December to February

Winter Finger Rhyme: Cora the Crow and the First Snow

A young crow sees snow for the very first time. She helps the children build a snowman and very nearly gobbles up his nose.

Age
from about 3 years

Time
about 20 minutes with the finger rhyme and word cards; the puppet play alone takes about 5 minutes

Puppets
1 hand puppet; you play the second role yourself

Materials
a large white sheet or blanket, large cotton wool balls or paper snowflakes, three white paper circles with a dark outline (large, medium, small), a woolly hat, a scarf, two large buttons, a carrot, a broom or hand brush

Puppet play

Read the script through once beforehand. It's fine to read from the page while you play.

Roles

Cora
the young crow (hand puppet)

You
in your own voice, without a puppet

Puppet: A bird hand puppet, for example a crow or a raven. Any other bird works too; it doesn't need a beak that opens and closes.

Getting ready

Spread the white sheet out in the middle of the circle. Keep the cotton wool or paper snowflakes, paper circles, hat, scarf, buttons, carrot and broom within reach beside you. The crow sits on your hand behind your back. The word cards are ready, picture side down.

Tips for playing the roles

- Give the crow a slightly croaky, curious voice and keep her sentences short.
- Puzzled: tilt the puppet's head to one side and hold it still for a moment.
- Fluffing up: make the puppet look bigger by spreading your fingers inside it, and give it a little shake.
- Pauses are good. Wherever it says 'let the children answer', wait calmly.
- Each time a word appears in bold, turn over the matching word card.

Script

Stage directions are in italics. Words in **bold** are on the word cards.

The white sheet is spread out in the middle. The crow peeps out from behind your back.

Cora: *(looks around)* Caw! What's happened here? Everything's gone white!

You: Hello, Cora! That's **snow**. Have you never seen snow before?

Cora: No. I hatched out of my egg in the spring. Everything was green then.

You: So this is your very first winter. Children, what does snow feel like?

Let the children answer: cold, wet, soft …

You let cotton wool or paper snowflakes drift down from above.

Cora: *(tilts her head)* Something's falling out of the sky. Tiny little white things.

You: That's a **snowflake**. Who can catch one?

The children catch snowflakes.

Cora: And what do children do when there's snow on the ground?

Let the children answer.

You: They might whizz down a hill on a **sledge**! Or build a **snowman**. Will you help us, Cora?

You lay the three paper circles on the sheet, one above the other: the large one at the bottom, the small one at the top.

Cora: But he hasn't got any clothes on! He'll be freezing!

You: What does he need, then?

*Let the children answer. Add the **hat** and then the **scarf**.*

Cora: And a **button** on his tummy. Or two!

A child puts the buttons on the middle circle.

You: Now he just needs a nose. We'll use a **carrot**.

You hold the carrot up to the small circle. The crow leans over it.

Cora: *(pecks at the carrot)* Mmm! I'd rather eat that myself.

You: Cora! That carrot is his nose!

Let the children react. There is usually some laughter here. Then you put the carrot on the small circle as his nose.

You: And we'll put a **broom** next to him. Some snowmen have one to hold.

Cora: Brrr. I'm cold.

You: When children are cold, they put their **mittens** on. Who's brought mittens or gloves today?

The children put their hands up.

Cora: I don't need mittens. I just fluff up my feathers. Then I'm nice and warm.

The crow fluffs herself up. The children hunch their shoulders and make themselves small and round where they sit.

Cora: *(looks up)* And what's that hanging from the roof? Long and pointy and sparkly?

You: That's an **icicle**. It's made of frozen water.

Cora: I can't eat that. And I'm hungry!

You: Birds can't find much to eat in winter. That's why some people hang up a **bird feeder**.

Cora: A feeder full of food, just for birds? I'm off! Bye-bye, snowman! Bye-bye, everyone!

The crow flies off behind your back. You put the puppet down, because the finger rhyme needs both hands. Move on to the finger rhyme 'One Small Snowflake'.

Finger rhyme: "One Small Snowflake"

The second time through, pause after the fourth line and count the fingers together, one to five. At the end, the 'snowmen' stay frozen for a little while until you click your fingers and bring them back to life.

1. **One small snowflake, soft and white,**
   Hold up one index finger and sway it gently from side to side.

2. **floating down so slow and light.**
   The finger drifts down in wiggly lines until it lands in your lap.

3. **Here's another, then three more:**
   Hold up a second finger, then three more.

4 **five go dancing to the floor!**
All five fingers flutter from high up down to the floor.

5 **Roll the snow up, ball by ball,**
Roll your hands round each other, slowly at first, then faster.

6 **eyes and nose and buttons small.**
Tap your eyes, your nose and then your tummy.

7 **Hat on head and scarf on too,**
Put both hands on your head, then wrap them round your neck.

8 **I'm a snowman, so are you!**
Everyone sits up tall and stays perfectly still.

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Word cards

The twelve words from the puppet play come as a printable A4 sheet: twelve cards with a picture and a word, ready to cut out. If you like, draw some more cards with the children.

snow	**snowflake**	**sledge**	**snowman**
hat	**scarf**	**button**	**carrot**
broom	**mittens**	**icicle**	**bird feeder**

Notes for practitioners

1. The set works any time from December to February, whether or not there is snow outside. If it does snow, the children can build a real snowman outdoors afterwards.

2. A suggested running order: the puppet play first, then the finger rhyme two or three times, and finish with a word card game. For example, 'Getting dressed': the children find the hat, scarf and mittens cards and put them in the order they would put them on to go outside.

3. Families may use different words for some of these things: a sledge might be a 'sled' or a 'toboggan', and a hat might be a 'bobble hat' or a 'beanie'. Ask the children which word they use. All of them are right.

4. Icicles on roofs and gutters can break off. Outdoors, the children only look at icicles from a safe distance.

5. Buttons and cotton wool are small parts. Use very large buttons or buttons cut out of card, and large cotton wool balls. Don't give buttons or cotton wool to children under three; use paper snowflakes with them instead. Collect everything up again after the session. The carrot is only a prop and isn't for eating.

6. All twelve words come up in the puppet play. Children who are more confident in English can explain the words to Cora. Cora is allowed to get one wrong now and then.

7. Home languages: ask the children or their parents what 'snow' or 'hat' is in their home language. Cora repeats the word and lets them correct her.

Suitable puppets: Bird hand puppets at Daliono. Many puppets you already have will work just as well.

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snow



snowflake



sledge



snowman



hat



scarf



button



carrot



broom



mittens



icicle



bird feeder

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PUPPET PLAY WORKSHOP

Winter

Dear family,

At nursery we have been playing with our hand puppet, **Cora (the young crow)**. Our theme was **Winter**. Along the way, we learnt these words:



Our words

snow	snowflake	sledge	snowman	hat	scarf
button	carrot	broom	mittens	icicle	bird feeder

Our finger rhyme to join in with

1. One small snowflake, soft and white,
2. floating down so slow and light.
3. Here's another, then three more:
4. five go dancing to the floor!
5. Roll the snow up, ball by ball,
6. eyes and nose and buttons small.
7. Hat on head and scarf on too,
8. I'm a snowman, so are you!

Ideas for home

- Ask your child which words they still remember, then say the same words in your language.
- Talk with your child in the language you know best.
- Do the finger rhyme together, in your language too if you like.

Best wishes from all of us at nursery

You can also find this letter, the rhyme and the words here:
www.daliono.de/puppet-play-workshop/winter/

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