

My Momma Likes to Say
By Denise Brennan-Nelson
Illustrated by Jane Monroe Donovan
Sleeping Bear Press 2003
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Synopsis: This book uses repetition and rhyme with bright, lovely illustrations to introduce a variety of common idioms and other figures of speech. Each page features eight lines of verse, beginning with a saying like “It’s raining cats and dogs/my momma likes to say. I’m not sure what she means/but I like it any way.” Smaller print on each page describes the origin of the expression with extra details. The rhymes proved a perfect introduction to figures of speech for very young children and, the smaller print details on the origin of the expression provide extra information for older students.

Themes: Figures of speech, parent and child relationships, idioms/proverbs/maxims/clichés

Author information: Denise Brennan-Nelson’s first book, Buzzy the Bumblebee, was published by Sleeping Bear Press in 1999. She has now finished her fifth childrens’ book. She uses figures of speech to describe her life, saying she prefers to “...have her *head in the clouds* which is how she discovered *every cloud has a silver lining*.”

Activities: Let creativity in your classroom run wild after reading this book. Make a chart of expressions students in your class are familiar with. They will probably think of many that aren’t listed in this book. Discuss where those expressions may have come from. Have students illustrate their favorites, and hang them up with the expression as the title. Share other books such as:

Mad as a Wet Hen! and In a Pickle by Marvin Terban

There’s a Frog in My Throat! by Loren Leedy and Pat Street

Ask the students to think about how our use of idioms might make it difficult for someone learning English as a second language.