

COUNTING TO BANANAS

A
Mostly
Rhyming Fruit Book

Words by
Carrie Tillotson

Pictures by
Estrela Lourenço

Educator Guide

ABOUT THE CREATORS



Carrie Tillotson is the author of *Counting to Bananas*, a 2022 Oregon Spirit Book Award Honor Book; the star-reviewed *B Is for Bananas*; and the forthcoming *Alpacas Here, Alpacas There*. As a child, Carrie loved to read, paint, and draw, and thought books were written by long-dead people. She later met a real-live author and realized she could be an author one day, too. After getting a master's degree in public health, Carrie worked as a biostatistician for more than 10 years. Her job involved counting lots of numbers (but not many bananas). Carrie now sculpts her interests in science and fun into playful picture books. When not reading and writing, you can find her running, playing games, and eating ice cream (though usually not all at the same time). She lives in Oregon with her family, two dogs, and two chickens. Connect with Carrie online at carrietillotson.com.



Estrela Lourenço is a Portuguese children's book author and illustrator living in Ireland since 2009. She is the illustrator of *Counting to Bananas* and *B is for Bananas*; her debut author and illustrator book *Walkies: A Dog's Tale* (PageStreet 2024); and other titles with PageStreet, Harper Collins and Henry Holt. Her career started in the animation industry working for clients like Cartoon Network, Hasbro and Disney XD but her love for children's books and illustration drove her into the kidlit industry where she is happiest telling stories and working with other amazing creators. When not writing or illustrating, you can find her walking her dog, playing catch with her toddler or spending the silliest evenings laughing with her family.

ABOUT THE BOOK

A hilarious, mostly-rhyming picture book about a banana and narrator who can't quite agree on what their book is about. Perfect for fans of Mo Willems' *We Are in a Book* and Adam Rex's *Nothing Rhymes With Orange!*

When a narrator starts filling this story with fruit, Banana can't wait to step into the spotlight. The book is called *Counting to Bananas*, after all. But as more and more fruits (and non-fruits) are added to the story, Banana objects. When will it be time for bananas?!

With laugh-out loud text from debut author Carrie Tillotson and brought to life by illustrator Estrela Lourenço, this is the story of a banana and narrator who have very strong opinions about what should (and should not!) be in this book.

The perfect next read for fans of Jory John and Pete Oswald's *The Bad Seed* series, as well as Ryan T. Higgins' *Hey, Bruce!*

ABOUT THIS GUIDE

This guide has activities for students in grades Preschool through Fifth Grade. Activities and questions can and should be modified by educators to best fit the needs of their students. Common Core Standard and NGSS connections are listed for reference and support. These are not the only standard connections, just a sampling so the breadth and depth of this book can be seen.

The guide was written and created by Kari Allen. Kari is an educator and author with over 20 years of classroom experience. Visit kariallenwrites.com for more information.



REVIEWS AND PRAISE FOR

Counting to Bananas

"An endearing yet opinionated banana makes learning numbers hilarious... **Mo Willems fans will give this book one, two, three, four, five stars!**" --*Parents* magazine

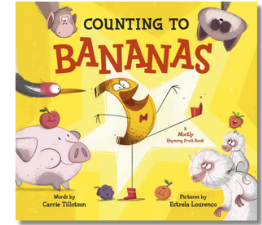
"Banana is ready to be the star of an all-fruit counting book. '1 plum / 2 figs / 3 oranges / 4 pigs.' Banana cries foul—pigs aren't fruit! 'But no other fruit rhymes with figs,' explains the invisible narrator, who then goes on to rhyme pears with bears and peaches with leeches. 'What about bananas?' Banana wants to know. Banana hollers at the narrator to stop putting animals in a fruit counting book, but alas, Banana's frustrations are ignored. Banana has had enough but obviously has not learned that it is never a good idea to argue with your narrator. When the text reads '17 lemons / 18 prunes / 19 apricots / 20 baboons,' Banana gets the narrator to change baboons to raccoons but still wants the spotlight...be careful what you ask for Banana! In the tradition of Mac Barnett's *Count the Monkeys* (2013), **Tillotson's rib-tickling debut is not to be missed.** The silly argumentative text plays out in speech balloons sharing the pages with simple numerical descriptions progressing from one to 20 and then counting up by tens to 100. Ireland-based Portuguese illustrator Lourenço's digitally created illustrations of cartoon fruit with faces and expressive animals are bright, dynamic, and foolish. (This book was reviewed digitally.) **Fruity fun for everyone.** (Picture book. 2-6)" --*Kirkus*

ACCOLADES

- 2022 Oregon Spirit Book Award Honor Book
- 2023 Oregon Book Award Finalist
- 2023 Texas Library Association 2x2 Reading List
- 2023 Red Bud Read Aloud Award Nominee
- 2024 Beehive Book Award Nominee
- Amazon Best Children's Books of 2022 So Far
- Amazon April 2022 Editor's Pick



DISCUSSION QUESTIONS



Before Reading:

- **Look** at the cover, what kind of book do you think this is? Is it a serious book or a funny book? Why do you think that?
- **Discuss** the title *Counting to Bananas: A Mostly Rhyming Fruit Book*. What do you think this book will be about?
- What do you know about counting books? What do you know about rhyming books? **Brainstorm** a list. Using what you know, what do you expect to find in this book?
- **Check** under the jacket. Sometimes books have a hidden cover under the jacket. This part of the book is called the case cover. What do you notice? What is the case cover setting up for the rest of the book?

While Reading:

- The story starts before we get to the first page with the illustrations. **Look** at the first page, the endpapers and the copyright, dedication and title pages. What do you notice? What predictions do you have based on these illustrations?
- On the title page, Banana says “Me, the star the of the book? Yes!” What prediction can you make about the rest of the book? Just by that first sentence, how would you describe Banana’s personality?

After Reading

- Were your predictions correct? How did the book challenge your predictions?
- Discuss narrators! Who do you think is telling this story? What evidence do you have?
- Talk about the ending. How did it make you feel? How did Banana feel at the end?



LANGUAGE ARTS ACTIVITIES

- **Brainstorm** other rhyming words for the fruit in the book. (See [Let's Rhyme! printable.](#))
- **Make** a poster starring a piece of fruit! Banana is such a fun character. What other fruit would make for a good character in a story? How can you give your fruit personality? (See [Make a Poster printable.](#))
- **Design** a book cover starring a different fruit or yourself!
- **Research** one of the fruits listed in the book. Some questions to consider, where does this kind of fruit grow? Are there different kinds of your fruit? How long does it take for your fruit to grow? Make a poster or a brochure about the fruit you researched.

WRITING PROMPTS

- Write/or draw about your favorite fruit. (See [Favorite Fruit printable.](#))
- Write/or draw about what book you'd be the star of.
- Write your own story where Banana keeps interrupting!

CRAFT MOVES

- How does the author show Banana's personality? How does the illustrator?
- How did the author use humor to move the story forward?
- Carrie Tillotson wrote this story after hearing her son's swim teacher count out loud. Instead of counting to ten, she would say "banana!" How do you think hearing that one simple thing helped the author write this book? How do writers get their ideas? (See this [blogpost](#) for more information on Carrie's inspiration.)



SCIENCE ACTIVITIES

- Do an observation about some of the fruits listed in the book. What do you notice? How would you describe them? Use your senses to write down/draw all that you observe. (See [Fruit Observation](#) & [Fruit Senses Observation printables](#).)
 - *Extension:* Compare two of the fruits listed in the book. (See [Compare Two Fruits printable](#).) Or make a Venn Diagram using two different fruits, how are they the same? How are they different?
- All fruits have seeds! What do you know about fruits and seeds? Brainstorm a list about your background knowledge. Then dissect some fruit looking for the seeds. Where are they? How many are there? How are they different or similar to other seeds you know about? How do you think fruits spread their seeds in order to grow new plants and trees?
- Go on a color walk! Since Banana is yellow, go on a walk where you look for and find yellow things. What kinds of things did you find? Are they natural or did people make them? Can you sort your yellow items? (See [Color Walk printable](#).)
 - *Extension:* Take photos of the yellow items and make a sorting game, or a memory game.



MATH ACTIVITIES

- Make a counting collection. (See [Choral Counting and Counting Collections](#) for more information about this practice.) Gather a set of objects to document and count. How many are there in your collection? How do you know? (See [Counting Collection printable](#).)
- Do some fruit math! Use the [Fruit Math printables](#) or make up your own fruit math problems.
- Let's add up all the characters in the book! Use the printables to add up the amount of fruits and animals in the book. Make an estimate first. How many do you think there are? How can you show your thinking about your counting strategies? (See [Counting to Bananas Math](#), [Fruit Counting](#), & [Animal Counting printables](#).)
 - Teaching Suggestion: Model looking for number combinations that make multiples of ten. For example, one plum plus nine star fruit make 10 pieces of fruit. Seven kiwis plus three oranges make 10 pieces of fruit. If students solve this way, all of the fruit will go together to make multiples of ten and therefore is easier to put together.
 - Other note: Have a conversation about whether or not to include Banana! Some will want to add Banana into the count, others might argue that Banana is not part of the official fruits of the book! Leave it open to student choice and reasoning.



SOCIAL AND EMOTIONAL LEARNING

While this is a counting and rhyming book, this book is also very funny!

- **Discuss** why is it important for books to make their readers laugh? How do funny books make readers feel?
 - What makes you laugh?
 - Why is laughter important?
 - How does humor connect us?
 - What other funny books do you love?

PICTURE BOOK TEXTS THAT CONNECT

to *Counting to Bananas*

- ***Count the Monkeys*** written by Mac Barnett, illustrated by Kevin Cornell (counting book)
- ***My Little Sister Ate One Hare*** written by Bill Grossman, illustrated by Kevin Hawkes (rhyming counting book)
- ***Z is for Moose*** written by Kelly Bingham, illustrated by Paul O. Zelinsky (interrupting narrator)
- ***Snapsy the Alligator Did Not Ask to Be in This Book*** written by Julie Falatko, illustrated by Tim Miller (omnipotent narrator)
- ***Nothing Rhymes with Orange*** written and illustrated by Adam Rex (rhyming fruit book)



COMMON CORE AND NGSS CONNECTIONS

LANGUAGE ARTS (READING, WRITING, CRAFT):

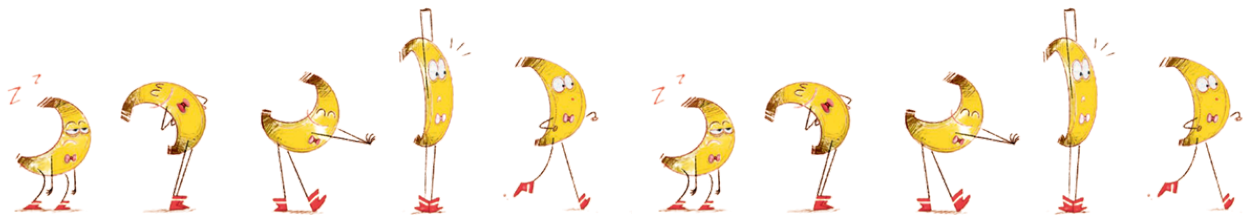
*Note because the standards build from previous grade levels, here is a sampling to see the possibilities for this book. Standard connections are not limited to these.

Kindergarten:

- K.RL.1 With prompting and support, ask and answer questions about key details in a text.
- K.RL.3 With prompting and support, identify characters, settings, and major events in a story.
- K.RL.6 With prompting and support, name the author and illustrator of a story and define the role of each in telling the story.
- K.RL.5 Recognize common types of texts (e.g., storybooks, poems).
- K.W.1 Use a combination of drawing, dictating, and writing to compose opinion pieces in which they tell a reader the topic or the name of the book they are writing about and state an opinion or preference about the topic or book (e.g., My favorite book is . . .).

Second Grade:

- 2.RL.4 Describe how words and phrases (e.g., regular beats, alliteration, rhymes, repeated lines) supply rhythm and meaning in a story, poem, or song.
- 2.RL.5 Describe the overall structure of a story, including describing how the beginning introduces the story and the ending concludes the action.
- 2.RL.7 Use information gained from the illustrations and words in a print or digital text to demonstrate understanding of its characters, setting, or plot.
- 2.W.1 Write opinion pieces in which they introduce the topic or book they are writing about, state an opinion, supply reasons that support the opinion, use linking words (e.g., because, and, also) to connect opinion and reasons, and provide a concluding statement or section.
- 2.W.7 Participate in shared research and writing projects (e.g., read a number of books on a single topic to produce a report; record science observations).



COMMON CORE AND NGSS CONNECTIONS

LANGUAGE ARTS (READING, WRITING, CRAFT) (continued):

Fifth Grade:

- 5.RL.7 Analyze how visual and multimedia elements contribute to the meaning, tone, or beauty of a text (e.g., graphic novel, multimedia presentation of fiction, folktale, myth, poem).
- 5.RL.6 Describe how a narrator's or speaker's point of view influences how events are described.

NEXT GENERATION SCIENCE STANDARDS:

- K-LS1-1 From Molecules to Organisms: Structures and Processes: Use observations to describe patterns of what plants and animals (including humans) need to survive.
- 2-LS2-2 Ecosystems: Interactions, Energy, and Dynamics: Develop a simple model that mimics the function of an animal in dispersing seeds or pollinating plants.*
- 2-LS4-1 Biological Evolution: Unity and Diversity: Make observations of plants and animals to compare the diversity of life in different habitats.

COMMON CORE MATH:

Kindergarten:

- K.CC.1 Count to 100 by ones and by tens. 2.
- K.CC.2 Count forward beginning from a given number within the known sequence (instead of having to begin at 1).
- K.OA.2 Solve addition and subtraction word problems, and add and subtract within 10, e.g., by using objects or drawings to represent the problem.
- K.OA.4 For any number from 1 to 9, find the number that makes 10 when added to the given number, e.g., by using objects or drawings, and record the answer with a drawing or equation.



COMMON CORE AND NGSS CONNECTIONS

COMMON CORE MATH (Continued):

First Grade:

- 1.NBT.2 Understand that the two digits of a two-digit number represent amounts of tens and ones.
- 1.NBT.4 Add within 100, including adding a two-digit number and a one-digit number, and adding a two-digit number and a multiple of 10, using concrete models or drawings and strategies based on place value, properties of operations, and/or the relationship between addition and subtraction; relate the strategy to a written method and explain the reasoning used.

Second Grade:

- 2.OA.2 Add and subtract within 20
- 2.NBT.1 Understand that the three digits of a three-digit number represent amounts of hundreds, tens, and ones.
- 2.NBT.6 Add up to four two-digit numbers using strategies based on place value and properties of operations.
- 2.NBT.9 Explain why addition and subtraction strategies work, using place value and the properties of operations.

Third Grade:

- 3.NBT.1 Use place value understanding and properties of operations to perform multi-digit arithmetic.

Fourth Grade:

- Generalize place value understanding for multi digit whole numbers.
- Use place value understanding and properties of operations to perform multi-digit arithmetic.

Fifth Grade:

- Write and interpret numerical expressions.
- Analyze patterns and relationships.
- Understand the place value system

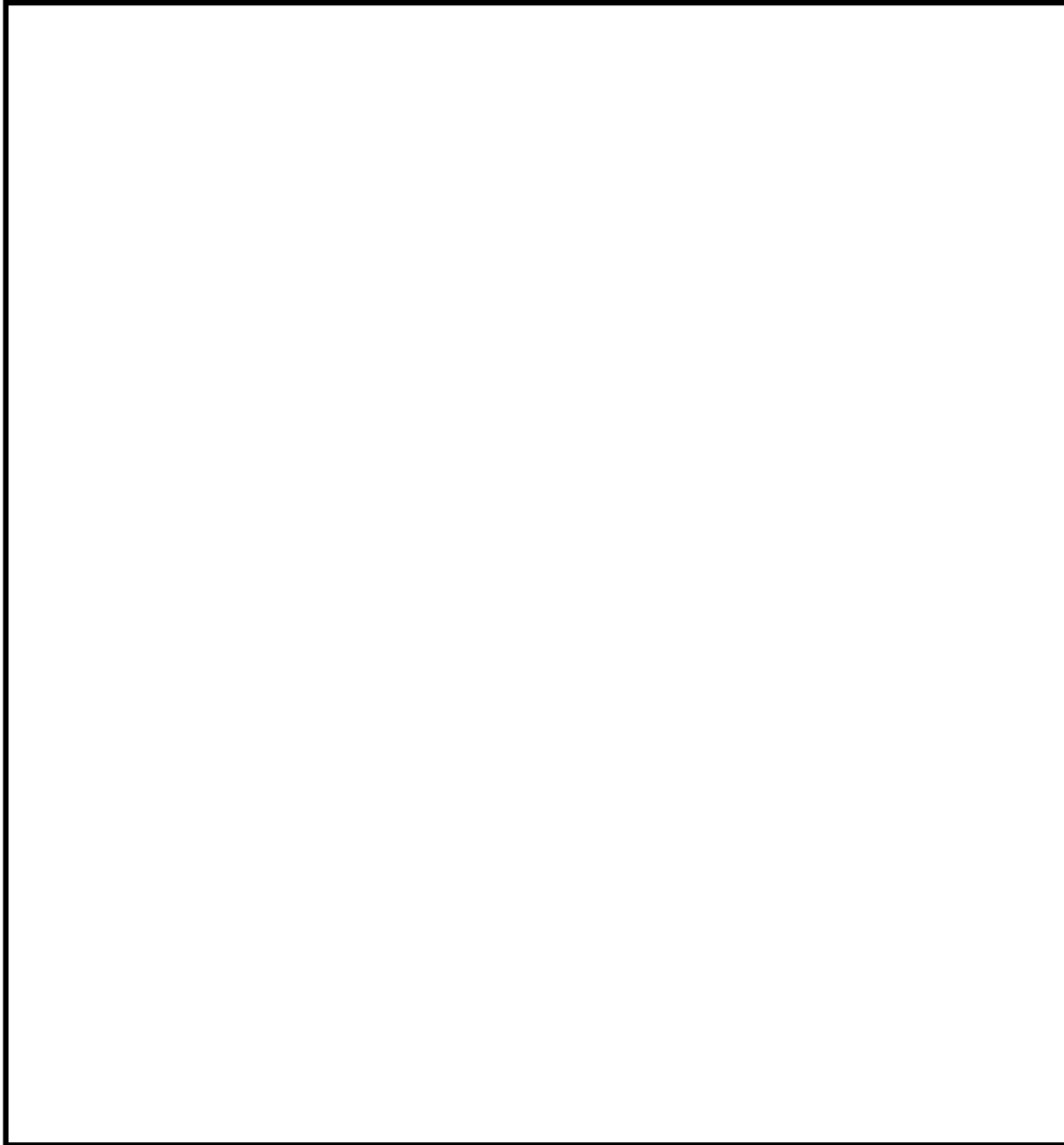


Name:



Make a Poster

Create your own poster below starring a piece of fruit.



Name:

Favorite Fruit



My favorite fruit is....

because...

Name:

Fruit Observation



My fruit drawing:

Looking at my fruit from a different angle:

Name:



Fruit Senses Observation

Touch:

Look:

Smell:

Taste:

Listen:

Name:



Compare Two Fruits

Think of two different kinds of fruit, for example an apple and a grape.
Compare and contrast the two kinds of fruits. What's the same? What's
different? Look at color, size, shape, how and where they grow!

Name:

Color Walk

What yellow things can you find?



Name:

Blank line for writing a name.

COUNTING COLLECTION

How many? How do you know?



Name: _____

Fruit Math



1 plum

+



5 apples

=



10 plantains

+



3 oranges

=



11 mangoes

+



6 pears

=



10 plantains

+



5 apples

=



6 pears

+



12 melons

=

Name:

Counting to Bananas Math

How much fruit was in the book?



1 plum



2 figs



3 oranges



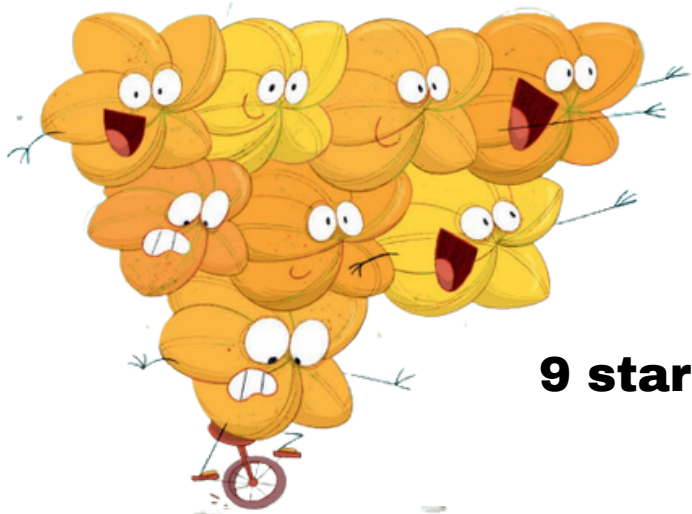
5 apples



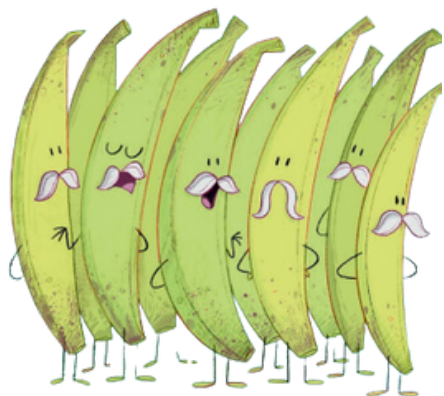
6 pears



7 kiwis



9 star fruits



10 plantains



11 mangoes



13 melons



14 peaches



15 kumquats



17 lemons

18 prunes

19 apricots

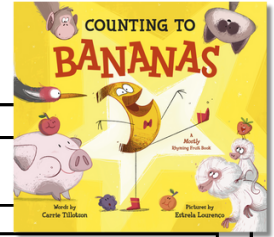


40 cherries

60 grapes

80 berries

Name: _____



FRUIT COUNTING

How much fruit was in the book?
Show your thinking here.

Name:

Counting to Bananas Math

How many animals were in the book?



4 pigs



8 bears



12 cranes



16 leeches



20 baboons

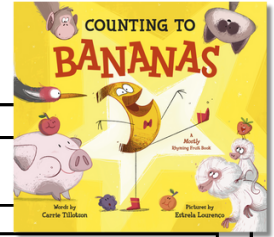


20 raccoons



100 apes

Name:



ANIMAL COUNTING

How many animals were in the book?
Show your thinking here.

Name:



HOW MANY ALL TOGETHER?

Challenge: Add up the fruit and the animals!
Show your thinking here.