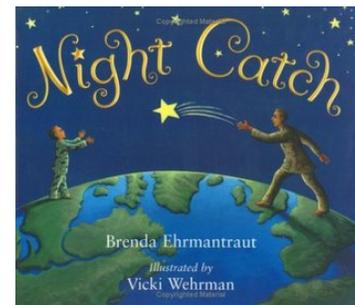


# Night Catch

By Brenda Ehrmantraut

This book is about a soldier whose job takes him across the world from his family. The father uses the North Star to create a game of “catch” with his son while he is away from home. *Night Catch* shows children they can stay connected to their military caregiver while they are deployed.



## Discussion and Questions:

- Ask the child to find something on each page. Help the child point to the answer if needed.
  - For example, “Where is the child’s hat?”
- There are several items throughout the story that the child may not be able to identify. Label the unfamiliar items (such as hot air balloon, bridge, lighthouse, and fisherman). Repeating the words of the objects while pointing to them will help the child increase their vocabulary.
- When appropriate, ask the child to imitate what is happening in the pictures. Caregivers can model the actions.
  - For example, “The boy is blowing the balloon away. Can you blow too?”
- Ask older children predictive questions about the book. For example, “How do you think that will happen?” or, “What do you think might come next?”
- Who, what, where, why, or how questions are useful with older children.
  - For example
    - “How do you think that happened?” Provide ideas if the child seems stuck.
    - “What do you see on this page?”

## Activities:

Ages Birth to 5:

- **Around the World:**
  - In an individual setting, gather the family and sit in a circle to play a game.
  - Give a ball to a caregiver. This can be the ball from the Globe activity below or any other soft ball.
  - Explain that the circular object represents the world and we represent different places around the world.
  - Tell the family that even though at times they are in different places, they are still connected (like the ball).
  - For older children, follow these steps:
    - Have the family pass the ball to one another by saying their name and then the name of the person they want to pass the ball to.
    - If the child is nonverbal, they can still participate by pointing to the person to whom they want to pass the ball.
    - Some children may be capable of a more complex activity. If so, consider asking each family member to pick any place in the world they want to go (i.e. a vacation destination, a family member’s home, or a place in the community). When the family passes the ball, they should say the other family member’s name and their dream destination.
  - For younger children, the ball should be passed to them by rolling it instead of throwing.
    - A young child also may want to walk the ball to the family member.
    - If the child is too young to pass the ball, the child can sit in a caregiver’s lap during the activity and receive as much help as needed.

- Singing a song while rolling the ball to one another will also help the child stay engaged and practice language skills. For example, “I roll the ball to [NAME]. [NAME] rolls the ball to mommy/sissy/cousin.”
- This activity can be adapted for the group settings by letting all children play the game.
- Divide the children into groups of four or five children. It would be helpful if a teacher or adult could assist each group. Teachers could invite caregivers to the group to help assist with the activity. Follow the same directions above, depending on the specific age group.
- **Blow the Balloon**
  - This activity uses a balloon. If possible consider using a permanent marker to draw stars on the balloon or purchase balloons that have stars on them from a local party store.
  - If the military caregiver is home, invite them to participate in this activity with the child. The child and caregiver should stand across from one another with 4 or 5 feet in between them.
  - Return to page 14 in *Night Catch* and point to the child blowing the stars. Explain that in this game, the child and caregiver will blow the balloon back and forth to one another like the child and dad in the story did with the stars.
  - The child should try to move the balloon with their breath, but if they need to use their hands they can. They will also need to walk with the balloon to keep it up in the air.
  - When the balloon reaches the other person, they should catch it with their hands and wait for their partner to return to their spot a few feet away.
  - The military caregiver can then begin the game by blowing the balloon to the child.
  - If the military caregiver is not home, this game can be adapted by putting a picture of them on the wall at the child’s eye level. Have the child blow the balloon (or use their hands to hit the balloon) over to their caregiver’s picture. When it hits the wall, it should bounce back towards the child. Encourage other family members to participate in this activity as well.
- **Star Count**
  - Find objects in the book to count.
  - For example, count the stars on pages 15 and 16
    - Encourage the child to count with you as you point to the stars.

#### Ages 3 to 5:

- **Globe Activity**
  - Open the book to the page 8 and point to the world.
  - If the caregiver is deployed tell them that their caregiver is across the world like the daddy in the book.
  - If the military caregiver is home, have the caregiver explain to the child that when they leave, they may go across the country or world to work.
  - Show the child a globe and point to where the family lives (or use a map if a globe is not available).
  - Point to the place (or general area) where the caregiver is or will be. If the exact location is unknown, a general area will suffice. The point of the activity is to show the child the distance between two locations, but it does not have to be exact.
  - Use a plastic ball, balloon, or beach ball to help the child make a “globe.” It is also possible to find an inflatable globe designed like a beach ball.
  - Make two dots on the globe using a permanent marker that represent the family’s location and the deployed caregiver’s location.
  - If the child is able, let them connect to the two dots using a permanent marker. If the child is too young or unable to draw the line independently, aid as needed.
- **Star Drawings**
  - This activity is designed to help children feel close to their deployed caregiver while they are away.

- Point to the pictures of the stars in the book and ask the child, “Do you think the stars look the same across the world?” Explain to the child that they are going to start drawing pictures of the stars at night to send to their military caregiver to see if the sky looks the same where they are located.
- For older children, use the back of the book to explain how to find the North Star.
- Encourage the caregiver who is home to take the child out 1 to 2 times a week before bed to find the North Star and draw a picture of the sky. Continue this activity for a week, month, or however long the family desires being sure to put a date on the child’s drawings each time one is created.
- The family can send the drawings in the mail or use a scanner to attach them to an email to the military caregiver.
- If the military caregiver is able, they could draw or take pictures of the stars at night and send them back to the family, or wait until they return home to share them. When the family is reunited they can make a collage or book of the night skies with the dates in order.