

# CREATE A STORY

## **Storytelling is one of our oldest traditions.**

Discuss with students why they think storytelling has lasted? Why do humans tell stories?

We have explored good storytellers (see 'What Makes a Great Storyteller') **but what makes a good story?**

## **LET'S WARM UP THOSE STORYTELLING SKILLS**

**WARM-UP ACTIVITY IDEA ONE | Conductor Story** - Create a small chorus of storytellers and a conductor to lead the performance.

When the conductor points at a chorus member they start telling a story. The conductor can choose someone else from the chorus at any time to pick up and continue the story.

If the story does not make sense, or a word is repeated or it simply takes too long to continue then that person is out. Continue until there is one reigning storyteller champion.

OPTION: Some may recognise this game as 'Die-Die-Die' and the gory death aspect, of course, makes it all the more appealing to students. Here's how it works: When someone messes up their turn, the audience all shout 'die-die-die' and the player must die in a dramatic and hilarious way. This just adds another fun (albeit ridiculous) layer for the students.

OPTION for ONLINE LEARNING: You can rework this game in a video conference call with you class. You could do this in the CHAT option of the call or record it as it is happening live – perhaps write out students' names on a piece of card and hold up the name of whoever is taking over the story.

## **WARM-UP ACTIVITY IDEA TWO | 60 Second Monologue**

This warm-up or introductory activity is a good way to encourage students to feel confident about performing or speaking solo. You may prefer to split the class into smaller groups, so students don't feel too intimidated. Once they gain confidence in a smaller group, you may then like to extend their challenge and ask them to present in front of the whole class.

Write a series of subjects / topics on slips of paper. Your first volunteer will choose a topic from a hat and then start a 60-second monologue. They should not have a lot, if any, preparation time but instead, simply launch into a monologue. The only rules are that they must make sense and should aim to speak about the topic for the entire 60-seconds.

OPTION for ONLINE LEARNING: Another activity which can be performed for the camera during an online video conference call with your class.

### Ideas for the 60 Second Monologue:

Daylight Saving Time	Hamburgers	A clock
Chess	Flamingoes	Helicopters
The carwash	Newspapers	Washing dishes
Ladybugs	Table Tennis	Writing Letters
My nose	The rubbish bin	Lobsters
Billionaires	Tattoos	Ice-cream headaches
Porridge	Nightmares	Thunderstorms
A mousetrap	Bees	Paper Clips
Pop Stars	Rocking chairs	Sleeping In
Playgrounds	Five cent pieces	A hairbrush

### A GREAT STORYTELLER NEEDS A GREAT IMAGINATION!

Drama games will help students tap into their imaginations, make up stories and use verbal and non-verbal communication skills.

#### DRAMA GAME | It Fell From The Sky!

Ask students to walk around the space. Prompt them to move in a certain way (a little like the 'Walk this way...' activity) and side-coach them to ensure they are undertaking this as a solo activity (i.e not distracted by anyone else in the room). An example of the teacher's direction for this game could be as follows:

*"You are walking home from school. You've had a really horrible, terrible day. And now, on top of all that, you are being forced to walk home. It is hot and you are really annoyed ... Suddenly, you notice something in the sky. Stop and look. It is falling, falling, closer and closer towards you. Reach out your hands and grab it. Now freeze!"*

The students should all freeze with the object that fell from the sky. Whilst they are frozen, ask each student in turn what they caught.

OPTION for ONLINE LEARNING: Even though you may not be able to be in the same room together, there is no reason you can't get students up and moving around in this drama game. You can side-coach from the computer screen.

OPTION for ONLINE LEARNING: This could be a good starting point for a longer, imaginative storytelling piece. Use the teacher directions above as a prompt for a writing activity or an improvisation that students can develop on their own – perhaps they could record and send in their ideas rather than present them 'live' via a video conference call.

## EVERYONE HAS A STORY

### ACTIVITY | Magic Mirror (worksheet on next page for print-out)

Magic Mirror is a technique you can use to develop your students' confidence as it provides the opportunity for them to practice speaking in a relaxed and nonthreatening environment.

You may like to use the Magic Mirror worksheet (see next page) however, a blank piece of paper will also suffice.

On this page, students are asked to create a picture to illustrate a story that they will tell their peers.

This is a story of personal importance. Something they are keen to share with the class and / or their friends. The drawing stage gives students preparation time and allows them to think about what they will say in advance.

- Ask the students to picture, in their minds, a time in their life / a memorable story from their past.
- On the Magic Mirror / blanks page ask students draw a picture to illustrate the story.
- Give the students some time to work on their drawing. Make sure you give students enough time to think about their story as they draw. (This is an important preparation stage as the students will be thinking about their story as they draw.) Remind students that it is not important for them to be able draw well.
- Monitor the class as they draw. Ask questions.
- Some students may be reluctant to draw anything. Encourage them to take part, reminding them that they do not have to be very artistic. If they still refuse to draw, suggest that they put down some key words and phrases in their Magic Mirror to illustrate their story.
- The topic of the story can be specified to fit with the curriculum or an area of inquiry you are you currently working (e.g. festivals and celebrations, family).
- Before students share their stories with a partner, ask them to consider the questions an active listener may want to ask the storyteller. You may like to model this activity by presenting your own Magic Mirror and encouraging students to ask questions in order to discover more information as you tell your story.

Questions could include:

- Who was there? / Who were you with?
- Where were you? / Where did it happen?
- When did this happen?
- Why were you there? Why did it happen?
- How did you feel?
- What did you say? What did you do? What were you doing in the picture?

Explain to students they are going to share their Magic Mirrors with a partner or small group.

At this stage students will actively listen to the stories presented and are encouraged to ask questions (about the story and the picture). The storyteller may use their Magic Mirror as a prop in their storytelling.

Allow students the time to tell their story to different partners / small groups. Repeating the story will build confidence and assist in enhancing the story itself (adding more detail, identifying and fixing areas which do not make sense to the listener etc.).

Once students have shared with story with at least three different people, bring the group back together to discuss the stories they heard and the moments they most enjoyed.

Discussion points could include:

- Whose story was the most dramatic or exciting?
- Whose story had the best ending? What was it?
- Which story had the saddest ending?
- Which was your favourite story? Why?
- Did anyone learn something new about their classmate?

OPTION for ONLINE LEARNING: This activity could be easily adapted for online learning. Send students the Magic Mirror and instruction and have them prepare for their story at home. Create small groups via online conferencing to share their stories with each other. Come back together as a large group to discuss what they learned and discovered.



## ACTIVITY TWO | Tell Me a Story

This activity is much like Magic Mirror in its aims and objectives, however it is targeted at older primary students (it could also work very well with secondary students).

Give students some thinking / reflection time. Ensure this time is directed and side-coach students through this moment. Ask students to lay on the floor and close their eyes. It may be useful to play some orchestral / classical music to help them with this thinking time. Instruct students to think of an event, a memory – either their own story or a family story they would like to share. It can be anything.

If students seem to be confused at this point, you could direct them to thoughts from their life about:

- A favourite birthday
- A family outing or holiday
- A time you were scared
- Significant celebrations
- Something funny that happened
- A story from your grandparent

As students are reflecting, encourage them to really ‘see’ the setting and the characters of this story.

After reflection, ask students to find a partner and share their story. Explain that this is not a polished performance or story – it is simply a starting point. A chance to explore the stories we have within us.

Once both partners have shared their story, regroup as a class and ask for questions a listener may want to ask the storyteller. Were things not clear? Did you want some more details or information? Consider the ‘Who, What, Where, When, Why and How’ of the story.

Questions may include:

- Who was there? / Who were you with?
- Where were you? / Where did it happen?
- When did this happen?
- Why were you there? Why did it happen?
- How did you feel?
- What did you say? What did you do?

Record these questions somewhere so students can refer them to when listening to their next partner.

Ask students to retell the story to a different partner. This time, the partner can ask questions during the storytelling to gain more information / details / clarification from the storyteller.

After this round of sharing stories ask students to reflect on the story they are telling.

Ask students to consider why they choose to tell that particularly story? Why, out of all the stories they could have told, did they choose that one? What is the objective of your story?

Record and collect the responses.

Now, ask students to tell their story again but, this time, really consider why they are telling – what is the **purpose** of the story?

Once they have shared their story, ask students to reflect on the experience as both storyteller and listener.

- What was the most difficult part of telling your story?
- What was the most enjoyable part of telling your story?
- If you were to perform this story to a large audience what would you change?
- What would you keep?
- What did you learn about storytelling?
- As a listener, what did you enjoy? What did you not enjoy?
- As a listener, were there elements which made some stories more enjoyable to listen to than others?
- Did you learn something new about the storyteller?

### **ACTIVITY THREE | Shoebox Story**

The shoebox story is a good introduction for students as they embark on sharing personal stories with the class. It also encourages students to consider how they could use props to enhance their storytelling.

Every student will need a shoebox. Students should decorate the shoebox to reflect their personality and style.

Inside the shoebox, students will need to place three personal mementos. Ensure students choose mementos that come with a story – something the students can speak to or about.

Ask students to consider the 'Ingredients of a Good Storyteller' (in 'What Makes a Great Storyteller') to enhance their presentations.

If you are teaching face to face, ask students to stand and make two lines facing each other (circle would work, too). Everyone should have a partner. Rotate one line after each storytelling presentation so that students are matched with new partners. Students may talk about the same or a different item with each new partner. Presentations should last no longer than one minute each.

**OPTION for ONLINE LEARNING:** Students can present to each other or the whole group over video conferencing. Alternatively, they could perform their story to their families at home, who may be able to record these and send them in, along with a photo of their shoebox.

## ACTIVITY FOUR | Object Story (an extension activity)

You may like to extend the shoebox story activity for older students.

Objects of all kinds carry personal and cultural stories across time and place. Students will need to study their object / memento and begin to map out the story. Prompt students with the following questions:

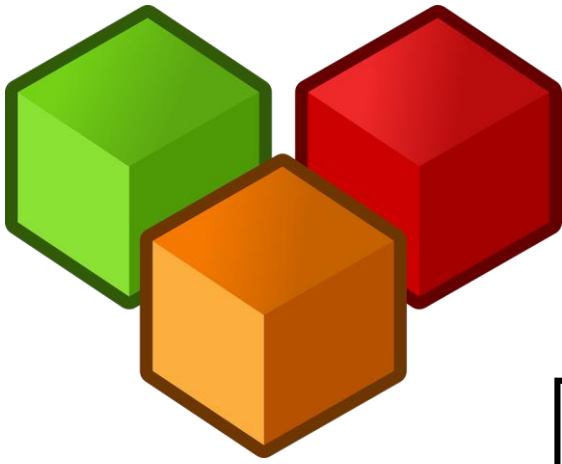
- What is the object you chose?
- How would you describe your object to someone who knows nothing about it?
- Describe how it looks (colour, shape), feels (texture), smells, sounds etc.
- Who are the people or things associated with your object? (characters)
- When and where does the story of your object take place? (setting)
- Why is the object so significant to you?

Encourage students to really reflect on the object/s they have chosen for their shoebox.

You may like to use the Object Stories Worksheet (next page) to help students arrange their thoughts and ideas about the object.

As in the Shoebox Story activity, students can present their Object Stories to the class or in small groups or record a performance for family members at home.





# OBJECT STORY

**1** What is special about your object?



**2** What person, place or thing is connected to your object?



**3** Why is this object so special to you?

