

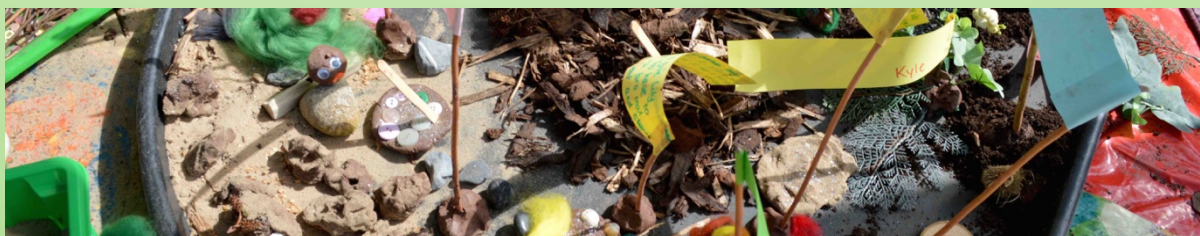
Stories alive!

Building stories: worksheets

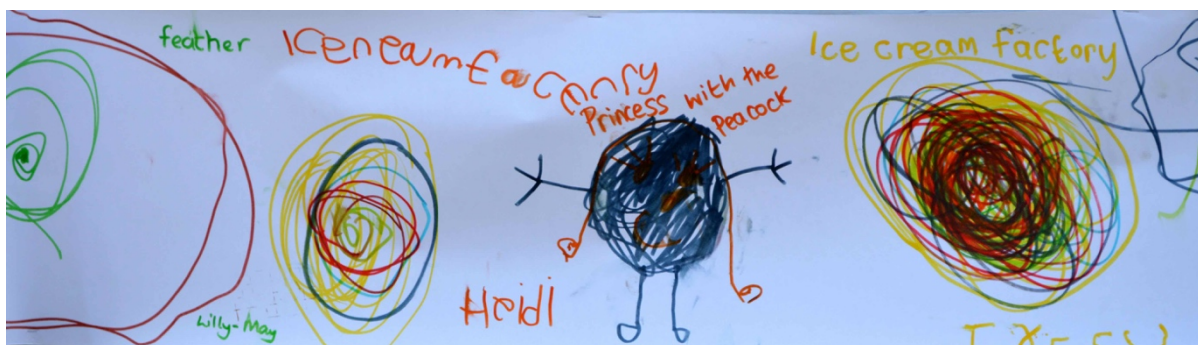
***A set of activities from
the Stories Alive! Project
for developing
storytelling, storymaking
and language skills with
young children***



***ideas for finding stories,
making stories,
telling stories,
singing stories,
ideas for
enjoying language***



Stories alive! Worksheets



The worksheets

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These worksheets grew out of the Stories Alive! project. A cluster of 5 nursery schools in East Lancashire each worked with an artist to explore ways of encouraging young children's literacy through storytelling by developing activities and principles that could be embedded in the work of both Early Years practitioners and parents

Aims running through the project and into these worksheets:

- to invite lively, active participation in storytelling and storymaking by children and staff

- to acknowledge that young children already build their own stories and to offer ways of structuring and sharing those ideas
- to use the school grounds and wider environment for inspiration
- to offer staff new experiences to draw upon and encourage them to improvise upon and develop activities offered by the artists
- to find new ways of inviting parents to join in the storymaking and sharing process
- to enjoy our stories, to share words with delight and glee

These sheets

In these sheets, a selection of activities from all 5 nurseries are presented as suggestions for ways of developing similar themes with other groups. The activities here are not presented in any particular order but activities on one sheet might well contribute to the activity on another. A lot of activities involve ways of improvising stories with children. We have kept the variety, knowing that different activities will work better in different situations and suit different staff styles. Please read, experiment, improvise and enjoy

The team

Nurseries

- Basnett Street Nursery School, <http://www.basnettstreet.lancs.sch.uk/>
- Newtown Nursery School, <http://www.newtown.lancs.sch.uk/>
- Rockwood Nursery School, <http://www.rockwoodnursery.com/>
- Rosegrove Nursery School, <http://www.rosegrove23.lancsngfl.ac.uk/>
- Taywood Nursery School, <http://www.taywood.lancs.sch.uk/>

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Photographs remain the property of the School concerned and may not be used without permission. If contact is needed, approach Gordon MacLellan: creepingtoad@btinternet.com

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Stories Alive! worksheet 1

Who shall we send on an adventure?

Introduction

In this activity, we set out to create a set of characters to use in this and future stories and get their first stories going by using found objects

Materials: characters: allow 1 piece of A7 card for each person (with extras for starting again) c 7cm x 10cm - cut 8 out of a sheet of A4, strips of card 1cm wide, pencils, coloured pencils, scissors, staplers

For outside activity: plastic plates



How long: maybe 60 minutes (but outside section expanded)

Activity

Characters

We started by talking about stories that we like and what sort of adventures people might have - treasure hunts, finding monsters, getting lost, being chased.... That took us to thinking about who we would like to make up a story about: children like ourselves? characters we know from other places (we tried to discourage too many film/TV characters although there were a few Teenage Mutant Turtles and several Spidermen). Then we drew some characters quickly on big sheets of paper. After this we chose "who would I like to send on an adventure" and drew these on the small cards and coloured them in. Characters were cut out roughly (don't get too precise or they will lose bits later), a strip of card was used to make a loop and stapled on the back to give us finger-puppets

Variations: we had some ready-made sheets of outline characters available so children could decide whether to draw their own character or use one of these

Ready for adventures

Puppets on fingers, we set off to explore the school playground and garden. Each child was given a plastic plate and asked to find "things that would help their hero on their adventure". Provisos were added: no live animals, no animal poo, please don't pick flowers, etc. Some children worked in pairs, others on their own. Some needed more help than others, so a set of quick prompts was helpful: something to make a shelter out of? what else would they need for a camp? will they need to cross a river? what about danger?

Generally, children just started foraging and came back with bridges, made little houses, found treasure, found feasts, beds, blankets, tents, friends...

Finishing: we sat down in small groups to listen to each other recite who they were taking and what they had found. The plates and opening question were there to help focus the hunt but most children went beyond this very quickly and used their found objects to create whole stories for their characters

Follow up: we drew and wrote small books (or used *sticky-storybooks* from *Worksheet 13*) about our hero's first adventures

Stories Alive! worksheet 2

Where shall we go on our adventure?

Introduction

Thinking about settings for stories. We used small boxes as houses/special places to find on an adventure, using this to start mapping stories - where should the special place be situated, how does the hero find it, where does that encounter come in a story...

Materials:

- **characters:** allow 1 piece of A7 card for each person (with extras for starting again) c 7cm x 10cm - cut 8 out of a sheet of A4, strips of card 1cm wide, pencils, coloured pencils, scissors, staplers
- **houses:** small folded card boxes (we bought 100 from a packaging supplier: boxes c 15 x 10 x 5 cm), pencils, pens, paper, scissors, glue, door shapes (*to be added*)



Time: allow 1 hour

Organisation: works with small or larger groups

Activity

Characters and houses

We had made characters to send on an adventure before (see *Worksheet 1*) and ideally, these same characters would have been picked up again here but they had been taken home, so we quickly made new people.

An opening question, "where are they going to go?", had us talking about special places on adventures: dangerous dungeons, palaces, towers, home. Every child got a box and was invited to decorate it so that it could become somewhere their character could visit. The boxes became buildings. We had a set of door shapes that could be coloured in and stuck on, or children could design their own decoration



Outside

Armed with heroes and houses, children started looking at the garden as a story landscape: deciding where their house should go, what should be around it, whose house it was anyway, what would happen when the hero got there...

Originally, the plan had been to "furnish" the houses with card and found materials but they

quickly turned into treasure chests. Children could still explain what was in their house and why. It is recommended that sand from the sand pit is avoided in the future....

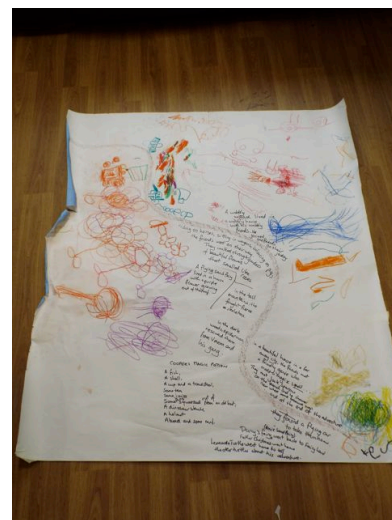
Finishing off: we used paper to draw maps where children's garden ideas could be recorded as a path to that Special Place

Stories Alive! worksheet 3

What happened at the end of our adventure?

Introduction

Here, we wanted to join different ideas together to create a longer, more organised story. An exercise in creating storymaps that might be done on paper or more physically (similar to Worksheet 5, "**Creating storyworlds**" - you might use ideas from both worksheets together)



Materials:

- characters and houses/storyboxes from worksheets 1 and 2
- a box of treasures - acrylic "gems", brass bits and pieces, colourful feathers, anything really
- a box of exciting landscape bits: pine cones, sea shells, bits of wood, plastic leaves, real leaves
- big sheet of paper (we used sheets stuck together to make a map almost 1 m square)
- pens for writing with
- oil pastels for drawing

Time: 40 minutes

Organisation: best in small groups of 5 or 6 children



Activity

Whether you do this indoors or outdoors, similar questions can keep the story moving. These notes describe an indoors session: outdoors you might do similar things but instead of working on paper you could work in a sand pit or on bark chippings

On a big sheet of paper we drew a wandering line: the path of our story.

Then as the leader asked questions

children could add answers, suggestions or simply place things on our story map, walking our little characters through the adventure as the story grew

- *where is our story going to start? in a wood? in a town? by the sea?*

- *where should we go first and what will we see on our way - river, woods, bridge*
- *are there going to be any mountains? a volcano? a sea?*
- *(separate characters from houses and decide where houses are going to go)*
- *(now set off walking along the path - everyone? or is someone going to join us later?)*
- *what do we see? is there any problem for us to face?*

Is there a clue that could help us start our adventure (one of the treasures?)?

By this point it will be becoming unpredictable - keep listening, keep feeding in questions and picking up on children's comments. Things to look for

- *a challenge or a mystery to solve*
- *friends or foes they might meet on their way*
- *ways of solving problems from among the bits on the map*
- *safe places to rest on our journey*
- *what will the adventurers bring away from this adventure? (treasures are not always objects)*
- *do they go home at the end?*
- *if they go off to even more adventures, can they find a way of travelling from the things on our map - flying carpets, bark boats, sailing away in a sea shell...*

Draw, scribe and then sit down together and try to tell the story again. Invite another group over to listen to each other's stories



Stories Alive! Worksheet 4

Story exploring: improvising with found objects

Introduction

Our aim here was to use anything we find to inspire stories.

Materials: useful things to have: shells, sparkly stones, feathers, twisty sticks, wooden ladybird, marbles, pine cones, a bone, a set of keys, a tower of stones, willow star wand, a staff, shiny stars, a mini football, bunch of keys, small doors
Big sheets of paper, crayons, pencils or pens



Organisation and time: works better in small groups.

Activity

A lot of this work uses simple everyday objects as starting points or simple physical activities to set stories moving. Encourage children to improvise but have a set of question prompts in case things slow down. Make sure you listen to stories as they start and find the question that will help a child move their idea on - or suggest an activity - something else to look for? somewhere else to look?

Starting points:

Perspective: what would it be like if we were tiny? Lying down and looking at the world: grass becomes a jungle and prompts a set of questions:

who might live in the jungle?

who can we find in our jungle?

Finding a door: a "real" door ("fairy doors" on trees are very useful) - knock on the door - who lives behind it? why is there no answer? what do we do if the person there is shy? quiet?

New worlds: a puddle decorated with stones becomes a wishing well, a pond, a sea. "If it was a real wishing well....find a pebble, count 1, 2, 3 drop in the pebble and make a wish". Talk to each other - what was your wish?

Keys: a bundle of keys might unlock anything.

Collect: where possible, collect items as you explore.

Drawing it all together: spend time drawing in groups on big sheets of paper - unfold the world of the garden - adults to scribe. Or simply spend time listening to each other recounting what they found, where, and what was happening around that object/in their adventure.

Stories Alive! worksheet 5

Three clues to build a story



Introduction

This is a very simple activity that can yield wonderful results. It starts with nothing and just builds a story from things we pick up - as we wander, or that we pick from a bag or a tray. Stories often go on growing beyond these first sentences but for uncertain people those three things can give them a quick story with items to brandish that help them hold onto their ideas.

Materials: for the basic activity, "whatever we find as we walk" will do. Indoors, try working with a tray or bag (look at *Worksheet 7, Story sacks*): ideally with mostly natural objects - sticks, stones, leaves, shells, feathers, seed-pods, nuts, fossils; everyday household ones (or, not quite) - wooden bowls, an old pair of glasses, a leather glove, hat or two; and a few treasures - brass ornaments are good, or large iridescent marbles, or bells, or boxes, or you might choose anything and add cars, planes, tools...

Activity

Pick things randomly - if anything doesn't seem to work, you can always discard it and start again

First clue: this will tell us where the story starts/is happening

Our story starts in a (what have you picked up?...) wood of tall trees, where....
(always try for that extra bit of the sentence)

You could work around a theme and a shape or a colour, encouraging children to find that feature in the environment and incorporate it into their story. (See the example below)

Second clue: will tell us who the hero/main character of the story is, and something about her. (We found a wisp of sheep's wool which might have been someone's hair, so...)

A little old lady lived in the wood, who.... (tell us more! Something special about the hero? Find an extra object?)



Third clue: the mystery, challenge or adventure that faces our hero on this day (do you want to slip something unexpected into the area to provoke surprise and extra discussions...a treasure chest? a footprint? a wonderful feather or shell?)

On the day of our story, the little old lady heard a strange noise...

Tell the story. Try it out. Pick something else to help move things along. Gradually involve a character from everyone in your group (stories

with lots of people often turn into rambling "Gingerbread Men" adventures).

Or let children make their own 3-piece stories. Maybe draw them on *sticky sotrybooks* (worksheet 13) or *quick books* (worksheet 12)

Theme example: one group worked with ideas around Chinese New Year, using aspects of this to build stories:

- our **first clue** was to find red things as red is a significant colour in New Year celebrations - we found red flowers, red leaves and red lanterns (hung in trees earlier!)
- **second clue:** a dangerous Lion and a helpful Dragon featured here, with us providing a bit of information and letting children decide upon its meaning and importance. The lion, for example has a horn on his head and an extra ear, because...
- **third clue:** the Lion likes eating goats so we had to find a way of keeping a Goat we found (cuddly toy) safe (as we enter the Year of the Goat)

Stories Alive! worksheet 6

Making storyworlds

Introduction

Here, we were aiming to create stories in landscapes made out of natural/found materials

Materials: Big play trays, soil, sand, twigs, bark chip, log slices/ discs, pine cones, pebbles, sticks, clay, willow, feathers, sequins, glitter, pipe cleaners, moss, leaves, glass nuggets, shells, googly eyes, beech mast/acorns/tree seeds
Paper and pens (flags)



How long? This activity can run throughout a whole session as a drop-in activity. Children could stay as long as they like or come and go through the time. Children could be encouraged to stay longer by being given new materials, chatted to about what they have made/are doing, or given suggestions to develop new ideas. In the main this is a child-led activity with adults observing and supporting only when needed.

Activity

We created landscapes in big play trays using natural materials and objects to make different scenery- beaches, hills, volcanoes, forest, the sea etc.

We made characters that we remembered from a previous session (*Worksheet 4*) or that we'd thought about since, using clay, sticks, fleece, glitter, and any of the materials listed below.

We put the characters in the landscape and talked about them- who they are, what they are doing, where are they going?



Using willow sticks and pens and paper we created flags , and the children did mark making on these to name or describe what they had made. Staff asked lots of questions about *who, where, what, why* etc and scribed if needed as well.

Next steps? The children could go further by spending time in small groups moving their characters through the landscapes and interacting with others.

Staff might ask questions and scribe stories that come from this free play.

Stories could be made into books with photos of characters and landscapes to illustrate.

Background: principles within this activity

- to get hands on and make story worlds instead of just talking or drawing.
- to place characters in a landscape which helps create 'happenings' or adventures
- to allow children to 'play' stories- to develop them as they go along- as their creations interact with the landscape and the other characters
- to have fun
- to allow those children who work differently a chance to shine
- to help develop fine motor skills used in writing through 3D sculpture and play.



Stories Alive! worksheet 7

Storyhouses - who lives here?

Introduction

Thinking about settings for stories, we have explored individual ideas for storyhouses and landscapes. This house-building activity creates delightful and unexpected communities. We used tree stumps/logs as homes for characters that evolved as we made their home – each one influencing the other – would that kind of animal fit in that door? – Does the door need to grow? Or does the animal need to be made smaller; have a magic wand?

Materials:

characters: fast drying clay; a little water to keep it moist while mouldled

houses: logs/tree stumps, felt, leaves, bunting, lollipop sticks, glitter, shells, pencils, pens, paper, scissors, glue guns, door shapes, paint, varnish (for making sure everything's sealed and weather-proof!) hammer and tacks if you're feeling brave!whatever you have!

Safety: you need to decide what parameters are appropriate for your children: hammers and nails? glue guns? Working in small groups with adult support, we used these

Time: allow 45 minutes



Organisation: works better with small groups (4-6 children at a time)

Activity

Characters and houses

Wherever your group is – outside, inside, let them first consider the place the house will need to be left in. Consider: outside, where you can keep the logs for future activities – is it big? Is it cold? Is it dirty? Does it smell like raspberries? Are there nooks and crannies up in high places?

Like most of our activities, this one grows through questions, responding to children's ideas and encouraging them to think a bit further. They usually come up with lots



of ideas about the homes they are building but it might help for you to have a personal checklist of points to talk about: doors, access (ladders? stairs? ropes? landing platforms? tunnels?), friendships, annoying neighbours (noisy trolls? partying ladybirds?), gardens, facilities (shops?)

As the space evolves, characters tend to appear, discuss - **What might live here?** What enjoys/can deal with the cold? Would that animal need longer/stickier legs to reach that?

While this is going on you can also be asking about what its house might look like.

Would that creature suit this house as it is now? Would its house fit there?

Would it like a house that low down? Is the door big enough? Does it need another for its friend? What about that tea party you mentioned? Does the house need a table?

Go back to the place the house will be left again – But it's wet here? Does the house need a roof?

....What does your character like to do? Does it need a swimming pool on the roof then?etc. Keep considering each factor.

The environment, character and the house then build off each other this way – transforming one another.

Finishing off: write a description of the character (if you're going to use them later on, the clay model you'll have made together might not be so recognisable!); if you have time, discuss what the character might do in its house tomorrow. Might it visit another house made by another group? – story, character, house-swap and see what happens! You might end up needing to build a few bridges from one house to another...

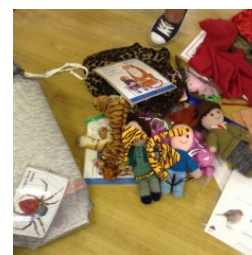


Stories Alive! worksheet 8

Story sacks

Introduction

A little different from our other worksheets, story sacks call for staff to prepare the resources and the children generally become involved in using the sacks, although there are opportunities for them to be involved in deciding or changing the content of the bag. A Story Sack is essentially a bag that contains a set of props (and possibly a text) that will help you tell a story actively and engagingly. While each sack does "belong" to a particular story, if you simply start drawing props from the bag, all sorts of new stories might evolve!



Planning your Story Sack:

Basic Story Sack contents include:

- A pillowcase (or make your own bag of about this size) with drawstring and hanging loop
- An inventory card with the story title, bag contents and suggested activities
- A book of the story (and sometimes a non-fiction book on the topic)
- Toys representing main story characters
- Props to support the story
- Any props needed for an extension activity



Props do not need to be expensive or perfect. They might be either handmade, everyday objects, found in charity shops, or picked up very cheaply. A little skill with sewing, drawing, or printing/laminating goes a long way!

Story Sacks are not "finished artefacts"; they are an evolving way to enhance a story. As such, you could be adapting, adding to, and learning from each story sack as you use them with the children.

Maintenance

- Make an inventory of each bag's contents, ideally laminated, and check it off after each session.
- Check items are clean, dry and undamaged at the end of each session. If necessary, wash or mend items before hanging bag up again.
- Natural items such as pine cones, straw and leaves, will need replacing regularly.



Accessibility

- Have something on the outside of your story sack to show which story is inside, for children who can't yet read. This could be drawn, sewn or stuck on (though be careful that glue will stay stuck if you wash the sack itself).
- Think about including a phonetic translation of key story phrases in community languages, to include children whose first language is not English.
- Be sensitive of family, cultural and religious issues in the stories you choose, so as not to cause undue upset or inadvertent offence.
- Involve children and families in creating, using and adapting story sacks. The more stake they have in them, the more they will value them.

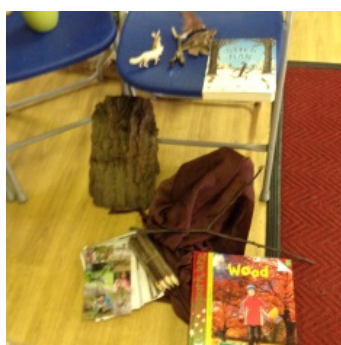
Safety

- Ensure all toys and story props are clean, washable and safe for use with children.
- Check that nothing can be detached or swallowed by children.
- Make sure strings, ribbons and cords are short, to minimise strangulation risk.
- Be aware of dietary issues and allergies when planning extension activities involving allergens.



Using your Story Sack

It might seem almost painfully obvious to say "open your bag, take out the book and start telling the story" but essentially that is what you need to do. As you tell the story (do you need to read it? can you tell it without a script and use the props to help keep the story going), take props from the bag. Don't get them all out at once, draw them as the story calls for them. Depending upon your group, you might then pass them around (can be distracting) or invite individual children to take charge of individual props (works best when there will be enough pieces for everyone) or even lay props down on the floor - or on a cloth or sheet of paper - and "map" the story as you go. The props are a good way of handing the telling of the story over to the group - see if they can say how *this* or *that* item helps the next piece of story.



Stories Alive! worksheet 9

Setting out a storytrail

Introduction

Here we suggest ways of using a story to set an activity trail through your school grounds (or even round the inside of your building). Storytrails like this encourage children to explore the grounds and use resources they find or experiences they have to help reconstruct a familiar story or build a new one



Materials: this will depend upon just what you decide to do - see below

Time and organisation: for children going round your trail, maybe aim for a 30 minute activity. How long it takes to plan and set up will be up to you!

Activity

This is such an open-ended activity that it feels more useful to offer some practical points to think about and then a couple of examples

Planning your trail:

Start with a story - it might be a familiar one or something new. Some old favourites lend themselves very well to this sort of approach - *The Gruffalo* and *We're Going On A Bear Hunt* spring to mind - while less familiar stories can invite a greater degree of improvisation from children

- break your story into stages - probably only 5 or 6 will be needed
- decide on what should happen and where in the grounds each stage should be - keep them in order as you map your storytrail
- do you want written (and laminated?) clues to mark stations – a request to do something? A verse from a poem?
- activities you might use:
 - something to find (natural or planted by you? a useful object? treasure? food?) an animal? granddad? A helpful tool/clue – a spyglass; map; things to make a cup of tea with? instructions to make something? Would it normally be found there? Why might it be there now?)
 - something to make - sticks for a shelter, stones for a house? Clay for a new character? – What would live here? How many legs would it need? What makes it special?
 - something to look/listen/touch out for - pictures in trees? ribbons? decorations? a special magic colour? shapes? things that make you feel safe? gaps in trees? scratches? strange noises? each other?

- o something to follow - a trail of ribbons? of footprints? lights? breadcrumbs? a string path / web left by something? Objects where they shouldn't be? – maybe there's pots and pans in the air? a trail of noises? bubbles?
- o somewhere to listen: places where the story can be told - especially valuable at the start and end!
- o someone to help: with small groups, perhaps having characters from the story at points along the trail - or to accompany the group along the trail can help keep it focussed
- **at the end:** pause and tell the whole story again, using anything the children found or invented on the journey. With the Dragon storytrail described below, children went indoors, met another storyteller to whom they told the story and then made quick books (see *Worksheet 13*)



Storytrail example

Happy Chinese New Year! A Dragon Story Trail
sshin-nyen kwhy-ler! – New Year Happiness!



Introduction

Looking at an event/theme/tradition relevant to what staff were soon to be exploring in nursery – Chinese New Year.

Choosing one simple way of exploring this and tying the trail together as something for the children to follow and explore, but still simple enough that they could elaborate and create new meanings of the story from this simple thing – this being the colour red; a lucky colour, able also to frighten off the monster Nian – a lion with a horn on his head who scares people on New Year's Eve. It's also great, as Red (or whatever you exchange this example for) will then hold new value and be memorable.

Materials

- Very simple red origami fans were made; red wool attached to them to make them into charms and be hung in trees; painted in gold – words/pictures of things that the traditionally are associated with good luck and so on... (these could be collected during the walk for use later on, or children could make their own versions)

- 'NIAN IS MISSING' poster (paper and ink)
- Red paper lanterns – to be used in some numbers to guide us along the
- A toy goat (2015-2016, Year of the Goat)
- A toy dragon (Dragons are important, as they ward off Nian, in Chinese folklore)
- A bag (to hide a clue in)
- Ball of red wool – to weave wishes with; make protective dens; wrap up Nian to block him off and so on...
- Gold coins in red envelopes.
- you might not need this much when you plan your own storytrail! The children can provide enough imagination to make the trail much bigger than you planned it to be.

Time and Organization

This example took 1 day's preparation.

Time and amount of children per session – 40 minutes; 10 children at a time

Activity

Set up the materials along a route; placing things where they might be a (small) challenge to reach, find etc. Start with one clue or a character's need; a task– "The goat needs our help, because... He's scared and we need to find him a safe place, which might be..." etc. and ask if they're up for the challenge. Let them reveal the clues – if some planted ones are missed out, is there a key learning reason you need to guide the children back to them, or can those clues be left in favour of new ones the children have created?

Stop and make. Create something that is happening in the story – a den; a tea party...

Finishing

For this activity, as groups were swapped over, so they could all complete the storytrail, the groups who'd walked the trail were brought inside to retell their story to a keen listener (who asked trigger questions eg. And why was that colour important? Did the animal look like this...?) who then showed them how to create their very own hand-drawn book (Worksheet 13!) of the adventure as they individually remembered it / wanted it to happen. Interesting descriptions surface here depending upon what was found and what was imagined, as the children plot out where exactly the goat's false tooth was; how big the dragon's foot grew; whether Nian could be hugged.

Stories Alive! worksheet 10

Storytelling hints

Introduction

While most of these worksheets are about making and telling stories one way or another, we thought it would be good to have a sheet dedicated to simply *telling stories*. As every worker knows, there is huge value in encouraging children to listen to stories. Whether these are read from a book or told directly, stories inspire, challenge and stimulate imaginations.

This worksheet revolves more around simply telling stories while *Worksheet 11* will look at taking a story and using it to plan a storytrail. If you are planning on telling a tale outdoors, a basic decision might be whether you will stay in one place or move around. This sheet will look at being in one place (indoors or out) while Storytrail will look at a wandering experience.

Planning

1. Telling your story

Have confidence in yourself! Once most of us have read a book out loud a few times, we know what is coming next and sooner or later you might be able to put the book down and tell from memory. There are differences in the experience of listening to a story that is being read and one that is being told without a book. There are values and advantages for both approaches but where reading is the more common strategy, here are some thoughts and hints to invite you to tell (rather than read) that story.

2. Indoors or out

- without pictures, listeners are encouraged to build their own ideas about characters and action
- without a book to manage, it can be easier to improvise
- easier to tell your story direct to your audience
- easier to involve other props to help keep the story moving



Outdoors, the direct experience of the environment can add richness to the experience of the story and might also

- get the children into the habit of noticing features of the environment.
- encourage an awareness of the seasons, giving a sense of time passing.
- gets children active, outdoors, and working together (go on, build a dragon out of children or a troll)
- storytelling outdoors can foster a sense of independence and improves confidence (see suggestions below)

- builds gross and fine motor skills in preparation for early writing.
- builds imagination as children adapt stories and characters to suit available resources.

3. Delivery

Telling your story again

Indoors or out:

- be confident
- enjoy the story
- use character voices if you can - but it's not essential
- use props if you want – objects or puppets or hats all help but don't get trapped by having lots!
- tell the story *to* the audience
- look for sounds, phrases or movements that can be repeated by the audience

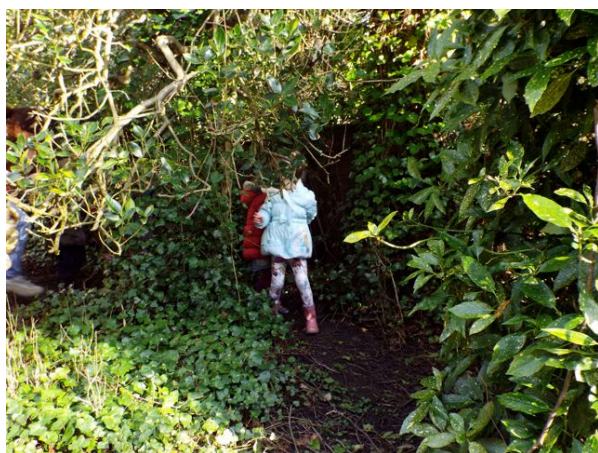


Using outdoor areas

- use the weather as part of the story where possible, talk about what the characters would do in that weather, or if the weather was different, how it might change the story
- use the seasons, encourage the children to bring you flowers/seeds for the story
- use any trees, woven willow structures and move through them as the story grows. Think about how they could become features of the story
- you might like to think about decorating trees, tunnels, etc with fabric, long grass, or flowers to add interest
- encourage the children to listen to the sounds, and to talk about what they think is making the sounds, or just build those experiences into the story
- after telling, you might make characters from the story from clay, leaves, twigs, feathers etc. (see other worksheets for ideas and development activities!)
- encourage the children to notice how the outdoors area changes through the year, and how it looks different when wet/dry, windy/still, hot/cold
- notice any animals in your outdoors area, see how they change through the year. Talk about what they eat, what kind of house they have etc. The more they know about the animals, the easier they'll find it to make them into characters
- if you have a sand pit or muddy area, you might bury items there, "find" them as part of your story, and get the children thinking about how the objects might have got there

4. Taking it further

- make footprints for stories that have journeys. Get the children to track the footprints as they follow the story
- make simple boats from leaves, mud and twigs, and float them across puddles/down the river
- encourage the children to suggest things for the story. It's a good way for them to learn to make their own stories



- keep fabrics and simple dressing-up props in an “outside” box, checking and cleaning them regularly. Hats, masks, scarves, glasses, handbags, gloves, glove puppets etc are easy to get on and off independently, and help fuel imagination

- keep toy cars, diggers, figures, plastic animals outside, encourage the children to make shelters/roads for them

- use sticks and stampers to make marks in sand for simple story pictures, maps of stories etc. The children will soon incorporate these ideas into their own storytelling

- get the children involved in using natural objects to make music to enhance their storytelling
- try planting seeds. Take photos as the seeds grow, and encourage the children to put the photos in order and make *the story of our plants*
- make a season book, with objects from different seasons stuck in/photographed. Get the children to put them into seasons or in order
- keep large paper, crayons and mark making equipment nearby, so the children can make rubbings of interesting textures
- encourage them to paint with mud and sand, talk about the different colours of mud, and how colour changes as the mud dries
- drop dye/powder paint/bubble soap into puddles on wet days and watch how the colour disperses
- tie ribbons to trees, watch how the wind moves them
- use large pieces of fabric as shelter from sun and rain, propped up with long branches, weighted down with stones or knotted/pegged at corners to create transient storytelling spaces
- have musical instruments available, help the children notice how the instruments sound different outside compared to indoors. Talk about why that might be
- take off shoes and socks in warm weather, encourage the children to talk about how the different surfaces feel under their feet

Stories Alive! worksheet 11

I Spy (alliteration song)

Introduction

Aiming to give children an experience of alliteration and challenge them to look for more examples

Materials: scrapbook, alliteration packs/props/found items (a bag or box of assorted bits and pieces)

If working outside: could use a camera or i-pad to collect images and you might be able to start with a bag of useful items and then go on to using objects found in the school area

How long: anything from 15 to 45 mins

Activity

1. Sing the Song

Find a place to stand or sit together with a blank book and a bag or box with alliteration props/pictures inside in the middle of the group.

Sing whilst passing the bag round:

*I spy with my little eye
Something beginning with r r r r
Please choose very carefully
Something beginning with 'r'*

Whoever has the bag when the song stops gets to choose something out of the bag and places it on the book. *So, this is a story about a.... "rabbit"*

Repeat the song and pass the bag around again for another person to have a go, trying to find something that both connects with the sound and moves the story on. *And that's the next part of the story a rabbit who flew off in a "rocket"*

Repeat again until everyone has had a turn.

Finishing

Say the story through together, lifting the found items for the children to shout out

Follow up: Swap the items around to get a nonsensical tale this is a story about a rocket. *A rocket who flew off in a rabbit etc...*

Stories Alive! worksheet 12

Let's Look Around!

Introduction

Here, we set out to explore our surroundings and describe things that we discover using rhyme and rhythm. As ideas develop we'll weave them into a story to sing.

Materials: big sheets of paper, felt pens or magic markers (thicker pens work better than fine ones)

How long: 30 – 45 mins outside

Activity

1. Setting the scene

Find a place to sit or stand together and sing the first half of 'Let's Look Around' (on next page) a few times each time reflecting on sights and sounds available to the group. When you sing the song try leaving the rhyming words so that the children to fill in the gaps. Feel free to wander off on tangential songs and rhymes that the children might know related to what they can see from where they're sat eg. *Baa baa black sheep, two little dickie birds.*

2. Ready for adventures

Send everyone off to find something and bring it back to the group. You could have an agreed signal that time's up and it's time to come back to base – a bell or a whistle or a song.

3. Making the story

Sing the second half of the song each time discussing an item that one group member has found. What does it look like? What else is that colour? What could it be for?

- **find a character to go on a journey** – sometimes a musical instrument in the shape of an animal.
- **include each found item in the story picture** – one at a time. So if someone found a plant pot the character's journey might start there. Place each item on the paper or ask the children to draw it. Keep going back to the beginning of the story.
- **keep the story alive with sound effects and songs.** Try and accept every suggestion into the story as that will keep the suggestions coming!

4. Variations: Hide some particular props that it might be useful or fun to have the children discover. Shiny things/different textures and colours/made by people or natural things...

5. Follow up: Display the story pictures for children to tell their story to others or to start a new one with the picture as a starting point.

Song: Let's look around!

(worried about a tune? Try just saying the words: they have a strong rhythm, feel the bounciness...if you can't sing this, recite it!)

*Let's look around,
Look up and down,
We can listen too,
So don't make a sound.*

*Sneak to the left,
And creep to the right,
You might find a friend,
Or you might get a fright!*

*What is the thing
That you have found?
Shall we look at the colour,
Or listen to the sound?
Shall we feel how it feels,
Shall we find out what it's for?
Shall we see if there are any more?*

***Stories Alive!* worksheet 13**

Rhyming Rap

Introduction

This activity aims to give children an experience of rhyming. They don't even need to know that they're doing it!

Materials: a drum if you like. Or a nice hip hop backing track. Or just stamp and clap. A blank scrapbook. Rhyming prompts in a bag or box. Could have a drum for everyone if you're feeling brave.

For outside activity: as above

How long: 5 – 30 minutes

Activity

1. Singing the song

Find somewhere to stand or sit and get a beat going. Use the *I spy song* (*Worksheet 11*) or *let's look around* (*Worksheet 12*) or a magic bag song to pass the bag round to. When the song stops get whoever has the bag to choose something from it and place it in the book.

That's the first line of the fourline rap. *This is a story about a "hat"*. Try it a few times together. Ask the children to just shout out the last word with attitude.

Repeat the process for the next person to choose something and find the story together. *A hat that landed on a "cat"*.

You could improvise with a Storysack (*Worksheet 7*), keeping its contents random rather than connected to an individual story

2. Finishing

Repeat until you've got four lines and then try a few performances of the rap. The leader guides everyone through the rap. Could be call and response for each line. Again ask the children to shout out the last word of each line (try different styles? quietly? fiercely? as monsters?)

3. Variations: swap the items around for a nonsense rap. Swap again.

4. Follow Up: Make a stop frame animation using "I Can Animate" App or similar and record the children rapping as a soundtrack.

Stories Alive! worksheet 14

Quick books

Introduction

We were looking for a quick and easy way of producing something to record ideas on. This format gives you a book with one long unfolding page. Variations might give you a simple book with pages or a form that stands up and can become a puppet theatre

Materials: for each child: 1 piece A5 card, 1 strip of paper (see below). Then pencils, crayons, glue

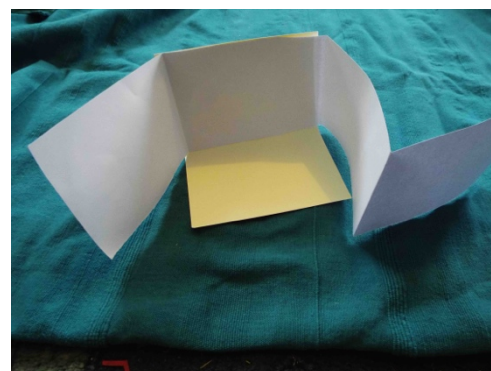
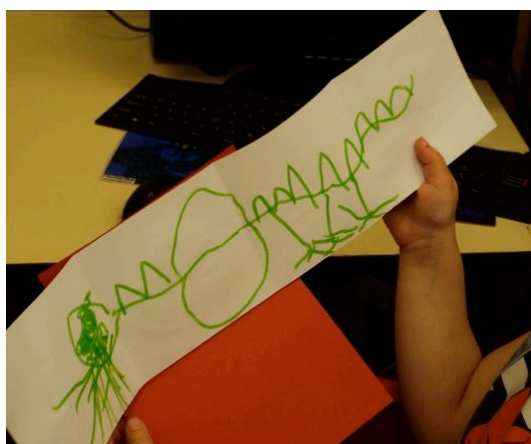
Book strips: a strip c10 cm wide, length can vary: I usually go for a sheet of A2 paper cut into 4 lengthways (might be a bit too long for this) or a sheet of A3 cut into 3 strips lengthways

How long: anything from 20 minutes to 40 depending upon children

Activity

This activity works best as a follow-up to other story-making activities providing a place for children to pause and reflect and gather their ideas.

1. Fold card in half to give a cover of two postcard sized sections
2. Fold book-strip into thirds (A3) or quarters (A2)
3. Before fitting bookstrip into cover, draw on it, add marks, words, whatever is wanted. You can work on both sides of the strip but remember that one "page" will be used to stick the strip into the cover
4. Fit strip into cover by simply spreading some glue on one of the covers and pressing the book strip onto this. It usually works best if you stick the strip on the back of page 2 or 3 (rather than on the first or last pages). Open cover so that it opens "landscape" (rather than from side to side - see the picture). Then: **version a)** if you stick the bookstrip onto the cover closest to you you get a "normal" sort of book while **version b)** if you stick the bookstrip onto the upper cover, the lower bit will act as a floor and the whole thing will unfold and stand up to become an instant puppet backdrop for the little character you might have made in *Worksheet 1* or ready-made toy figures. (See the picture)



This is one of those activities that takes longer to explain than to do. Try it for yourself and see how easy it is. Experiment and try other ideas....

Stories Alive! Worksheet 15

Other quick books

Aim: *Worksheet 12* has one way of making a quick folding book. Here are several other ideas you might like to consider

1. Sticky storybooks: this activity is a useful quick one that produces an interesting, easy to handle or display booklet

Materials: for each "book", half a sheet of A4 card (cut lengthways to give a piece about 30cm x 10cm), pencils or crayons, double-sided sticky tape

Fold the card into thirds (you get an eye for the proportions quickly) and onto one section (or more if you want) add a strip of double-sided tape

Then look at this as a book of 6 pages and use it in conjunction with other activities in this set as a way of recording story ideas. Individual "pages" might include: a cover, a drawing of our hero and her name, drawings of useful things we found, a picture of her home...the double-sided tape allows for texture pictures with small found objects (it will only take small and dry things, and *"no live animals, or animal poo, please"*). Grass, leaves, mud or even flowers can be scrunched up (no, not the mud) and used as paint as well. Pictures show a sticky strip of flowers and feathers, the insides of 2 folded storybooks one of which has been coloured grass, leaves and mud and with the edges nibbled and cut to add shapes, while the other is a longer strip giving an 8-page "book".



2. A proper book

Materials: one sheet A6 card (postcard sized), 1 sheet A4 paper. Scissors, stapler, pencils, crayons

Process: fold the paper into eighths. Fold the card in half, Tucking the folded paper into the card, staple down the centre then cut through



the folds along the top and right hand sides and you have a little book. You could of course have cut all the paper into sheets first, or made one of those clever little fold-the-sheet-and-snip books, but young children can do a lot of this themselves

3. You might like to consider writing a book as a group

- give your book a cover - a design needs to show what the story is about
- for new stories, a few simple characters is plenty, children especially like stories about friends and families
- simple flaps and pop-ups add surprise to the story
- add texture, perhaps glue sand/bark/feathers to the page to make it more interesting
- use holes in pages to give a glimpse of what's over the page
- keep the language simple, with short sentences and repetition
- "Happy ever after" - how does the story finish (see *Worksheet 3 storymaps* for thoughts)
- do you need a back cover with simple blurb?

Stories Alive! Worksheet 16

Building stories with parents

Introduction

Within the *Stories Alive!* project we have been keen to find ways of involving parents in the storytelling and storymaking process. At the same time we recognise that parents often do not have a lot of time to spare or, sometimes the confidence, to participate. So in addition to more familiar strategies (inviting parents to stay on during a storyteller visit or to join us for a out-of-school, or after-school, storywalk), we have been looking for other directions to explore

1. Building on books: for activities where a book or booklet has been produced, try to keep one page blank so that this can be sent home with the child inviting the child to tell their story and, with their parents write or draw *"what happened next"* - either in an unfinished story or as the start of *"our hero's next adventure"*

2. Sending stories to and fro: take # 1 a bit further and after making a character in school (eg Worksheet 1) start a story in a book or on a map that can go back and forth several times adding instalments to the story, encouraging parents and children to work together, telling next instalments in school or at home as appropriate

3. Story sacks: if you are making story sacks (*Worksheet 8*) in school, perhaps invite each child to adopt a sack and ask them and their parents to find or make one thing that would help with that story. You might ask for something specific - *a plastic spoon?* - or leave it open (with provisos about size and weight?). **Make it a mission:** take time to print out a set of challenges, seal them in envelopes and let children take the mission home, open at home and return the next day, or whenever.

Missions might include: something that the hero would find useful

- a treasure the hero would like
- a danger our hero might meet
- a challenge
- a new friend

4. Favourite book bags: without making a full story sack, a challenge for home might be to find or make 3 or 4 things that would help a child tell their friends about their favourite book

5. Family sacks: a lot of nurseries already do family-tree activities, so how about inviting families to make their own Family Sack: with child and parent working together to put something that represents each family member into the sack, adding a family-map (rather than a story map (see *Worksheet 3*). This might grow over several weeks with children taking time to tell the story of their family back in

Nursery. You might need to decide how accurate this needs to be or if princesses and pirates start appearing, is that OK?

6. One thing: if you have used the 'three clues to build a story' activity (*Worksheet 5*) or some of the song/rhyming activities, you might simply ask parents to find something with their child as they come to school in the morning (hopefully walking): a twig, a stick, a leaf, a stone: anything might feed into a story. As a first activity maybe sit down in large or small groups and try building stories or finding songs (*Worksheets 9 and 11*) with the things children have found. Sing or tell or display on a board for parents at the end of the session?