honor book, poems celebrate the months of the years. Words and pictures work together to describe each month's special beauties and celebrations.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR
John Updike is a celebrated writer of novels, short stories, and poetry for adults. He grew up in Pennsylvania and went to Harvard University and the Ruskin School of Drawing and Fine Arts in England. After working at the *New Yorker* magazine, he began writing full-time. His books have won many awards, including the Pulitzer Prize and the National Book Award.

ABOUT THE ILLUSTRATOR
Trina Schart Hyman grew up near Philadelphia and went to art school, where she first saw the work of book illustrators such as Arthur Rackham and Howard Pyle. Determined to follow in their footsteps, she illustrated her first children's book in 1961. Since then she has illustrated over 100 books and has written several as well. She has won many awards for her work, including the *Boston Globe-Horn Book* Award and the Caldecott Medal.

INTRODUCING THE STORY
Ask children to close their eyes and think about the month of April. Ask them to list things they associate with that month, and write their suggestions on the chalkboard. Then tell them that the book they will
read will show them poems and illustrations for each month of the year.

READING ACTIVITIES
Comprehension/Thinking Skills
a. "What do the scissors do in February?"
b. "What does Daddy do in May?"
c. "To what does the author compare June freckles?" *(Figurative Language)*
d. "What are the children doing in October?"
e. "What are the 'prancing sheep' in the April sky?" *(Figurative Language)*
f. "Why does the author describe the sun in March as 'nervous'?" *(Draw Conclusions)*

Vocabulary

parkas   icicles   bungalows   jonquils

Write these nouns from the story on the chalkboard. Then ask children these questions.
- Which of these nouns is a synonym for coats?
- Which of these nouns is a kind of flower?
- Which of these nouns are long frozen sticks?
- Which of these nouns is a synonym for cabins?

CROSS-CURRICULAR ACTIVITIES
Art: Make a Calendar
Have children make their own illustrated calendars. Create and copy twelve pages of date squares, seven across and five down, for each child. Starting with next month, help them fill in the correct dates for each month. Ask children to draw a picture for each month, showing something that happens in that month. Use a hole punch to make holes in the top of each date page and the bottom of each picture, and help children use yarn to tie the pages together. Encourage them to mark special dates on their calendars, such as birthdays and holidays.

Language Arts: Favorite Holiday
Ask children to think about which holiday of the year is their favorite. Have them jot down reasons why they enjoy the holiday and then use their notes to write a persuasive paragraph. The paragraphs should use examples and reasons to try to convince readers that the holiday each child chose is the best one. Children can read their completed paragraphs aloud to classmates.

Science: Autumn Changes
The poems for September, October, and November describe several changes that occur in fall. Have children work in groups to find out how and why one of these things happen:

- Geese flying south   - Leaves changing color   - Leaves falling from trees

When children have found the information they need, they can report on what they've learned to the class.

INTERNET ACTIVITY
Before you send children to do research using any of the keywords listed below, you may wish to try them yourself to make sure the sites are suitable.

Month Poems
Ask children to use the keywords *poems about months* to find other poems about the months of the year on the Internet. When they find a poem they like, they can copy it or print it and read it to the class. Encourage them to compare the poems to the ones in *A Child's Calendar* and to decide which poems they like best.