



**Minnesota Storytime  
Reading Guide**

**Title:** *Two Old Potatoes and Me*

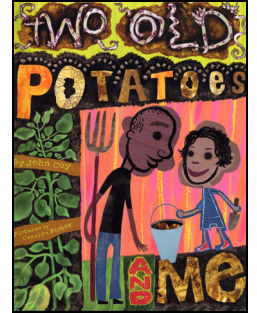
**Author:** John Coy

**Illustrator:** Carolyn Fisher

**Publisher and  
Copyright Date:** Alfred A. Knopf, 2003

**Connection to  
Minnesota:** Minnesota author

**Summary:** After a young girl finds two old potatoes at her father's house, they plant and tend them to see if they will have new potatoes in September. The unnamed setting for the story is the Mulberry Junction Community Garden in Minneapolis. While this book focuses on gardening, it also has a subtle message about a strong father-daughter relationship in a situation where the girl's parents don't live together.



**Suggested ages:** 4-6, 7-10

**Tips for Reading:**

- Before reading the book, show the children an old potato.
- Read the story in two distinct conversational voices – one for the daughter and one for the dad. Read the daughter's conversational voice differently from her first person narrative.
- Emphasize words like "Gross" and read the "One Potato" rhyme section rhythmically.

**Questions before reading:**

- Have you ever seen potatoes when they are old and mushy with sprouts growing out of them?
- What can you do with old potatoes?
- Does your family have a garden? What do you grow in it?

**To Introduce this story say:** We're going to read a story about a little girl who found two old potatoes in her Dad's cupboard and then found something very special she could do with them.

**Questions After Reading:**

- How did the girl and her father make the potatoes grow? What other vegetables grow under the ground?
- Have you ever helped make a special dish to eat with food that grew in your family's garden? What did you make?
- Do you have a special activity (like working in the garden) that you do with your family?
- How do the dad and the daughter show their love for each other?
- Where is the girl's mother? What special things might the mother and daughter do together?

## RELATED ACTIVITIES

- Art:**
- Use potatoes to make stamp art. Cut simple designs into halved potatoes, dip them in paint, and stamp the “potato art” on cardstock paper.
- Math:**
- Say this “counting game” chant with younger children, using your fingers to count the potatoes:
    - One potato, two potato three potato, four---
    - five potato, six potato, seven potato, more!
- Science:**
- Look at a potato together to see if you can find the tiny “eyes” that will grow into sprouts and make a new potato. Leave the potato in the cupboard for a couple of weeks. Read this book again and re-check the potato for sprouts!
  - If you have a place to garden, consider planting potatoes with a child. If you live in an apartment, using a plot in a community garden is possible---like the author of this story! Check with your city government to learn more about community garden availability. Visit your library for books about simple plants that can be grown inside your home or program. You and your children can enjoy growing a vine from a sweet potato or a potted tree from an avocado seed.
  - Visit a local vegetable garden, farm, or farmers’ market to talk to farmers and gardeners and learn how food is grown.
- Other:**
- Talk about the many different ways you cook and eat potatoes. Make mashed potatoes from the recipe in the back of this book, or cook a family “potato favorite.”
  - Play “Mr. Potato Head” – a game that has been around a long time. (Note that the images of the author and illustrator on the inside back cover are “potato heads.”)
- Suggestions for English Language Learners:**
- Talk about the ways potatoes are cooked in other cultures. If potatoes weren’t used in your birth culture, talk about the vegetables or fruits that were “homegrown” and what delicious things may be made from them.
- Related Books:**
- ***A Harvest of Color: Growing a Vegetable Garden*** by Melanie Eclare (Ragged Bears, 2002).
  - ***One Potato: A Counting Book of Potato Prints*** by Diana Pomeroy (Harcourt, 1996)
  - ***Growing Vegetable Soup*** by Lois Ehlert (Harcourt 1987)
  - ***Flower Garden*** by Eve Bunting, illustrated by Kathryn Hewitt (Harcourt, 1994)
  - ***Jack’s Garden*** by Henry Cole (Greenwillow, 1995)
  - ***Oliver’s Vegetables*** by Vivian French, illustrated by Alison Bartlett (Orchard, 1995)
  - ***Farmer’s Market: Families Working Together*** by Marcie R. Rendon and Cheryl Walsh Bellville, photographs by Cheryl Walsh Bellville (Carolrhoda Books, 2001)
  - ***Two Homes*** by Claire Masurel, illustrated by Kady MacDonald Denton (Candlewick, 2001)

