

CHILDREN'S BOOKS AND RESOURCES REVIEW

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Fort and Den Making Resources

Children love hidden spaces and building forts, dens, and cubbies. Forts can be made from a variety of objects - cardboard, fabric, blankets, cushion, sticks, pallets, tarps, and more! The outdoor context allows for more space and different materials for fort building. Check out these books and resources for den making inspiration.

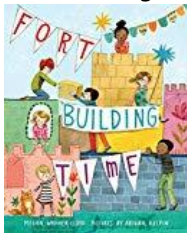
Children's Books:

The Better Tree Fort by Jessica Scott Kerrin



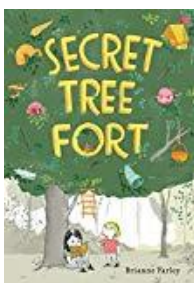
Russell's family moves to a new house with a large maple tree in the backyard. He wants to build a fort in the tree; however, his dad is not so handy at building forts. The boy creates plans, including a basket and rope. Slowly they began to work on the plans. They eat dinner and even slept in the fort. Russell could see a bigger, better tree fort being built a few yards over and went to say hello. It ends with Russell and his dad in their tree fort, realizing there will always be better tree forts and Russell says, "But not a better dad."

Fort Building Time by Megan Wagner Lloyd



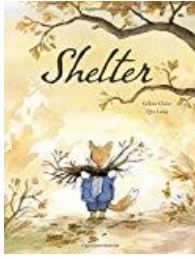
Fort Building Time follows nature play through the seasons with a different type of fort for each season—snowballs, sheets and rope, driftwood and beach blankets, and a tree house. At the end the fort falls down (as many do!) and it allows for fixing projects and imaginative play. The text is lyrical and poetic without too many rhymes. The illustrations are lovely and include depictions of children of color.

Secret Tree Fort by Brianne Farley



Two sisters are sent outside to play. The older sister sits and reads while the younger girl shares details of her secret fort. It has a rope ladder, water balloon launcher, a roof, a basket and pulley, special flags, natural treasures, magnifying glass, a crow's nest, an underwater viewing space, and more. Obviously, she has quite the imagination when whales, mermaids, and pirates are near her fort as well. The secret is the fort is made of candy. The older sister doesn't believe her; however, they realize that maybe they can build it.

Shelter by Celine Claire



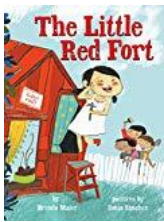
The animals are preparing for a storm and two strangers arrive to the area; however, no one will help them find shelter for the storm. The strangers (bears) make a shelter with the snow. The fox family finds themselves on the outs as their shelter begins to sag and seek refuge with the strangers who help them out. This book shows how we can be kinder to others than they might have been to us.

Stick! by Irene Dickson



A young boy uses a stick in so many ways! He uses it as part of a flag, to write in the sand, float it down a stream, etc. At the end, many sticks are put together as new friends gather together.

Little Red Fort by Brenda Maier



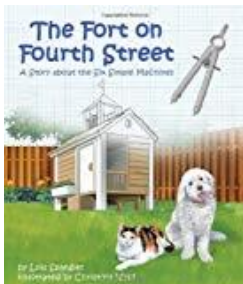
In this spin on the Little Red Hen, a young girl invites the other children to help build the fort; however, none help. With little encouragement, she learns how to build a fort and builds it! The end has an illustration of different types of forts--bunk bed, snow, kitchen chair, sofa, etc. I love that the girl has dirty knees sometimes and that the children are allowed some freedom to play outside and build!

King Jack and the Dragon Fort by Peter Bentley



King Jack and his friends must protect their castle fort from the dragons. The book has good illustrations showing their fort made of cardboard, blankets, and other items they find. The friends stand together to defend the castle, yet King Jack also realizes when it's time to return to his parents. The text rhymes.

The Fort on Fourth Street: A Story About Six Simple Machines by Lois Spangler



This book is a little more formulaic with a cumulative rhyme. A young boy and his grandfather build a fort, using simple machines, like wheels, pulleys, etc. This is a more "formal" fort, rather than a simpler, child made fort. Sometimes the text seemed a little forced; however, it does great at introducing the various simple machines. There is a section on simple machines at the back, along with ideas and questions to get started on building your own fort.

Other Resources:

Meet the World's Leading Expert of Why Kids Build Forts by Paula Spencer Scott

This article on fort building from Children and Nature Network includes information from David Sobel on why children build forts, a typical developmental timeline of children's interest in den building, benefits of fort building, and ways to support this type of play in children. Find it at:

<https://www.childrenandnature.org/2016/03/20/meet-the-worlds-leading-expert-on-why-kids-build-forts/>

Fabric as a Loose Part/Den Making by Carla Gull

This podcast episode from *Loose Parts Nature Play* explores fabric as a loose part and den making as a corollary concept, including information on making a fort making kit, celebrating Den Day, and a summary of a research article on den making. Find it at: <http://loosepartsnatureplay.libsyn.com/fabric-as-a-loose-part-den-making>

Children's Places of Secrecy and Play: Playworkers Guide to Dens and Forts by Morgan Leichy-Saxby

Sponsored by Islington Play Association, this guide explores the background behind den making with sections on constructive play, types of play, playwork principles, and information on affordances. Additionally, there is another portion looking at the practice including how we can facilitate fort making, best practices, and gender and forts. Find it at: <https://islingtonplay.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2017/09/den-booklet-web-version2.pdf>