

FROM STORYTELLING TO STORY WRITING

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Inspiring Children to Write in 4 Simple Steps

Step One -

Read or tell a short story. Then ask the children what their favourite part of the story was and write it on the board. Once all of the favourite parts are listed the children should be asked to work in pairs.

In their pairs they should be given a large sheet of paper and asked to make a 'Story Map'. This means that they have to write in note form or even draw pictures to retell the story.

However, they must try and list the main events in chronological order and link each event with an arrow.

Once the Story Maps are completed ask the children to join a different pair and the two groups show each other their maps. Do they notice anything different? Do they need to add anything to their own Story Map?

The children are then going to work in their original pairs again. This activity is called 'Tag Team Storytelling'. One of the pair starts to retell the story. They are to have a last, lingering look at the Story Map to help before they start but then all of the Story Maps are to be collected and the board wiped. They then orally tell their partner the story from the beginning but if they get stuck, they can 'tag' their partner to take over. If their partner gets stuck later on they too can 'tag' and so on.

Once the story has been told they then swap so that the other person starts the story and again they can continue to 'tag' each other to help them remember.

'Tag Team Storytelling' will catch on fast and can be used for any story and can dramatically help speaking and listening.

Step Two -

Read the Story 'Ching Ping and the Dragon' from 'Snakes' Legs and Cows' Eggs.'

This story can be used to assist the children with their story ideas. Ask the children what happened in the story. They should try to orally identify the key features. Make notes of these key features on the board.

For example:

1. Ching Ping and his wife Mina need to find a new village to live in.
2. They try lots of villages but no-one needs a woodcutter.

3. They come to an abandoned village and meet a grumpy innkeeper who tells them about a dragon in the forest.
4. Ching Ping goes to the forest and hears a BOOM! BOOM!
BOOM!
5. The dragon scares Ching Ping.
6. The dragon turns out to be friendly, Ching Ping and Mina become to woodcutters of the village.

Give the children a comic strip grid with, in this case, six boxes on the sheet. Ask the children to draw six simple illustrations for the six key features of the story. This storyboard will help the children remember the story if they wish to retell it.

The children are then going to change three key features of the story.

First, ask the children to change the dragon into another creature, e.g. a lion, a dinosaur, a ghost etc.

Secondly, the children should then change the main characters of the story from Ching Ping and Mina to any other story character, such as Jack from Jack and the Beanstalk or Red Riding Hood from Little Red Riding Hood. Or perhaps *they* could now be the main characters so that the story becomes in the first person.

Finally, change the grumpy innkeeper to another character, e.g. a friendly innkeeper, a scared troll, a rich king.

Next, the children should name their new story so instead of 'Ching and the Dragon' it could now be 'Jack and the Lion' or 'Red Riding Hood and the Dinosaur' or 'Adam and the Ghost'.

The children can then make a new storyboard of their own story and use it to help them tell this story. This storyboard can also be used to help them write their story too.

Step Three -

Creation or Origin Stories such as 'How the Zebra Got His Stripes', 'How the Snake Lost Her Legs', 'How the Shark Got Its Teeth' etc. can be followed up by asking the children to think about the common patterns in the stories. Usually there is a lot of repetition, it happened a long time ago, the story ends with a problem being solved, the story ends with the animals looking like they do today, the story also ends with the story title, etc.

You can find lots of animal Creation Stories on the Internet. Print one off and read it to the class. Using this story as an example, the children should then choose their favourite

animal. Then they should think about the most distinguishing feature of that animal, e.g. If they choose a rhino it may be the rhino's horn, or a shark's teeth or a hyena's laugh.

Next the children should think about a good story title for their animal, e.g. *How The Rhino Got its Horn*, *How The Shark Got its Sharp Teeth*, *How The Hyena Got Its Laugh*.

The children should then be asked to get into groups of 3, 4 or 5 in mixed ability. They should then tell each other what their story title is. The group then votes on which story title they would like to work on.

After that the group should try and make a story plan for what could happen to their animal. For example a rough storyline could be:

BEGINNING - The hyena was always grumpy and never ever laughed. The other animals felt sorry for him.

MIDDLE - All of the animals take turns in trying to make the hyena laugh.

END - The clown fish (or any other animal) makes the hyena laugh and he has never stopped laughing. That is how the hyena got his laugh.

Once the group had a rough story plan they present it to the rest of the class.

The children then individually work on their own story using ideas either from their group or one that they have heard from another group.

The best way to present this kind of story is either using a comic strip or a picture book. The children could then read or tell orally their story to younger children in the school.

Step Four -

Read a Roald Dahl short story. Ask the children to identify what they like about the story. One of the key features may be that they were surprised by what happened. The unexpected part of a story is what makes it work.

The children should be placed in mixed ability groups of 3, 4 or 5 and then given a choice of four story starters. They choose which story starter they wish to work on and it is their job to make up the rest of the story. But, they must put in a twist in the tale, something the reader would not expect to happen.

Any four story starters will work but here are some examples:

STORY STARTER ONE - A boy or a girl decide they want super powers like Spiderman. He/she went to the zoo to get bitten by a spider. But, they were bitten by a different animal and now he/she has the power of that animal . . .

STORY STARTER TWO - A group of friends were playing football when they kicked the ball down a well. One of the friends peered inside the well and beside the football they saw something unusual. Something was shining . . .

STORY STARTER THREE - A boy or a girl was on his/her way home from school when he/she passes a deserted house. They saw lights flashing in an upstairs window. He/she rushed to tell his/her friends . . .

STORY STARTER FOUR - A group of friends were on a farm when they heard strange noises coming from an abandoned barn. They decided to investigate. When they opened the barn door it was dark and they stepped inside . . .

The children should then make a story plan for the rest of the story using notes or sentences or pictures to create ideas.

Once the group had a rough story plan they present it to the rest of the class.

The children then individually work on their own story using ideas either from their group or one that they have heard from another group. With the confidence they have gained from the former three steps the children could then write their ideas up as a short story.