

Stuart J. Murphy: Math in Everyday Problems

Sharing, comparing, timing, measuring, grouping, and scoring become ordinary problems that mathematics can settle.

6 core books	Grades 1-3	Catalogue reviewed
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You are the teacher.

Use these as an author/series study, a read-aloud sequence, or a source of book-to-book comparisons. Change the order when your students need a different entry point.

Teaching purpose

Students compare how Stuart J. Murphy's MathStart stories make mathematics useful inside recognizable situations. The sequence deliberately crosses several domains so students notice a larger habit: the story creates a reason to quantify, compare, organize, or calculate.

Recommended grade band

Grades 1-3

The Big Question

When does an everyday problem become a math problem?

Source and confidence boundary

Titles, book IDs, authors, formats, and reading levels were checked against the updated TumbleBookLibrary Book_List.xlsx supplied for this build. Grade-band recommendations are instructional recommendations for the set, not catalogue claims about every individual title.

Before reading

For every book, ask students to name the problem before naming the math. Then ask what information has to be counted, measured, compared, or organized to solve it.

Core reading sequence

COMPARE

Mighty Maddie

Book ID 8553 · Stuart J. Murphy · Math story · Reading level 1.9

Why it belongs: A child sorts objects by how heavy they feel while helping with a household task.

Unique contribution: It begins with an intuitive comparison students can act out before formal measurement.

Ask What makes one object feel heavier than another?

SHARE

Give Me Half!

Book ID 8514 · Stuart J. Murphy · Math story · Reading level 2.2

Why it belongs: A sharing conflict creates a concrete reason to divide a whole into equal halves.

Unique contribution: It makes fairness and equal partition visible at the same time.

Ask What has to be true for both shares to really be halves?

Book ID 8512 · Stuart J. Murphy · Math story · Reading level 2.9

Why it belongs: A game setting gives elapsed time and sequence a practical purpose.

Unique contribution: It moves from objects and shares to a quantity that cannot be held in the hand.

Ask What information about time does a player need in order to know what happens next?

Book ID 8526 · Stuart J. Murphy · Math story · Reading level 2.6

Why it belongs: A sports-day story uses grouping, counting, and participation to make mathematical organization necessary.

Unique contribution: It shows how numbers can keep a group activity orderly and understandable.

Ask What gets easier when the participants are organized mathematically?

Book ID 8498 · Stuart J. Murphy · Math story · Reading level 3.3

Why it belongs: A dinosaur-themed context uses numerical combinations and deal-making to create a more demanding calculation problem.

Unique contribution: It raises the computational demand while keeping the reason for calculating visible.

Ask What are the characters trying to find out that requires more than one number?

Book ID 8596 · Stuart J. Murphy · Math story · Reading level 3.2

Why it belongs: A swimathon turns totals, progress, and repeated quantities into a problem the characters need to monitor.

Unique contribution: It closes with multiple pieces of information that must be combined and interpreted rather than simply counted once.

Ask What should the swimmers keep track of, and why?

Optional extensions

Bigger, Better, Best!

Book ID 8476 · Stuart J. Murphy

Why optional: An extension for comparison and measurement language; catalogue reading level is not supplied.

Grizzly Gazette, The

Book ID 8519 · Stuart J. Murphy

Why optional: A Grade 3 extension for organizing and interpreting numerical information.

Selection note

The core is limited to six titles so every book has a distinct job. The point of an author/series set is not to catalogue everything held; it is to make recurring craft, structure, or instructional design visible.

Across-the-set teaching moves

1. Name the everyday problem before identifying the operation or concept.
2. Ask what quantity is being counted, compared, measured, partitioned, or tracked.
3. Use manipulatives or quick sketches to recreate the story's mathematical model.
4. Change one number and ask whether the same strategy still works.
5. After solving, explain the answer in the language of the story rather than stopping at a numeral.

Book-to-book connections

Mighty Maddie + Give Me Half!

Compare measurement language with equal partition.

Game Time! + Jump, Kangaroo, Jump!

Compare tracking a continuous quantity with organizing discrete groups.

Dinosaur Deals + Shark Swimathon

Compare two situations where several numbers must be combined to make sense of progress or a deal.

Culminating discussion

Choose three books from different math domains and explain what everyday problem each turns into a mathematical one.

Teacher look-fors

- Names the underlying quantity or relationship.
- Chooses a strategy because of the problem, not because a worksheet says which operation to use.
- Explains an answer in context.
- Recognizes that different math domains can solve different kinds of everyday problems.

Existing-set duplication check

Closest existing Text Set: Counting stories

What overlaps: Both use story situations to make quantities and mathematical relationships meaningful.

Why this set is genuinely different: Counting stories centers on counting and number ideas; Murphy's books range across comparison, equal shares, time, grouping, calculation, and tracking totals, with the everyday problem consistently creating the need for mathematics. S

Production note

Author and series sets can legitimately reuse a title that appears in a thematic Text Set when the instructional job is different. Reuse should be explicit and purposeful rather than accidental.