

Strategies for Engaging Children in the Art of Storytelling

1. “What if?”

Ask the question using a sentence where the subject and predicate are chosen haphazardly. Examples:

What if cities could float? What if your dog had wings? What might happen if rocks could sing?

2. Use of Arbitrary Prefix One way to make words provocative is by deforming them. Examples:

*What is a microHippopotamus? Have you ever seen a maxiBee? How do you deInvent something?
Have you ever used a unSharpener?*

3. Sequencing of Events—modified to become a fantastic plot Ask the children:

1. Who was it?
2. Where was she/he?
3. What did they do?
4. What did they say?

If you ask a group of 4 children these questions, where each child contributes a single answer. Then the teacher reads back the story. Teachers encourage the children to be clever in their responses. For example:

The frog was sitting on the lunch box. She said, “feed me, feed me—I’m hungry”.

5. How does he/she feel (emotion)?
6. What did the children say?
7. What happened in the end?

Expand on the story by asking more questions, then re-read the entire story. Example:

The frog was sitting on the lunch box. She said, “feed me, feed me—I’m hungry”.

She was so hungry she became very sad. She began to sing a song, “groak, groak, groak”.

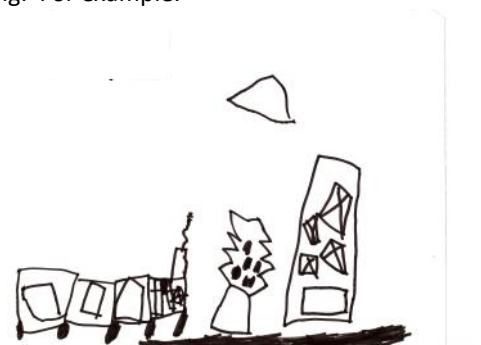
4. Drawing Pictures Game—played with a group of children, the teacher initiates the drawing and then each child adds one thing to the picture. The children talk about the change they are making. For example:

A teacher draws a rectangle on a large piece of paper.

The first child puts a square inside the rectangle and says “It’s a window”

The second child draws another rectangle and says “It’s a train!”

The third child draws a smoke stack and says “look, it’s moving...”



5. **Use of Popular Folk Tales & Nursery Rhymes**—the teacher tells the story but alters the story. Example:

The Three Little Pigs—change the wolf to a superhero

Goldilocks—change the porridge to ice cream

- ◇ Important that the tales be very familiar so that the children know the characters, plot, sequence and emotion.
- ◇ Try reversing the emotion of the story—what if the wolf was good? What is Goldilocks wasn't afraid?
- ◇ Once the story is completed, ask the children "What happened after the ending?"
- ◇ Recast the story using the names of children in the classroom.
- ◇ Create a fairytale salad—mix it up. Examples:

Little Red Ridinghood meets Prince Charming.

Pinocchio is the 8th dwarf.

Hansel & Gretel find the home of dwarfs instead of the witch.

6. **Picture Cards**—Cards for characters, cards of environment and cards of things/stuff are in three baskets. The child picks a card from each basket and tells a story. Example:

Picks a boy cards, picks a playground picture, picks a bike picture

The boy went to the park to ride his bike.

Cards can be created by student drawings, photo of children, photos cut out from magazines or printed from the internet.



Inspired by the work of by Gianni Rodari
The Grammar of Fantasy: An Introduction to the Art of Inventing Stories (1996)
by Gianni Rodari (Author), Jack Zipes (Translator) First published in 1973

Rodari, G. (1996). *The grammar of fantasy: An introduction to the art of inventing stories*.
New York, NY: Teachers & Writers Collaborative.