

Using stories

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Introduction

This session helps teachers explore how stories can be used in class with primary or lower secondary aged pupils. The ideas can be easily used without access to storybooks or computers; the focus is on the teacher reading aloud a printed story or telling a story orally and designing motivating tasks around this.

- In part one you will be teaching a demonstration lesson for your teachers, using them to play the part of the pupils.
- In part two you will ask the teachers to reflect on the lesson and what was done and why at different stages.
- In part three the teachers will brainstorm reasons for using stories with younger learners and do some reading about this to compare with their ideas.
- In part four teachers will work together to think of more ideas that they can use to exploit stories with their classes. They will then look at a story and decide how they could exploit it with their pupils.
- Finally you will give teachers some articles to read or tell them where they can access them on the teaching English website.

The materials referred to from the teachingEnglish website are:

- Miko the monkey <http://www.teachingenglish.org.uk/try/plans/miko/miko.shtml>
- Pictures from the story on the LearnEnglish website (pages 2,3,4,5)
<http://www.learnenglish.org.uk/kframe.asp?menu=menu/kids/menu.html&content=/kids/stories/story.asp?story=69>
- Storytelling
http://www.teachingenglish.org.uk/try/resourcetry/resource_activities.shtml#short
- Storytelling – benefits and tips
<http://www.teachingenglish.org.uk/think/literature/storytelling.shtml>
- Storytelling in young learner classes
<http://www.teachingenglish.org.uk/think/methodology/storytelling.shtml>
- Creating a framework for writing
http://www.teachingenglish.org.uk/try/writetry/writing_activites.shtml#framework

Trainer's notes

Part one: The demonstration lesson

Stage 1. Write the session objectives on the board or display them on an OHT.

Objectives

- To provide you with some practical ideas on how to exploit stories in the classroom
- To consider the benefits of using stories in the language classroom

Explain that the session will begin with a demonstration lesson, followed by a discussion and then group work to generate further ideas about how stories can be used in class.

Tip: Using trainees to act as pupils in demonstration lessons helps them to experience a lesson from the learner's point of view. It is an excellent way of showing how teaching ideas work in practice. You can ask all of the teachers to act as pupils or just some of them with the rest watching and taking notes. Alternatively, if you have the opportunity, you could demonstrate the lesson to the teachers with real pupils, or show them a video of a class.

Stage 2. Tell the teachers that for the purposes of the demonstration lesson they are a class of nine, ten or eleven year old elementary level pupils.

Write on the board and play hangman to get the teachers to guess the word *monkey*. Stick up a picture of monkeys in the middle of the board and then elicit from them what they know about monkeys. Prompt them as necessary. Write up their ideas in short sentences around the picture. For example:

- They are funny.
- They are like people.
- They are noisy.
- They swing from trees.
- They eat bananas.
- They live in the jungle.
- Etc.

Stage 3. Now show the teachers Worksheet A from Miko the monkey

<http://www.teachingenglish.org.uk/try/plans/miko/miko.shtml>

Tell them they have to read the sentences about monkeys and decide if they think they are true or false. Give out the worksheets and tell them they can work in pairs.

As they are working, go round and stick short texts about monkeys around the room.

The loudest animal on Earth is the blue whale. It is also the largest animal on Earth. The second loudest animal is the Howler Monkey which lives in South American rainforests.

The Mandrill is a large, noisy, and ferocious monkey that lives in Western Africa. The mandrill is the biggest monkey and the most colourful mammal. It is closely related to the baboon. It is primarily terrestrial (it lives on the ground) but it sleeps in trees. The mandrill walks on all four legs. They live in troops of up to 50 mandrills and they walk up to ten kilometres each day. These intelligent primates are endangered due to loss of habitat.

Habitat:

Monkeys live in forests, grasslands, high plains, and mountain habitats. Many monkeys are arboreal (they spend most of their lives in trees); others like baboons and macaques live mostly on the ground.

Diet:

Monkeys eat leaves, fruit, seeds, nuts, grass, roots, eggs, insects, spiders and small mammals.

Monkeys are primates, an order of intelligent mammals that also includes apes and people. There are about 125 species of monkeys. A group of monkeys is called a troop.

The loudest monkey is the Howler Monkey. The most acrobatic is the Spider Monkey.

Anatomy:

Adult monkeys range from about 0.6 to 1.2 metres long. Most also have a long tail – up to almost 0.9 metre long. They weigh from 113g (the pygmy marmoset) to 45kg (the mandrill). Monkeys have long arms, and five fingers on their hands and five toes on each foot.

Barbary ape

A monkey, not an ape. The only non-human primate to live in Europe. Barbary apes have yellow-grey to grey-brown fur. Their under-parts are paler, and their faces are dark. They do not have a tail. Native to northwestern Africa, introduced to Gibraltar. Latin name: *macaca sylvana*.

The pygmy marmoset is the smallest living monkey in the world. It is only 35cm long, including the tail, and weighs about 80-100g. It lives in the tropical rain forests of South America. It has a tawny coat sprinkled with grey and its tail is ringed.

Monkeys are divided into two groups, Old World monkeys (from Africa, Asia and Europe) and New World monkeys (from the Americas).

New World monkeys

- live in south and central America
- are usually smaller
- live in trees

Old World monkeys

- live in Africa, Asia and Europe
- are larger
- live in trees or on the ground

- The information above was adapted from information on <http://www.enchantedlearning.com/coloring/m3.shtml> and <http://www.bbc.co.uk/nature/wildfacts/factfiles/218.shtml>

When the teachers have decided on their answers, elicit from them their ideas. There will probably be some disagreement - don't tell them if their answers are right or wrong yet.

Then tell them to stand up and move around the room and look at the texts on the wall. They contain the answers to these questions so they can check their answers.

When they have done this, tell them to sit down again and go through the answers.

Stage 4. Tell the teachers that shortly they are going to listen to a story about a monkey. It's a story about a little monkey who has seven sisters and brothers. Display the four pictures from the story on the board, but not in the correct order. Ask the teachers to look at the pictures and in groups of three or four make up a story based on them. They should do this orally – they don't need to write it down.

When they are ready, ask them to tell their stories to the group.

Stage 5. Ask the teachers to listen to the story called Miko the Monkey and see if it is similar or different to the stories they made up themselves.

Read the story to the teachers, using eye contact, facial expression, gestures and your voice to express drama, sadness etc. (See Performance skills in Storytelling - benefits and tips Paula Stoye)

<http://www.teachingenglish.org.uk/think/literature/storytelling.shtml>

After you have read it, ask them what was similar to or different from their own stories. Ask them which order the pictures should be in and ask one of them to come up and rearrange them on the board.

Stage 6. Hand out copies of the text to the teachers. Read the story aloud again, pausing every so often for them to fill in words.

Tip: Tell the teachers that with a real class of pupils you would encourage them to ask questions about any parts they didn't understand, encouraging pupil to pupil explanation. You could then ask the pupils to read through it again in groups or pairs but since they are teachers you are not going to do that.

Stage 7. Now tell them to turn over their copies of the text. You are going to read out some statements about the story, which may be true or false. If they are true the teachers should stand up; if they are false they should stay sitting. Read out the statements from Worksheet C.

Now tell the teachers to look again at the story and in pairs to make up two or three more true or false statements about the story.

They then read out their statements and the other teachers stand up or stay sitting as appropriate.

Stage 8. Tell the teachers that with a real class you may continue with some further activities. For example:

- Pupils complete gapped summary of story (Worksheet D) and wordsearch (worksheet E) from Miko the Monkey.
<http://www.teachingenglish.org.uk/try/plans/miko/miko.shtml>
- Pupils act out the story in groups. One is the narrator (a student good at reading) Others act the parts of the different monkeys. Add more dialogue.
- Pupils prepare a storyboard of the story. (i.e. they draw pictures to illustrate the main events of the story and write a summary of the story underneath each picture)

Ask the teachers if they enjoyed the lesson. Now they are going to be back in their role as teachers.

Part two: Reflection on the demonstration lesson

Stage 9. Elicit from teachers what age / level they think the lesson they did was appropriate for.

Possible answer: This particular story and process would probably be most suitable for children of 9 – 10 years old who already have an elementary level of English.

Point out that stories can however be used with younger children and with children with less English. Why? Because the story itself engages the children, they don't worry about not understanding everything (young children are used to this in their daily lives!) Also it is easy to adapt the tasks we use to the age and language level of the children. Also point out that you can use stories that are designed for slightly younger children successfully with older EFL learners too.

Invite comments from teachers who have already used stories with their classes.

Stage 10. Ask the teachers to think back to the demonstration lesson and elicit from them the different stages and aims of the different activities. Either give them a partially

completed grid for this or elicit from them the stages and aims and slowly reveal the completed grid on OHT. Then give them a copy of this to keep.

Example lesson plan

	Activity	Aim
Pre story-telling activities	Hangman	To establish topic of the lesson in a fun way, to get pupils' attention
	Brainstorming ideas about monkeys	To draw on pupils' general knowledge, to create interest, to set the scene, to revise or feed in some useful language on the topic
	True/false facts about monkeys - prediction and wall crawl reading activity	To draw on and increase pupils' knowledge of the natural world (cross curricular links), to encourage reading for specific information in semi authentic texts, to allow movement in the classroom
	Story prediction from pictures	To encourage creativity, to encourage co-operation, to provide opportunity for oral fluency practice, to establish some vocabulary or phrases that may come up in the story, to provide motivation to listen to the story
While story-telling activities	Listening to and joining in with reading the story	To provide practice in understanding a whole story (extended discourse), to focus pupils on meaning and understanding, to engage them fully, to encourage awareness of sound/spelling relationships, to encourage memorisation of chunks of language.
After story-telling activities	True false questions	To check that pupils have understood the story, to enable them to use some of the language from the story, to encourage them to think about the story, to provide opportunity for fun and movement.
	Gapfill and wordsearch	To recycle some of the key language items from the story.
	Acting out the story or preparing a storyboard	To encourage spoken or written fluency, to encourage dramatic expression, to encourage interpretation of the story through drawing and retelling, to provide further practice of key language, to encourage memorisation of language chunks.

Part three: Discussion and reading – why use stories?

Stage 11. Ask the teachers to brainstorm in groups what the advantages are in using stories in the classroom with younger learners.

Tip: Getting teachers to think about a topic and discuss their ideas before they read is good for several reasons. As well as tuning them into thinking about the topic and letting them relate what they already know to new ideas, it caters for teachers with different levels of experience or knowledge about the area. If they have a lot of ideas the brainstorming stage will go on longer; if they have fewer ideas you can introduce the reading sooner.

Hand out or display:

- The first part of **Storytelling**
http://www.teachingenglish.org.uk/try/resourcetry/resource_activities.shtml#short
- The first part of **Storytelling benefits and tips**
<http://www.teachingenglish.org.uk/think/literature/storytelling.shtml>
- The first part of **Storytelling in young learner classes**
<http://www.teachingenglish.org.uk/think/methodology/storytelling.shtml>

Give the teachers time to read through these.

Alternatively you could divide the teachers into three groups and give them just one of the texts to read: group A reads text one, group B reads text two and group C reads text three. Then regroup them (into groups of ABC, ABC, ABC etc) and let them compare what they have read.

Tip: Giving different groups just one out of several texts to read is a technique called *jigsaw reading*. It is useful in training when you don't want the teachers to spend a lot of time reading in the session but more time on exchanging ideas orally. Make sure that you organise the regrouping stage very clearly so that the teachers know who to go and talk with.

Stories can be a very versatile and powerful teaching tool

- Stories are fun and motivational
- Stories allow students to be creative and imaginative
- Stories give students a sense of achievement
- Story telling gives students a chance to practice oral fluency and extended discourse
- Stories introduce language in a comprehensible and meaningful way
- Stories are authentic
- Listening to stories can develop important skills such as prediction, guessing, hypothesising, and message decoding
- Story telling can provide valuable cultural input
- If the students know the story in their L1 they can use this knowledge to help them understand or tell the story in their L2
- There are lots of different fun activities that spin off from stories

(from **Storytelling** Fiona Lawrie)

http://www.teachingenglish.org.uk/try/resourcetry/resource_activities.shtml#short

What can storytelling offer?

Children have an innate love of stories. Stories create magic and a sense of wonder at the world. Stories teach us about life, about ourselves and about others. Storytelling is a unique way for pupils to develop an understanding, respect and appreciation for other cultures, and can promote a positive attitude to people from different lands, races and religions.

Storytelling and intercultural understanding

There are a number a number of ways in which storytelling can enhance intercultural understanding and communication. Stories can...

- allow children to explore their own cultural roots
- allow children to experience diverse cultures
- enable children to empathise with unfamiliar people/places/situations
- offer insights into different traditions and values
- help children understand how wisdom is common to all peoples/all cultures
- offer insights into universal life experiences
- help children consider new ideas
- reveal differences and commonalities of cultures around the world

Other benefits of using storytelling in the classroom.

Stories...

- Promote a feeling of well being and relaxation
- Increase children's willingness to communicate thoughts and feelings
- Encourage active participation
- Increase verbal proficiency
- Encourage use of imagination and creativity
- Encourage cooperation between pupils
- Enhance listening skills

Commonalities of cultures around the world

Stories reveal universal truths about the world. Through stories we see how very different people share the same life experiences and how human nature can transcend culture.

(from **Storytelling – benefits and tips** Paula Stoye)

<http://www.teachingenglish.org.uk/think/literature/storytelling.shtml>

According to David Vale and Anne Feunten in 'Teaching children English: A training course for teachers of English to children', kids start developing their identity as readers and listeners from the age of three or four years old, because they start constructing their world of meaning and imagination when they are first exposed to different stories of life. It is vitally important that we, as teachers, support this development.

Constructive and creative comprehension

Storytelling is a kind of reading which requires children to be active participants in the construction of meaning. Children get fully involved while listening to a story and they also feel joy and satisfaction. As language teachers, we are always tempted to regard the teaching of reading and listening only as a variety of comprehension activity but in doing so we sometimes discourage children from becoming "good" readers of English. Using storytelling in class, children develop a constructive and creative comprehension.

What constructive and creative comprehension implies

When children listen to a story, in terms of comprehension response, they get involved in different types of mental processes. First, they create a mental picture of what they are listening to. Then, they can imagine what is going to happen next. Children also identify themselves with the characters and situations in the story relating them to their own experiences. Last but not least, children apply their own values to those found in the story. Therefore, each child's response will be unique because it will demonstrate individual interpretation, it will relate to the whole story and it can be also discussed and shared with others in the class.

From **Storytelling in young learner classes** Patricia Lelmini

<http://www.teachingenglish.org.uk/think/methodology/storytelling.shtml>

Ask the teachers if they can add any further points from their earlier discussion.

Part four: Ideas exchange

Stage 12. Ask the teachers to think about other activities that could be used with children at the pre story- telling, while story-telling and after story-telling stages. Depending on the age groups and levels that the teachers are working with, you may want to get them thinking about different classes.

Then give them a copy of the worksheets below and ask them to compare their ideas:

Younger (5,6,7 years old) / lower level/ non reading writing

Pre- storytelling	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> Use pictures to illustrate key vocabulary or events in the story, ask questions <input type="checkbox"/> Pre-teach key vocabulary orally <input type="checkbox"/> Use real objects to teach key vocabulary <input type="checkbox"/> Give a brief summary of the story in L1 first <input type="checkbox"/> Personalise <input type="checkbox"/> Chant, rhyme or song connected with the theme <input type="checkbox"/> Show them cardboard figures of characters/ places in the story and talk about these
While storytelling	<p>Teacher</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> Dramatic voice <input type="checkbox"/> Point to pictures <input type="checkbox"/> Mime and gesture <input type="checkbox"/> Use sound effects <input type="checkbox"/> Stopping and asking questions (encouraging prediction, asking opinions) <p>Pupils</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> Listen <input type="checkbox"/> Sequence pictures <input type="checkbox"/> Holds up pictures (of objects/characters/scenes) <input type="checkbox"/> Joining in with story <input type="checkbox"/> Do gestures
After storytelling	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> Draw a picture of your favourite scene <input type="checkbox"/> Make masks or finger puppets and act out the story <input type="checkbox"/> Story chant (a simplified version of the story in a chant form) <input type="checkbox"/> Make a book of the story <input type="checkbox"/> Make a class book of the story (each child makes one page)

Elementary level (8,9 years old)

Pre- storytelling	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> Show pictures connected to the story and ask questions about them <input type="checkbox"/> Give words or phrases from the story and children guess what it is about <input type="checkbox"/> Give children a picture from the story and children suggest words or phrases associated with it <input type="checkbox"/> Personalise <input type="checkbox"/> Chant, rhyme or song connected with the theme <input type="checkbox"/> Pre-teach key vocabulary orally
While storytelling	<p>Teacher</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> Dramatic voice <input type="checkbox"/> Point to pictures <input type="checkbox"/> Mime and gesture <input type="checkbox"/> Use sound effects <input type="checkbox"/> Stopping and asking questions (encouraging prediction, asking opinions) <p>Pupils</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> Listen <input type="checkbox"/> Sequence pictures <input type="checkbox"/> Holds up pictures (of objects/characters/scenes) <input type="checkbox"/> Joining in with story <input type="checkbox"/> Do gestures <input type="checkbox"/> Hold up words
After storytelling	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> Order events (simplified from the story) <input type="checkbox"/> Draw pictures for each part of the story (storyboard with simplified text) <input type="checkbox"/> Act out the story <input type="checkbox"/> Retell the story making mistakes – children have to correct you

Older/higher level (10,11 years old)

Pre- storytelling	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> Give some excerpts from the story (e.g. on handout) – children predict what it's about <input type="checkbox"/> Quiz about the topic <input type="checkbox"/> Give children a picture from the story and children write phrases or questions about it <input type="checkbox"/> Give title and children predict words they think will be in the story <input type="checkbox"/> Give children questions about the story and they answer them <input type="checkbox"/> Give children a gapped summary of the story
While storytelling	<p>Teacher</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> Dramatic voice <input type="checkbox"/> Mime and gesture <input type="checkbox"/> Use sound effects <input type="checkbox"/> Ask questions for further information (details) <input type="checkbox"/> Ask for a personal response - What would you do? <p>Pupils</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> Join in reading story <input type="checkbox"/> Read in groups <input type="checkbox"/> Hold up words <input type="checkbox"/> Listen and sequence sentences
After storytelling	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> Children make up own questions about the story <input type="checkbox"/> Order events <input type="checkbox"/> Draw and write a storyboard <input type="checkbox"/> Retell the story making mistakes – children have to correct you <input type="checkbox"/> Complete a worksheet about the story – characters, settings, events, favourite scene etc <input type="checkbox"/> Dictation and dictation of questions for pupils to add detail. See Creating a framework for writing Jeff Fowler http://www.teachingenglish.org.uk/try/writetry/writing_activites.shtml#framework <input type="checkbox"/> Children make changes to the story (e.g. different ending) <input type="checkbox"/> Children make up their own story

Stage 13. Organise the teachers into groups of four or five and give each group a different story to read through. Ask them to think of what activities they could use as pre-story, while story, after story.

Then regroup the teachers and get them to exchange their ideas.

You can download further stories from the LearnEnglish website

<http://www.britishcouncil.org/kids-stories> or you could use stories from other sources such as your course book or well-known stories typed up. Encourage the teachers to make an action plan – to use one of these or another story with one of their classes.

Tip: It is an important part of a training session to include a stage where teachers are encouraged to plan how they can incorporate some aspect of what has been discussed into their own teaching. In a follow up training session you can ask them to tell each other about how their lessons went.

Stage 14. Give teachers a copy of the following articles to read or tell them to read them on the website to consolidate what you have covered in this session.

- Storytelling Fiona Lawtie

http://www.teachingenglish.org.uk/try/resourcetry/resource_activities.shtml#short

- Storytelling – benefits and tips Paula Stoye

<http://www.teachingenglish.org.uk/think/literature/storytelling.shtml>

- Storytelling in young learner classes Patricia Lelmini

<http://www.teachingenglish.org.uk/think/methodology/storytelling.shtml>