

STORY ACTING GUIDELINES

These guidelines are informed by the work of Vivian Gussin-Paley.

- Make a stage by marking out a rectangle big enough for everyone to sit around (I do this with masking tape)
- Explain that this is your storysquare, or storyspace, where you bring stories to life
- Invite all the children to come and sit around, keeping outside the tape
- Introduce the idea of “Whoosh” - you make this sound with a gesture to signify that whoever is in the storyspace quickly returns to their seats around the outside. This is like turning the pages of a book.
- Do a few to practice children quickly returning to their places. This also warms the space up (would you 5 like to be 5 buzzy bees, 3 mice, 1 stomping monster etc)
- If you are doing it for the first time, you might want to show the children your notebook (or a storybook) and say, let's try bringing this story to life (it could be a story from another child a similar age that you have previously collected)
- Read out the of the story, bit by bit, inviting children to come and embody each part of it

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- Roles are allocated by going around the stage in turn. Several children at once can be aspects of the story such as fire, forest, houses, castles – and work collaboratively
- If children don't want to act, that's fine, say "we need good watchers too"
- After you have finished, clap, then ask "who would like to tell me a story?" and collect one or two there and then (you can make a list of more children want to tell you a story, and take theirs later)
- Act out those stories straight away.
- Use your voice to help nurture the story and a sense of excitement/wonder
- Ask for verbs – "can I see how the princess walks around the stage/ spiderman shoots his web/ the lion crawls through the jungle"
- Sometimes it's nice if the whole group creates a sound effect (thunder/ rain) or all speak a line of dialogue if the child is too shy to do so alone
- Always clap at the end of a storyacting, and thank the author.
- You can ask the children to say what aspects of the story they particularly enjoyed doing/ watching
- Storyacting doesn't need props

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You can also do a more dynamic version of this with KS1 children standing in a circle, and it can be used to bring myths, legends, traditional stories to life in a very memorable way.

Warming up for Story Acting

It can be helpful to warm up the body and physical expressiveness and bring the children present in the space ready to work physically together.

Here are some suggestions:

- What does your body want to do today? Take a move from a child and all do the movement together, verbally affirming the qualities of the movement
- This is my.....and it wants to.....eg "these are my hands and they want to shake". Encourage everybody to join in with the movement
- Body part greeting – all move around the space. At a certain cue, stop and find the nearest person to you and have a "conversation" with your knees, or elbows
- Runner beans, frozen beans, jelly beans, string beans (all hold hands) broad beans, baked beans (huddle together)
- Action word cards or picture cards that children pick
- Move as if... secret tippy toes, giant steps, leaf being blown in the wind. Let's be... cheeky mice/ spiders/ detectives/ spies
- Collaboratively making castles, forests, caves

Music can support some of these exercises