



What's your favorite story? Do you like to make up stories? Whose stories inspire you? What's YOUR personal story? Whoever you are, wherever you live, stories are all around you. Your own life is a story in progress! Shine a light on the living stories around you with this illuminating theme.

SETTING THE SCENE

Cozy Story Corner: What invites a story more than a soft chair in a living room warmed with firelight? Set up a story corner with an electric fireplace or Christmas fireplace prop. Bring in an overstuffed chair (downsized for young readers?), placing a braided rug in front, a reading lamp behind, and a small table beside it. Stack some books on the table; add a pair of reading glasses. A stuffed animal in the chair is welcoming. Hang a "Let Your Story Shine" poster on the wall, perhaps in a picture frame.

Story Tent: Set up a small tent and stock it with rolled-up sleeping bags and flashlights. Pin a handwritten sign to the outside of the tent. On the top of the sign, write "Bedtime: 9:00". Then cross that out with a large X and write below it "Story time: Anytime!"

Bulletin Board: Back a bulletin board with black or gray paper, or fabric. Title the board "Let Your Story Shine" in bright yellow letters, and add flashlight cutouts pointing lighter yellow beams in from each corner. Display stories written by kids, announce upcoming activities, or post lists of related titles from your collection.

Book Display: Display folk tales, fairy tales, biographies, or books about writing on stacks of similar books. Keep this format, changing genres occasionally.

Incentives: Gather theme bookmarks, inexpensive paperback books, small flashlights on ropes or key chains, or blank mini-journals (the last two available through www.orientaltrading.com) as incentives for accomplishing reading goals or as prizes for games or contests.



SHARING FAVORITE STORIES

We all have favorite stories.

Here are some ways to share stories, alone or with a buddy or team of fellow readers, actors, or storytellers:

- Read the story aloud, in one sitting or in segments or chapters.
- Read it aloud in two or more voices, alternating paragraphs or pages.
- Introduce it through a written or oral book report or booktalk.
- Assign roles and present a Reader's Theater or dramatic reading.
- Tell the story, using vocal and facial expression and gestures.
- Tell it using different voices and simple props or costumes (i.e. hats) to represent characters.
- Tell a story with an ethnic or multicultural flavor in alternating voices, translating the text into a second language or American Sign Language.
- Tell it while illustrating with drawings on a flip chart as you go.
- Present the story as a puppet play.
- Present it as a play using actors.
- Tell it as a flannel board story.
- Involve the audience in reciting repeated phrases or joining you in actions.
- Tell it as a "cut paper" story, folding and cutting paper into a surprise shape which you reveal at the end.
- Sing the story as a ballad.
- Read or recite a story poem.
- Present a dance that tells the story.
- Record the story in an audio or video format.



All-Time Favorite Stories: Poll kids for the titles and authors of their favorite story books. Some stories have been written many times; have kids choose a particular edition. Post the top ten vote-getters on a bulletin board and feature them in a story time or workshop.

Favorite Story Mural: Cover a long table with paper and create a mural of memorable storybook characters. Have children choose characters. Sketch the mural showing characters interacting in interesting ways and have kids complete the drawing and coloring. Be sure to label the characters, who may "look" different to different readers.

The Kids' Storytelling Club,

www.storycraft.com/index.html. This fun site explores how telling stories differs from reading stories, and helps kids create stories appropriate for telling, make crafts to aid in storytelling, and find opportunities to practice.

Where in the World? Not only do all cultures have rich traditions of stories and storytelling, but many stories and story themes show up in variations in many cultures. Share stories from different parts of the world or different versions of classic fairy tales like Cinderella, and have kids find the countries from which they come on a globe or world map.



Story Sharing Workshop:

Gather several workshop leaders who are skilled in different aspects of story sharing, as listed above. Open with a good storyteller sharing a folktale about stories to set the tone. *A Story, a Story* is a great choice. Split into groups to explore different modes of sharing stories. End with a program in which children share stories in different modes. Workshops on storytelling, puppet theater, and dramatic reading/Reader's Theater work well.

CREATING ORIGINAL STORIES

Anyone can write a story. We all have life experience to draw on; we all have imagination. Help kids start from where they are to develop both their understanding of what makes a good story and their skill in crafting one.

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Cumulative Story: Gather several children. Start with “Once upon a time ...” and add a sentence or two to begin a story. Then have kids take turns adding a few sentences to move the story forward. Make several rounds and bring the story to its end in about five minutes. See how creative you can be when you work together!

Wacky Web Tales, www.eduplace.com/tales. 3–6. Bookmark this site, which lets kids choose a story title and enter words as directed to create wacky tales.

The Parts of a Story: Read aloud *A Story, a Story*. Use the discussion guide on page 7 to explore the parts of a story: title, setting, characters, plot, tone, and theme. This will help kids appreciate and create stories.



And Then What? Invite kids to choose a favorite story and review it carefully. They will practice their creative writing skills by writing a short story about what happened to one or more of the characters after the original story ends.

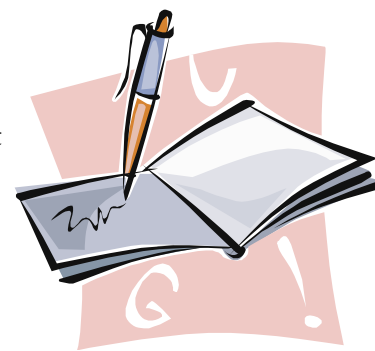
Character Combinations: Challenge kids to create and illustrate new stories by bringing together two fictional characters from different stories to share an original adventure. *The Magician's Boy* is an example of this sort of mixed-up characters story.

Story Starters: Introduce several books that provide intriguing story starters, like *The Mysteries of Harris Burdick*, and place them at a center with paper and pencils. Invite kids to get creative and let their stories shine!

Kids on the Net Creative Writing Site, www.kidsonthenet.com/create/index.cfm. This site lets kids read stories written by other kids, submit their own stories, play games, get advice from authors about writing, create “instant stories,” contribute to “Daisy Chain” stories, and more.

Creative Writing Contest: Challenge children to enter stories in a creative writing contest. Define categories,

like Animal Stories, Folk or Fairy Tales, Mysteries, Adventure Stories, Family Life, School Stories ... Enlist several judges, and consider the elements found on “The Parts of a Story” worksheet mentioned above, as well as more subjective criteria, as you choose winners. Award prizes.



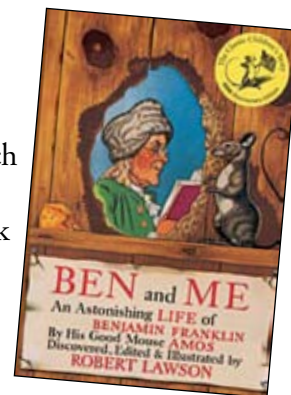
EXPLORING OTHERS' STORIES THROUGH BIOGRAPHIES

Some of the most inspiring stories are true stories of people's lives. Biographies entertain us and encourage us to dream big and be our best. Reading about our favorite authors increases our enjoyment and inspires us to create our own stories. Here are some ways to get the most out of biographies:

Reading Goals: Have kids visit the biography stacks and list five biographies they want to read.

My Favorite Writer: Display biographies and autobiographies of children's authors. Invite children to read about their favorites, and bring in original biographical sketches and portraits to feature on a bulletin board.

Biographical Interview: Match kids with partners and give each child a copy of the questionnaire on page 8. Kids will interview each other, take notes, and introduce their partners to the group. Check out the biographical interview of Jack Prelutsky at www.teacher.scholastic.com/write-wit/poetry/jack_meet.htm.



You're the Storyteller: Have kids choose an anecdote from a biography that gives a feel for the person and stands alone as a story with a beginning, middle, and end. They may use an excerpt as written or adapt an

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interesting event into a stand-alone story. Rather than memorizing it, they should study it to understand the sequence, the point of the story, and interesting details, and practice using appropriate expressions and gestures. When they're ready, have them tell the anecdote.

Biographical Fiction: Introduce the idea of biographical fiction. Tomie de Paola has written many books of autobiographical fiction. In *Ben & Me*, a mouse tells his fictional version of the life of Ben Franklin. Have kids think about what a mouse would see if it befriended them and kept them company for a week. They will write a short story, told from the mouse's point of view, which describes the friendship and some adventure the child and mouse share.

WRITING YOUR OWN "STORY IN PROGRESS"

There's one subject about which each of us is the ultimate expert—ourselves! No one else can tell our stories the way we can. All children have stories to tell about their daily lives, their feelings, hopes, and dreams. Here are some ways to get kids thinking about autobiography, focusing on the "stuff of stories" to be found in their lives, and sharing their unique stories effectively.

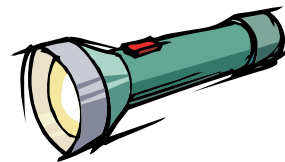
Read-Aloud Titles: Read aloud *Marianthe's Story* and/or *In English, of Course*. Discuss the challenges these girls face as they try to tell their stories, and how they manage to communicate in spite of them. What can we learn from them about how to tell our own stories?

Personal Journals: Provide or have children bring spiral notebooks or blank books to serve as personal journals. Provide a variety of craft materials. Kids will decorate their journals to express their personal tastes and interests. Challenge them to write in their journals daily. Set a goal of using a week's worth of journal entries as the basis for an autobiographical story.

Journal Stories: Build the journal craft activity above into a story time or booktalk featuring books about journals or written in journal format. Include silly fantasy like *Diary of a Worm* along with more realistic titles like *Things Will Never Be the Same*.

Shadowgraphs: This fun project literally shines a light on children and helps them think about themselves as unique individuals with their own stories.

- Find a dark room for drawing silhouettes.
- Tape a large sheet of white paper to the wall for each portrait.
- Seat the subject sideways on a chair in front of the paper, so his or her profile faces the artist.
- Aim a flashlight at the subject's head to cast a shadow on the paper. Adjust the positions of the paper, subject, and flashlight to get a clear profile shadow. Secure the flashlight in place.
- Carefully trace the shadow down to the shoulder, including small details. Bits of flyaway hair or natural irregularities of the face make the silhouettes interesting and personal!
- Cut out the silhouette carefully. Mount the white silhouette on black paper.
- Have children write notes on their silhouettes about themselves, their interests, talents, and aspirations.



A variation of this idea is to trace around the child's whole body, cut out the "shadow," have the child color in the face, and write an autobiographical story on the rest of the body. Display the resulting creations!



Words from Pictures: Have children bring three to five photos of themselves doing interesting things, alone or with friends or family members. Then follow these steps:

- Number each photo on the back or make a composite photocopy sheet of each child's photos and number each photo.
- Have kids write a very brief caption for each photo, using the first person (i.e. "Fishing with my Dad").
- On separate paper, have kids write three sentences describing each photo, numbered to match the pictures, also in first person.
- Which picture was easiest to write about? Kids will use that photo and their sentences as the basis for a one-page autobiographical story.

Let Your Story Shine

My Story Right Now: Challenge kids to use what they've learned to write a three- to five-page autobiography. If kids still have trouble seeing "the stuff of stories" in their own lives, read *Nothing Ever Happens on 90th Street*. If nothing else, it will make them laugh and help them see the seeds of stories around them every day.

My Story Later: Invite kids to imagine the things they'd like to experience and achieve during their lives. They will write biographical sketches about themselves, as they hope people will think of them after they've died. Who would they like to tell their story when that time comes? They may write from the perspective of that person, if they wish.



FOODS/RECIPES

Favorite Stories about Food: Find creative ways to share several stories that feature food in the plot or as characters, like *Runaway Pancake*, *Green Eggs and Ham*, or *Blueberries for Sal*. Then serve a snack of featured foods.

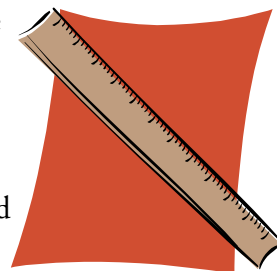
Characters' Favorites: When children share their story creations or autobiographical writings, invite them to bring samples of their own or their fictional characters' favorite foods and add a "potluck snacks" element to the program.

MATH ACTIVITY

Stories Galore: How many story adventures are waiting to be discovered in your library? Have kids use math to find out.

- Form teams of four.
- Give each team a 12" ruler.

- Have each team find the picture book section and measure a 12" shelf length within it. They will count the picture books in that section, then use the ruler to find the total length of shelves occupied by picture books. Multiply the length of picture book shelf space by the number of books in their sample to estimate the total number of picture books in the collection.
- Use the same process in the children's fiction section.
- Do the same with fairy tales/folktales in nonfiction (Dewey 398.2).
- Finally, do the same in children's biographies.
- Have each team add its four section subtotals for an estimated total of stories waiting to be read.

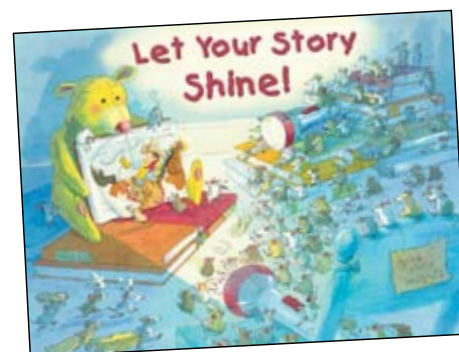


Collect results from each team. Talk about the range of results and why they are different. Discuss why averaging final team results could produce a more accurate estimate.

SPECIAL EVENTS

Flashlight Story Time: Host a story time using flashlights as your primary source of light. This could be an evening program, with kids encouraged to wear pajamas and bring blankets. Use fun or scary bedtime stories. The title poem from Jack Prelutsky's *My Parents Think I'm Sleeping* would be a good opener.

Let Your Story Shine Celebration: Combine activities from the sections above in a grand finale to your celebration of stories and storytelling. Feature different ways of sharing stories and include kids' original creative and autobiographical writing. Recognize contest winners and children who met reading goals, and shine an actual spotlight on each as you do so!



“LET YOUR STORY SHINE” RESOURCES

- *Akira to Zoltan: Twenty-Six Men Who Changed the World* by Cynthia Chin-Lee. Charlesbridge Publishing, 2006. ISBN 1570915792. 3–6. See also the companion volume, *Amelia to Zora: Twenty-Six Women Who Changed the World*.
- *The Amazing Paper Cuttings of Hans Christian Andersen* by Beth Wagner Brust. Houghton Mifflin, 2003. ISBN 0618311092. 4–6.
- *Ben and Me: An Astonishing Life of Benjamin Franklin by His Good Mouse Amos* by Robert Lawson. Little, Brown Young Readers, 1988. ISBN 0316517305. 3–6.
- *The Book of Story Beginnings* by Kristin Kladstrup. Candlewick Press, 2008. ISBN 0763634190. 4–6.
- *Diary of a Worm* by Doreen Cronin. Joanna Cotler Books, 2003. ISBN 006000150X. P–3.
- *Gooney Bird Greene* by Lois Lowry. Yearling, 2004. ISBN 0440419603. 2–4.
- *How to Write Your Life Story* by Ralph Fletcher. Collins, 2007. ISBN 0060507691. 4–6.
- *In English, of Course* by Josephine Nobisso. Gingerbread House, 2003. ISBN 0940112086. K–4.
- *The Jumbo Book of Drama* by Deborah Dunleavy. Kids Can Press, 2004. ISBN 1553370082. 2–6.
- *Lives of the Athletes: Thrills, Spills (and What the Neighbors Thought)* by Kathleen Krull. Harcourt Brace, 1997. 3–6. Also see other books in this fun Lives of the ... series
- *Look at My Book: How Kids Can Write & Illustrate Terrific Books* by Loreen Leedy. Holiday House, 2005. ISBN 0823419592. 1–4.
- *Make Your Own Puppets & Puppet Theaters* by Carolyn Carreiro. Williamson Books, 2005. ISBN 0824967704. 3–6.
- *The Magician's Boy* by Susan Cooper. Aladdin, 2006. ISBN 1416915559. 2–4.
- *Marianthe's Story: Painted Words and Spoken Memories* by Alikei. Greenwillow Books, 1998. ISBN 0688156614. K–3.
- *My Parents Think I'm Sleeping* by Jack Prelutsky. HarperTrophy, 2008. ISBN 0060537221. K–3.
- *The Mysteries of Harris Burdick* by Chris Van Allsburg. Houghton Mifflin, 1984. ISBN 0395353939. K–6.
- *Noodlehead Stories* by Martha Hamilton. August House, 2000. ISBN 0874835852. 3–6.
- *Nothing Ever Happens on 90th St.* by Roni Schotter. Scholastic, 1999. ISBN 0531071367. 2–4.
- *Presenting Reader's Theater: Plays and Poems to Read Aloud* by Caroline Feller Bauer. H. W. Wilson, 1987. ISBN 0824207483. Use with 2–6.
- *A Story, a Story* by Gail E. Haley. Simon & Schuster, 1988. ISBN 0689712014. K–3.
- *Storytelling for the Fun of It* by Vivian Dubrovin. Storycraft Publishing, 1999. ISBN 0963833936. 4–6.
- *A Tale of Tales* by Tony Mitton. Corgi Children's, 2007. ISBN 0552548871. 1–5.
- *Things Will Never Be the Same* by Tomie dePaola. Puffin, 2004. ISBN 0142401552. 2–4.
- *We Were There, Too!: Young People in U.S. History* by Phillip Hoose. Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 2001. ISBN 0374382522. 4–6.
- *Writing Magic: Creating Stories that Fly* by Gail Carson Levine. Collins, 2006. ISBN 0060519606. 4–6.

The Parts of a Story

Stories, like everything else, are made up of parts. When we read or listen to stories, we usually don't think about what goes into them. But every good story has each of these parts. Start by reading *A Story, a Story* to use as an example. After discussion, challenge kids to identify these elements in other stories.

TITLE. What is the title of this story? (*A Story, a Story*) The title of a story gets our attention, and may hint at what the story is about. In this case, it tells us that this story is about stories. The repetition in the title is another hint. Many folk tales, especially African tales, use repetition to create an interesting pace and rhythm.

SETTING. The setting of a story is when and where it takes place. What is the setting of this story? (Africa, long ago before there were stories on earth) We expect different things from a story set long ago and far away than we do from one set here and now, in the world that's familiar to us.

CHARACTERS. Characters are the people, animals, or things that act like people in the story. There are usually only one or two main characters in a story, but there may be many minor characters. Who are the main characters in this story? (Ananse, the Sky God) Who are the minor characters? (The leopard, Mmboro, and Mmoatia) Characters carry out the action in the story.

PLOT. Plot is the series of events and actions in the story—what happens. Every plot has a beginning, a middle, and an end. Who can tell, in a few words, the beginning of this story? (Ananse goes to buy stories from the Sky God, who tells him what he must do to earn them.) The middle? (Ananse tries to complete the tasks to earn the stories.) The end? (Ananse succeeds and brings stories to the world.) There are many kinds of stories—mysteries, fairy tales, science fiction, sports stories ... But they all have plots with beginnings, middles, and ends.

TOPE: Tone is the overall feeling of the story. Is it sad? Silly? Exciting? Serious? Does it make you think hard about something, or try to warn you of danger? How would describe the tone of this story? (Responses will vary. Kids might say it's exciting, or that it makes them think about how other things they take for granted first came into the world.)

THEME. The theme is the main idea or message of a story. It's what the writer or storyteller wanted to tell us through the story. People may get different ideas from the same story. What are some ideas you might take from this story? (Responses will vary. Children might say that stories are so important that we needed a hero to bring them to us. Others might think Ananse shows that we can achieve our goals by being clever ...)



Biographical Interview Questionnaire

Take turns interviewing each other. Take good notes on the back of this sheet.
You will use them to introduce your partner to the group, sharing highlights from his or her life.

1. What is your full name? Are you named after anyone? Do you have nicknames?

2. Where and when were you born? Describe your favorite birthday so far.

3. Who's in your family? Describe each family member in a few words. Pets, too! Do you have a favorite relative?

4. Who are your best friends? Are any of them much older or younger than you? Describe each in a few words.

5. Do you play sports, take music lessons, study dance, act in plays, or have other structured activities?
Explain what you do and how you feel about it.

6. What is your favorite thing to do when you have free time? Do you collect anything?

7. What's your favorite subject in school? Your least favorite?

8. What's your favorite book? Movie? Color? Food? TV show? Computer game?

9. What career do you think you'd like to have someday? What one thing would
you most like to accomplish? _____

10. What's one interesting thing about you that most people don't know?

