Jack used to stay with his Grandmother on Fridays when his mother worked. They love playing together, reading stories and eating cakes. Then one day it was raining, so Jack and Grandma made potato people. But Jack didn’t come back for a very long time. When he returned the Potato People had gone, but where were they?

Responding to the Book

Jack’s grandma is a special person in his life. Who is a special person in your life? Why are they special? Why was Jack’s grandma sad when he didn’t visit?

Grandma and Jack play hide and seek, roly-poly on the ground, they read stories and they eat cake. What games do you play when you visit grandma or a friend?

One Friday it rains. Grandma and Jack make potato people. What games do you like to play on a rainy day?

Look at Pamela Allen’s illustration of the potato people. What will we need to make our own potato people? What else can we use? Record the children’s responses.

Visual Arts: 3D Sculptures

The children bring in two potatoes - one large and one small and whatever else they need to create their own potato character.

Provide them with some scraps of cloth and other collage materials as listed in the above activity.
Look at the pictures of the Potato People in the book and discuss how these were made.

Ask children to create their own potato people using these resources.

**Visual Arts: 2D Drawings**

When the Potato People are completed, have the children draw their own Potato People.

Display them with captions describing who they are and what is special about these Potato People.

**Visual Arts: Digital Forms**

Take Digital Photos of each of the Potato People.

Have children write a story on the computer about their particular Potato People.

Illustrate the story with the digital images.

Once the potato people are made the children write a ‘biography’ about their creations.

- What is his/her name?
- Where does he/she live?
- Are there others in the family?
- Do they go to school? To work?
- What games do they like to play?
- And so on.

If the school has a digital camera (or any other camera) take a photograph of each and display the image and the biography. Perhaps create your own ‘Potato People’ book.

Grandma says, ‘Tambourines and treacle tarts!’ What is a tambourine? What is a treacle tart? What do you notice about the words in grandma’s expression? Create your own alliteration expressions (phrases starting with the same letter for each
word) using musical instruments and food. For example, ‘Flutes and flaming flambé’, ‘Trumpets and tasty turnips’, ‘Tubas and toasty toffee’.

How do potatoes grow? In a large pot, plant some potatoes that have started to grow ‘horns’. Record what happens.

How many different types of potato could you grow? Do they all look the same? How many ways can you cook potatoes? Which way tastes the best? Which way is the healthiest? Unhealthiest?

In The Potato People, instead of writing ‘said’ all of the time Pamela Allen uses different words. For example, Jack sighed, Grandma thought, Grandma exclaimed. How many other words can you find instead of said? Try using some of them in your next story.

Visual Arts: 2D Drawing
In The Potato People Pamela Allen uses cross-hatching as a background (where lines cross and intersect) in many of her illustrations. For example, when grandma is sitting at the table, her own cross-hatching creates the background.

The children create their own picture and experiment with cross-hatching as a part of the background using pencil, pen or felt-tipped pen or a combination of all three.

Music: Duration and Dynamics
Learn to sing the song Just a Little Seed (MMADD about the Arts CD) by Deirdre Russell-Bowie.
Read through the words, then clap the beat as children listen to the song. Sing the song softly, then loudly. Decide on appropriate dynamic levels to sing the song effectively.

Music: Pitch
While singing the song, have the children show the rising melody (pitch contour) with their hands; ie. the pitch of the music in each verse starts low and become higher towards the end as the verse describes the growing plant.

Look at the written music together. Work out which is the highest note and which are the lowest notes. Have children show these clearly with their hands as they sing the song.

**Dance: Space, Action**

As the song is played, or spoken as a poem, have children move to the lyrics, ie.

**Verse one: Low level**

Crouch down and make yourself as tiny as a seed, buried in the warm earth, then just using your hands, push slowly up through the earth until you break through and see the sun.

**Verse two: Medium level**

Kneel and start moving as a small plant, using the top half of your body; unfurl your green leaves as you grow bigger.

**Verse three: High level**

Using your whole body, stand up, create a small bud with hands, and make this grow and develop until it bursts out in radiant beauty, swaying gracefully in the sun.

**Just a Little Seed**, © Deirdre Russell-Bowie, 1981 *(MMADD about the Arts CD)*

1. *Just a little seed, buried in the earth,*
   *Keeping warm until it starts to sprout.*
   *Pushing slowly up, through the muddy ground,*
   *Searching for the sun and then it’s out!*  

2. *Green leaves start to show, opening gradually,*
   *Now it’s growing taller, can’t you see?*
   *Slowly leaves unfurl, coloured brightly green*
   *Stronger, bigger, opening,- one, two, three!*

3. *Now the bud appears, covered up in green,*
   *Soon it starts to show, a flower begun.*
   *Brightly coloured flower, stretching open wide,*
   *Swaying in the breeze to greet the sun!*
Dance: Extension
Discuss how a potato grows, the root system, how tall it grows, what sort of flowers it has, etc.

Use these ideas to create movements to the above song.

Drama: Improvisation
As a class, have children discuss what the Potato People might have talked about when Grandma and Jack were not around. Have children discuss the following questions about the Potato People:

How did they feel about being dressed up with pins and toothpicks stuck into them? What sort of people are they: happy, grumpy, old, young, anxious, carefree, etc? How did they feel when they were left alone for so long and started to grow horns? How did they feel when it rained and the storms came? What did they say to each other? How did they feel when they were buried in the compost heap? Did they call out for help, or realise it was for the best? Then what happened in the dark, under the compost? How did they feel when they heard Grandma and Jack digging them up? What did they say to each other?

In pairs have children work on an improvisation to show their representation of what the Potato People were like and how they reacted to the events in the story.

Compare the different interpretations from the different pairs.

Discuss why they were different and how effectively they were presented.