

Why Penny Loved Peanuts



Written by Carol Szuminsky
Illustrated by Kristin Szuminsky

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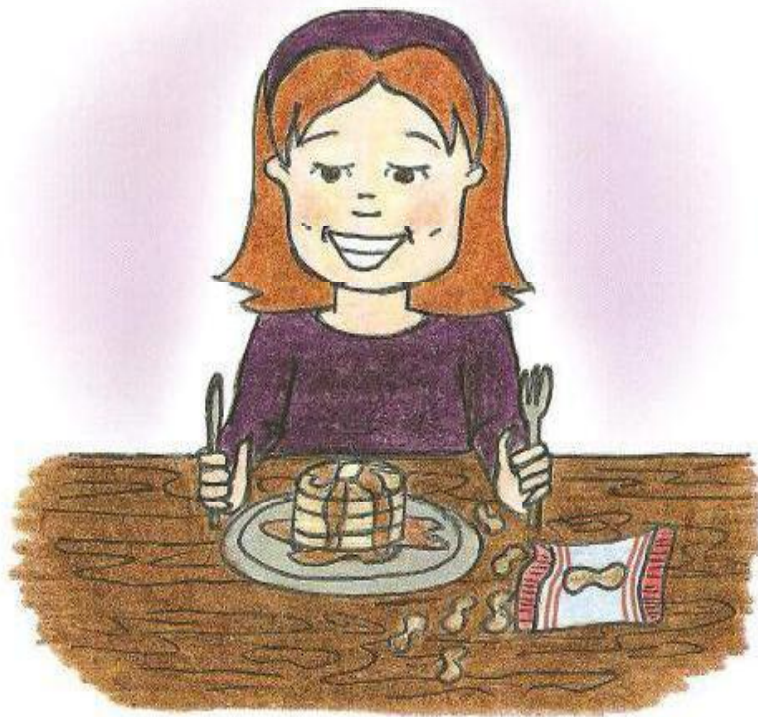
 Peanut Butter Press 

CAUTION:

Individuals with peanut allergies should not take part in the hands-on activities involving real peanuts that are suggested at the end of this story, as contact with peanuts or peanut products may cause serious health problems.

If there was one thing Penny loved more than anything else in the whole world, it was peanuts!

Her family and friends loved them too, but not nearly as much as Penny. If she could have, she would have eaten them every day at breakfast, lunch and dinner, as well as for snacks in between.



Penny liked it best when the peanuts were still in their shells.

“May I please keep the peanuts out for a while?” Penny asked her mother politely. “I’d like to try and guess how many are in the bag. We’re doing that at school in mathematics. It’s called estimating. We use different kinds of objects and containers of all shapes and sizes.”



“That sounds like fun. Yes, you may do your estimating but take the bag to your room,” answered her mother. “I’ll finish putting away the groceries and get supper started. Thanks for your help.” She smiled as she thought to herself, “What will that girl think of next?”

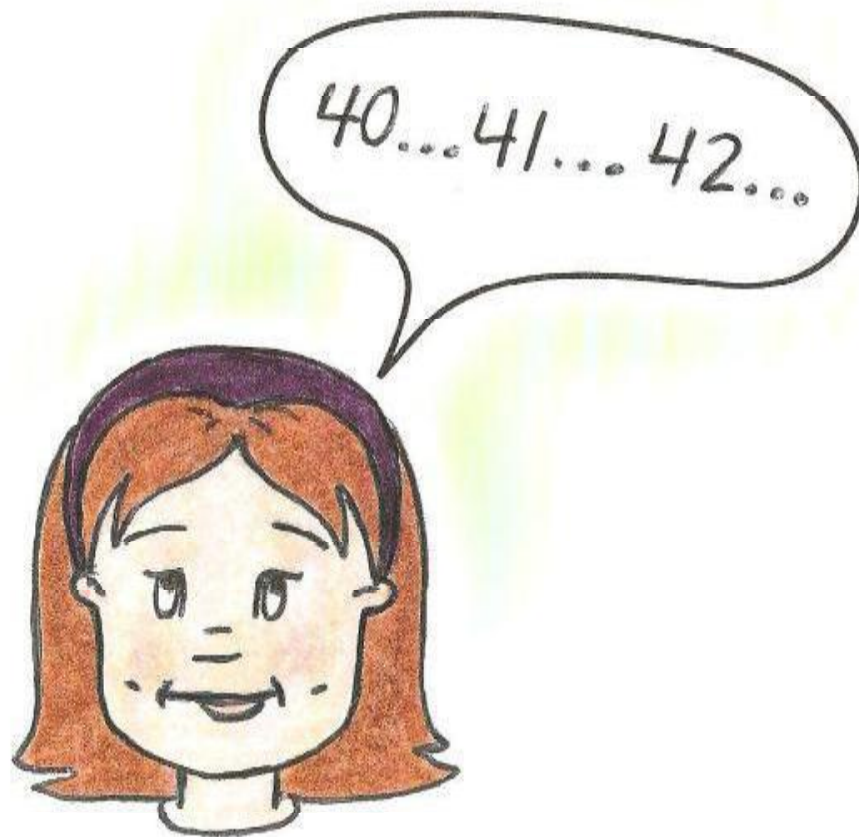
Then her mother got busy making dinner and forgot all about Penny and the peanuts.



Penny went upstairs and disappeared into her bedroom. She sat down at her desk and looked at the bag.

“I can see right through the package in most places, so it shouldn’t be hard to guess how many peanuts are in the bag,” she said happily. “I’ll just count all the peanuts I can see and add on some for the ones that are hidden. That should work. One, two, three, four, five...” she counted as she pointed to each peanut.

Penny found the counting easy at first and was pleased with herself for coming up with such an excellent idea.



When she reached the number 40, she ran into a problem and her counting began to slow down. She was having difficulty keeping track of which peanuts she had already counted and which ones she had missed. But Penny wasn't one to give up easily, so she just kept on pointing and counting.

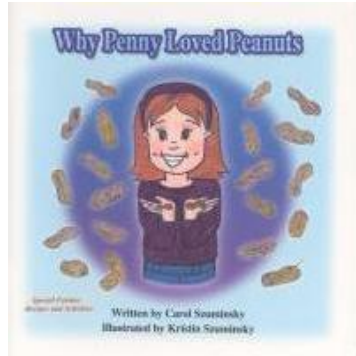
By the time she got to 50, Penny was really quite confused. "This is too hard," she sighed. She stopped counting altogether and took time to think. She remembered her teacher's words, "Counting by twos is faster than counting every single object." So Penny tried using that strategy, but she still got lost.

"I'll have to take the peanuts out," she decided, trying to tear the bag open. When that didn't work, she got her scissors and cut it open.



First Penny poured some of the peanuts onto the desk. Next she counted out ten peanuts and put them together in a pile. She made more piles and counted by tens. After that, she emptied the bag and studied the rest of the peanuts.

Review by CM Magazine:



Why Penny Loved Peanuts.

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Peanut butter-Juvenile fiction
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Review by Barbara McMillan
Faculty of Education
University of Manitoba

***** /4 Recommended**

excerpt:

Penny picked up one of the peanuts and began to turn it over and over in her hands. "Why do I love peanuts so much?" she wondered. She stopped turning the peanut and stared at its peculiar shape.

"Hmmm, maybe it's because they're so funny-looking," she murmured. "You can tell how many peanuts are hiding inside the shell by counting the bumps on the outside.

Penny is a delightful girl who happens to love peanuts and comes to the realization that her fondness of peanuts is a result of their flavor. In Carol Szuminsky's unfolding of the story, however, it becomes obvious that the real reason "why Penny loved peanuts" goes beyond a mere sense of taste. Penny loves peanuts because she is a curious child who notices and wonders and uses what she knows to investigate. The reader quickly discovers through Penny's actions that there is a lot more to a peanut than first meets the eye. It is the portrayal of Penny's attentiveness, in all of its spontaneity and non-linear progression, that

creates an interesting story of what's possible in just minutes of a child's life.

Why Penny Loved Peanuts begins with a trip to the grocery store. Penny sees a display of roasted peanuts still in their hulls, and she asks her mother to purchase one bag. As soon as the groceries are carried into their house, Penny retrieves the bag of peanuts and, with her mother's permission, heads upstairs to her bedroom to estimate the number of peanuts contained in the bag. She begins by counting those she can see and then runs into difficulty when it becomes impossible to distinguish those that have been counted from those that have not. So, she opens the bag, forms piles of ten peanuts each, counts by tens, and estimates that the number remaining uncounted when added to the number counted must be 222, her favorite number. As she begins to count to compare her estimate to the actual number of peanuts, she gets distracted by visual, tactile and sound information. First, she notices the variety of shapes, then the sizes. These observations are followed, in sequence, by observations of the colours, textures, sounds, smells, and patterns of the peanut hulls. In the end, Penny removes the peanut kernels from their hulls, takes off the paper-like seed coat or skin covering the kernels, and studies the visible embryonic parts of the edible peanut, which she knows as a seed. Her desk is covered in hulls, skins and kernels when her mother walks into the room to tell her dinner is ready. Because she appreciates Penny's curiosity and understands the reason for the "mess," she helps her to organize the clean-up, and they are soon making peanut butter in the kitchen.

The story is followed by Penny's peanut butter recipe, a recipe for "chocolate peanut butter layers" that resemble a homemade version of Reese's "Peanut Butter Cups," and seven "Peanut Activities" that build upon the activities Szuminsky describes Penny doing and which extend into reading, research, crafts, and a challenge to walk while "balancing a peanut on your nose." All come with a caution to those with peanut allergies.

Why Penny Loved Peanuts is Carol Szuminsky's first book for children. It is modeled after her daughter, Kristan, whose child-like pencil crayon drawings illustrate the story, and all of the other inquisitive Grade 2 children Szuminsky has had the good fortune to teach. Given the focus on estimating, counting, and observing the characteristics of the peanut hull and kernel, the book would be a good addition to an Early Years classroom or school library. **RECOMMENDED**