

## **Otis**

by Loren Long

### **Summary**

Otis is a special tractor who loves his farm and farmer. He particularly loves the little calf in the next stall of the barn. Otis and the calf become great friends who play together. One day, a big yellow tractor comes to replace Otis and Otis has to live outside behind the barn, which makes him very sad. One day, the little calf gets stuck in a mud pond. There is only one tractor (and it's not big or yellow) who saves the day. It's Otis!

*Adapted from Long, L. (2009). Otis. New York, NY: The Penguin Group.*

### **Themes**

Friendship – Otis and the calf become wonderful friends. They play joyfully together in the fields and around mud pond. Otis comforts the calf to sleep with the sound of his purring engine. When the calf gets in trouble and is stuck in mud pond, Otis helps the calf back to safety. Children can relate by talking about how they play with and care for their friends.

Loyalty and trust – The farmer brings a brand-new yellow tractor to the farm. He moves Otis out of the barn to make room for the new tractor. The new tractor replaces Otis, and the calf sadly misses her friend. The new tractor is big and strong, but when the calf gets stuck in mud pond, the new tractor isn't able to help get her out. The calf needs someone she trusts to coax her out of the mud – Otis. Children can learn about loyalty and trust, and how these qualities are wonderful to find in friendship.

### **Purposes**

Sharing a story can encourage and help children to:

- Listen to stories read aloud.
- Increase the number of words in their vocabulary.
- Discuss the idea of friendship, and explain that trust and loyalty are important qualities of a good friendship.
- Develop understanding of main events.
- Develop understanding of farms; this understanding will be important background knowledge when children read about farms in other books.
- Demonstrate increasing levels of engagement.

### Vocabulary

Explain the meaning of these words while reading, and use them in other contexts throughout the day.

<b>bales</b> – <i>noun</i>	large bundles
<b>bawl</b> – <i>verb</i>	to cry loudly
<b>calf</b> – <i>noun</i>	a baby cow
<b>leapfrogging</b> – <i>verb</i>	playfully jumping or skipping over something else
<b>nearby</b> – <i>adjective</i>	near
<b>parade</b> – <i>noun</i>	a march or procession to music
<b>rumbling</b> – <i>verb</i>	making a low, heavy rolling sound
<b>skirt</b> – <i>verb</i>	to go around, rather than through
<b>stall</b> – <i>noun</i>	a space in a barn for an animal
<b>startled</b> – <i>verb</i>	surprised and frightened

Definitions taken from *Biemiller, A. (2010). Words worth teaching: Closing the vocabulary gap. Columbus, Ohio: McGraw-Hill Companies, Inc.*

### Sound it out

For a child who is ready for the challenge, have him or her help you read the title of the book, *Otis*. Use your finger to underline the title, letter by letter, and sound out each letter. Pointing to letters while saying their sounds helps children make the connection between letters and sounds.

*Otis's* engine makes a sound that is funny to hear and enjoyable to say. Invite children to say these silly words with you each time they come up in the book: "putt puff puttedy chuff." As children learn to say these silly sounds, they are also listening to the sounds in words. This is an important skill for children who will later sound-out words when reading on their own.

### Model for introducing the book

Story introductions are a wonderful way for children to learn about books. It is also an opportunity for children to learn the important characters that they should pay attention to during the reading. Introduce *Otis* by sharing the following details while looking at the cover of the book.

- The title of this book is *Otis*. The author of this book is Loren Long.
- What's this on the front cover of the book? (Point to *Otis* and the calf – allow children to respond.)
- Yes, this tractor is named *Otis* and he is sitting next to this little calf, a baby cow. They look like they are friends. Do you know where tractors and cows usually live?
- At the beginning of the story, *Otis* is working with his farmer. Then some things start to change at the farm; the farmer brings some new animals and tractors to the farm. Let's find out what happens when new animals and tractors come to the farm!

### **Prompting comprehension with questions**

While reading the story, or after reading the book once, help children develop comprehension skills by asking the following questions. Use the book to support children's understanding of the answers to these questions.

- What did Otis do to make the calf feel comfortable and safe in her new home at the farm?
- Why did the farmer buy the new tractor?
- Why couldn't Otis stay in the barn when the new tractor came to the farm?
- How did Otis feel when the new tractor came to the farm?
- What did Otis learn about himself when he saved the little calf from mud pond?

### **Relating the story to children's lives**

Children can practice talking about the story by making connections back to their lives. This helps children develop expressive language skills. Ask children:

- Otis and the calf played games like leapfrog and ring around the rosy. What games do you like to play with your friends?
- When the calf got stuck in mud pond, she was in trouble! Even though the farmhands, yellow tractor, and fire truck came to help her, she wanted Otis because she trusted him. If you were in trouble, who would you want to come help you? Is there someone that you trust to help you when you are in trouble?
- After Otis saves the calf from mud pond, the farmers, the fire truck, and the tractors go down the road in a happy parade. Have you seen a parade before?

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