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Introduction

The circus is coming to town! *Circus* is a thematic unit in which children make a big top using butcher's paper, cardboard tubes and paint. Once the tent is made, the ringmaster and tightrope walker 'ride' into the arena in an appliance-box carriage pulled by an elegant sawhorse pony. Awaiting them is a life-size baby elephant created from boxes, coffee tins, buttons and an old grey sock. Paper bags, paper plates, manila folders and old T-shirts are transformed into dramatic play props for a clown, a ringmaster and a tightrope walker. The children dress in vendors' costumes to sell 'fairy floss' made from coloured cotton balls. Animal puppets and masks spark their imaginations as they interact with one another.

All of the colours, shapes and animals of the circus provide an excellent opportunity for matching, sorting and recognition activities to challenge the young learner.

Personal Observations:

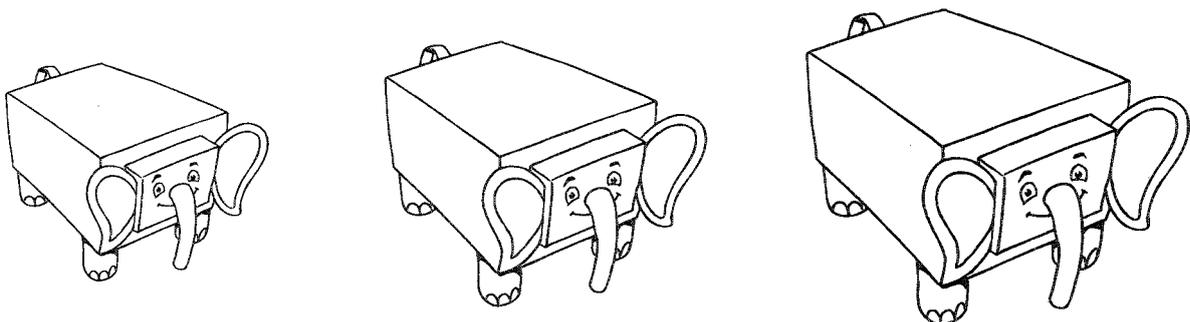
While making the big top, children discussed visiting the circus. They could hardly wait to put the finishing touches on the baby elephant, and many asked if they could bring in grass or peanuts for him to eat. Conversations between the baby elephant and the elephant puppets were ongoing. The roars of lion and tiger puppets echoed throughout the room.

Once the tent and props were completed, the children became engaged in dramatic play. They exchanged costumes during this time, so everyone got a turn to play the different roles.

There was much excitement among the children when the clown's grass hair started to grow. This led to discussions on seed growth and the life cycle of plants.

As the children became involved in the matching, counting, sequencing and playdough activities, they had many opportunities to interact with one another. The dramatic play experiences strengthened their eagerness to work cooperatively.

After participating in these activities, the children felt as if they were a part of the circus. Now you can open the pages of this book and watch the big top come to life!



Big Top

Materials:

Four computer paper boxes (or other boxes), twelve wrapping paper tubes (or other cardboard tubes), butcher's paper, masking tape, tempera paint (in assorted colours), shallow tins (for paint), paintbrushes or sponges, streamers, sharp instrument for cutting (for adult use only)

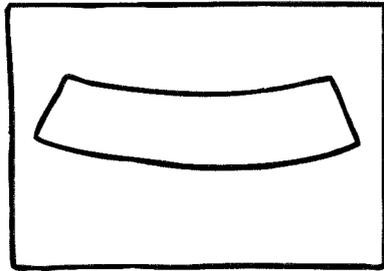
Directions:

1. Cut a hole in the lid and in the bottom of each computer paper box. The holes should be just large enough to fit a wrapping paper tube. (Make sure the holes are aligned on top and bottom.)
2. Connect three wrapping paper tubes by inserting one inside another. Reinforce joining sections of the pole by wrapping with masking tape. Repeat this step for the remaining tubes.
3. Cut two slits in one end of each of the long poles.



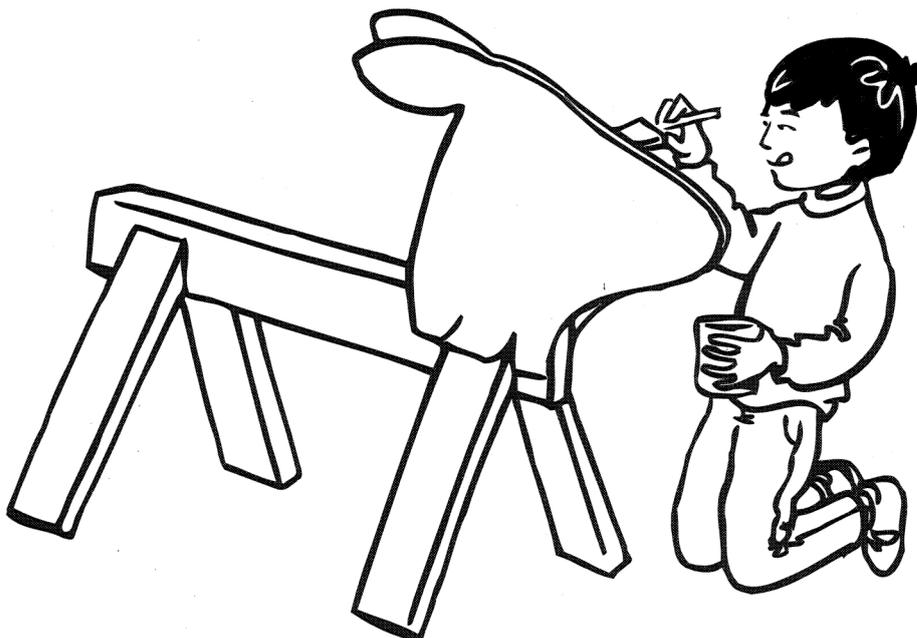
Sawhorse Pony & Carriage

6. Cut four hooves out of sturdy paper according to the diagram below.



7. Have the children paint the pony white.
8. Once the paint has dried, add the facial features with black and pink paint.
9. Glue on large buttons for the pony's pupils.
10. Cut long strips of tissue or crepe paper for the children to glue to the pony's mane and tail.
11. Children can glue sequins to the pony's hooves.
12. Once the hooves are dry, wrap them around the pony's legs and staple.

Note: See 'Tightrope Walker Hat' (p. 23) for directions to make the pony's headband.



Circus Bear Game Cards

