

Hands On Literacy – 17th November 2012

“From Telling to Writing” The Journey Man (Johnny Gillett)

“There have been great societies that did not use the wheel, but there have been no societies that did not tell stories.”

Ursula K Le Guin, author

“Life itself is the most wonderful fairytale of all.”

Hans Christian Andersen, author

The need for storytelling amongst Third Culture Kids.

The resources for storytelling from Third Culture Kids.

Ideas, Exercises and Techniques

Imagined and Real Adventures

The use of children’s natural imagination and sense of play. The teacher leading the pupils on a physical adventure about the classroom or selected space. The teacher may have a number of key characters, locations or objects to incorporate, but leaves many of the decisions and descriptions to the pupil’s imagination. This can also be done in an outdoor space, which often fires the imagination even more, and can be linked to Artifacts and Hidden Objects (see below).

The key storytelling aspect of this however is bring the pupils back to a space where they can sit and hear their peers tell the group of what they saw/heard/experienced on the adventure.

Words Games

Various games involving any number of pupils and the development of an improvised story as a group together. The games below help the development of sentence structure and the use of connectives.

The One Word Story

Fortunately, Unfortunately

And, But, Because, So...

Story sack

A bag containing a number of item which can be produced randomly, or in a planned order, to provide stimulus for a story or help structure its narrative. The strength here is the hidden nature of the objects producing a sense of ‘what’s next’ in the pupils.

Artifacts and Hidden Objects

The use of genuine, or imagined, artifacts that require a story telling of their current state or where they came from. There is almost no end of how such objects can be used. Two possibilities:

1. *The artifacts could be hidden in a location to be found by the pupils who come up with stories to explain how they got there.*
2. *Pupils can create stories to try to sell them or trade them with others in the class.*

Costumes

The use of some special clothing and/or props to create a storytelling persona. The strength of costume is that it helps pupils to take on a character, to show new aspects to themselves, and this allows them to experiment or 'rise to the occasion'.

Finger puppets

Puppets in general work very similarly to costumes in that the pupils feels some of the attention has moved away from them and they can project their ideas and creativity onto another persona. Finger puppets work well considering small groups working in a classroom environment. Their small size allows better handling by Kindergarten children, but also creates a more intimate storytelling experience.

Story expansion

This is where a teacher leads the class in following on from a shared story, such as the group-reading of a book. The teacher may ask some questions about the choices of the characters or whether the end was entirely satisfying to the pupils. The teacher then leads the class through the story again – maybe with the book – but adds in their ideas for alternative narrative paths.

What else could the character have chosen to do?

How else could the character have responded?

What if they knew about XXX? How did they find out?

Such an approach can also look at alternative outcomes for historical events. The whole process is opening up creativity and options. It allows for experimentation with the narrative and encourages free thought before ideas are committed to paper – see the 'storyweb'.

Storiotypes

A simple exercise to create new and interesting characters, playing with traditional fairy-tale roles. This allows for a breaking down of stereotypes and some experimenting with archetypes. Children love the subversive nature of its random creativity.

Created by The Journey Man, see resources named 'Storiotypes'.

Journey/Story sticks

A Native American tradition of carrying objects, which relate to key events in one's life. The Journey Man's storystick holds objects, which are all key elements in the stories he could tell, object he has collected on his travels.

For pupils, the storystick can act as a way of nurturing symbolism and metaphor, as well as becoming a handy memory aid in storytelling.

Freeze frames

The distilling of a story into 4 distinct scenes. The pupils take a well-known story, one under study or their own creation, and choose the four most important events. They then create those scenes physically by standing in the position of the characters, representing the action of each chosen scene.

A Freeze Frame series can then be presented to a class using the Eyes Open/Eyes Shut technique, with pupils taking turns to tell the story of each scene as simply as possible.

A Four Scene Freeze Frame Series allows helps pupils to recognise a clear narrative and sort out many ideas into what is important. However, it also helps them to think through possibilities and options as they consider this physical representation of the story. A teacher could look at each scene with the class or group and discuss the thoughts and feelings being shown by the pupils as they represent the characters.

A great exercise is to have 'speech bubbles' and 'thought bubbles' made for each of the scenes. The pupils watching their peers presenting a Freeze Frame Series can then write something in the bubbles and come to hold them up to the frozen characters – becoming a live comic strip.

The Story Web

A method of seeing a story simply and as a whole in a diagrammatic form rather than as a linear narrative. Invented by the Journey Man, this method allows for viewing a story from many different perspectives as well as highlighting the links between the characters and fostering new ideas and interpretations. It can be used to create many new narratives that should be initially told in 4 simple scenes. This allows for a new basic linear narrative to write from.

Dates and Festivals

Four key times, perfect as a springboard or focus for storytelling and Creative Writing. All three have associated websites with support material, resources and ideas.

Singapore International Storytelling Festival

- generally beginning of September

<http://bookcouncil.sg/sisf>

UK National Storytelling Week

- Sat 26th January to Sat 2nd February 2013

www.sfs.org.uk/national-storytelling-week

World Book Day

- Thursday 7 March 2013

www.worldbookday.com

World Storytelling Day

- 20 March 2012

- This year's theme: "Fortune and Fate"

<http://worldstorytellingday.webs.com>

Online Resources

Marc Levitt's work in storytelling for Third Culture Kids

<http://www.ThirdCultureStories.com>

TES resource page for National Storytelling week

Flash cards, activity ideas, masks for storytelling, interactive whiteboard ideas, character creation guidelines, fun writing ideas...

<http://www.tes.co.uk/article.aspx?storyCode=6168796>

Tim Shepherd's Storytelling Resources for Storytellers

A great catalogue of links to almost everything you can imagine related to storytelling.

<http://www.timsheppard.co.uk/story/tellinglinks.html>

Society for Storytelling

The UK's leading support network for storytelling with links internationally. The SFS has produced a number of publications and provides support and resources for storytelling, in schools and in general.

<http://www.sfs.org.uk>

Australian Storytelling

The Australian support site and network for storytelling with many resources and ideas on their web pages.

<http://www.australianstorytelling.org.au>

THE JOURNEY MAN

Two books:

'Cheshire Folk Tales'

'Staffordshire Folk Tales'

(Published by The History Press)

'Catching & Creating' – INSET training in how to use your school premises for outdoor learning and story forming. Enabling a school to find its own story - hidden in the site, retold by teachers and enhanced/developed by the pupils.

The Journey Man

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