

Storytelling to Young Learners

SPEAKER'S NOTES

INTRODUCTION

Slide 1 — Opening

OK, let's get started.

Good morning, everyone, and thank you for coming. I'm Halis Bereket.

This morning I'm going to talk about storytelling with young learners. My aim is to introduce as many practical storytelling activities as possible and to show how one story can be revisited through a wide range of active, enjoyable language-learning experiences.

The original idea for developing a bank of storytelling activities came from a seminar given at our school by Manda Brown from the British Council. She presented about ten activities. I later adapted, extended and added to these ideas through classroom practice, and over time the activity bank grew to more than fifty activities.

There are countless things we can do with a story.

Slide 2 — How the Programme Developed

I first began using ideas from the many language-teaching seminars I attended in Istanbul. As I tried them in my own classes, I adapted them according to my students' responses and interests. To maintain interest, I continually introduced different hands-on activities and prepared new materials for different storybooks.

In Grades 4 and 5, storytelling/reading was allocated two hours per week. We selected age-appropriate fairy tales that were suitable for classroom use. Four stories were used during an academic year. With approximately eight teaching months available, each story could be explored for about two months — roughly 16 classroom hours.

The purpose was not to repeat the same activities for two months. Each story was revisited through different activities, giving learners repeated exposure to the language while maintaining variety and participation.

Slide 3 — The Storytelling Archive

As different stories were used with different classes, the number of prepared materials increased considerably. Eight fairy tales eventually formed the basis of a large archive of teacher and student materials, including PowerPoint and Word resources.

The activities in this seminar should therefore be viewed as an activity bank rather than a fixed sequence that every teacher must follow from beginning to end.

Slide 4 — From Classroom Practice to Publication

Some of these classroom-based storytelling ideas were later brought together in the article "Successful Storytelling", published in English Teaching Professional, Issue 23, April 2002.

[Show the publication page briefly and continue.]

Slide 5 — Outline and Seminar Mode

To start with, I'll focus on vocabulary preparation and pre-story activities. Then we'll move on to telling and retelling the story. After that, we'll explore post-story and follow-up activities.

Please feel free to interrupt me if you have any questions.

Young learners learn effectively through games, movement, chants, songs, stories and active participation. They do not need long theoretical explanations. Language learning should be meaningful, active and enjoyable.

For this seminar, imagine that you are the young learners. You are about nine years old. Please participate as they would: repeat, move, mime, sing or act whenever the activity requires it.

Are you ready?

CORE PRINCIPLES

Activity selection: Choose activities according to the time available, the interests and abilities of the learners, the story itself, and the teacher's own preferences. It is neither necessary nor desirable to use every activity with every story.

Participation: Most activities are designed to involve the whole class actively rather than leaving a small number of pupils to perform while the others watch.

Revisiting a story: Repeated exposure does not mean mechanical repetition. The story is revisited through new purposes and new activity types, creating fresh opportunities for listening, speaking, reading, writing, movement, memory and imagination.

Classroom atmosphere: A productive young-learner classroom may sometimes be lively and noisy. The important distinction is between purposeful activity and uncontrolled noise.

Teaching principle: “Babies don’t learn by memorising lists, why should children and adults?” — James Asher

A SUGGESTED STORYTELLING PROGRAMME

Four fairy tales per academic year → approximately two months per story → roughly 16 classroom hours per story.

This extended period allows the same story to be revisited through a wide range of pre-story, while-story and post-story activities instead of being treated as a one-off reading or listening task.

The need to maintain interest, provide variety and create new opportunities for language practice gradually led to the development of a large storytelling activity bank.

SECTION 1 — PRE-STORY ACTIVITIES

Prepare learners for the story by introducing and practising selected key vocabulary. Not every unfamiliar word needs to be pre-taught. Additional vocabulary can be clarified naturally during storytelling through pictures, gesture, mime, action and context.

Slide 1. Flashcards

Introduce selected key vocabulary using pictures, flashcards and, where appropriate, real objects. Students listen and repeat.

Speaker's note: Select only the vocabulary learners genuinely need before the story. Avoid turning the pre-story stage into a long vocabulary lesson.

Slide 2. Poster

Practise key vocabulary using a numbered picture poster. Say a word and students identify its number; then say a number and students recall the word.

Speaker's note: There is no need to prepare a separate poster for this activity. As a simple classroom alternative, attach the flashcards to the board and write a number under each one. The activity can then be carried out in exactly the same way: say a word and students identify its number; say a number and students recall the word.

Slide 3. Picture Cards

Give ten students ten picture cards representing target words. Say a word; the student holding the corresponding picture shows it.

Slide 4. Miming

Show a student a picture and ask them to mime it. The class guesses the word.

Slide 5. Matching

Students match words and pictures using flashcards or prepared cards.

Slide 6. Ball Game

Say a target word and throw the ball to a student. The student says another target word and throws the ball to someone else.

Speaker's note: Keep the pace brisk so that many learners participate. Always use a soft, lightweight ball and remind students to throw it gently. The activity should be lively, but safety comes first.

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Slide 7. Flashing Activity

Flash picture cards very briefly. Students identify and say the words.

Slide 8. Yes/No Guessing

Give one student a flashcard. The others ask Yes/No questions to identify the word.

Slide 9. Lip Reading

Put six flashcards on the board. Silently mouth one of the words. Students watch your lips and identify the word.

Slide 10. Drawing Worksheet

Students draw pictures representing selected key vocabulary on a prepared worksheet.

Slide 11. Jigsaw Puzzle

In groups, students put together a jigsaw puzzle related to the story.

Slide 12. Pelmanism

Students turn over cards to find matching pairs. A player who finds a pair keeps it; the player with the most pairs wins.

SECTION 2 — WHILE-STORY ACTIVITIES

Present and revisit the story through active listening, prediction, movement, drama, visual support and learner participation.

Slide 13. Tell the Story

Tell the story using pictures, drama, gesture and mime.

Speaker's note: Do not simply read the text aloud. Use voice, pace, facial expression, movement and visual support to make meaning accessible.

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Slide 14. Noisy Story

Retell the story, replacing selected words with the sound of a bell. Students supply the missing vocabulary.

Slide 15. Picture Response

Give students pictures of characters or people from the story. As the story is retold, students show the relevant picture when they hear that character or person mentioned.

Slide 16. Forgotten Story

Retell the story with deliberately incorrect words. Students listen and correct the mistakes.

Slide 17. Opposites Story

Retell parts of the story using negative or opposite words. Students identify and correct the changes.

Slide 18. Group Acting

Divide students into groups representing different scenes or pictures. Each group acts out its part of the story.

Slide 19. Poster Story

Use posters as visual prompts while students reconstruct or act out the story.

Slide 20. Envelope Sorting

Prepare green and white envelopes, word cards and picture cards. While the story is told, students sort picture cards into one colour and word cards into the other.

Slide 21. Mime Scenes

Give students a scene from the story. They communicate it through mime without using the target vocabulary.

Slide 22. Act Scenes

Give students a scene and ask them to act it out.

Teacher's note: This complete text is for the teacher's reference only and should not be distributed to students. Divide the story into natural scenes and give each group only the section they are going to act out. Encourage learners to convey meaning through action, gesture and expression rather than memorising every sentence.

Slide 23. PPT Presentation

Students listen to the story while following the PowerPoint presentation.

Speaker's note: Use the presentation as visual support; the teacher's storytelling should remain central.

SECTION 3 — POST-STORY ACTIVITIES

Consolidate comprehension and language, provide further practice, and evaluate learning through worksheets, games, dictation, speaking, drama and projects.

Slide 24. Worksheet 1 — Sentences with Blanks

Students complete sentences from the story by filling in missing words.

Slide 25. Worksheet 2 — Questions

Students answer questions about the events, characters or pages of the story.

Slide 26. Worksheet 3 — Sequencing / True-False

Students sequence sentences and complete True/False or related comprehension tasks.

Slide 27. Worksheet 4 — Paint, Cut and Stick

Students colour, cut and assemble prepared story materials.

Slide 28. Bingo

Use story vocabulary, pictures or clues in a Bingo format.

Slide 29. Who Said This?

Students identify which character said selected lines from the story.

Slide 30. Hangman

Review selected story vocabulary through Hangman.

Slide 31. Sentence Order Game

Students put sentences from the story into the correct order.

Slide 32. Last Letter Game

In groups, students produce a new story-related word beginning with the last letter of the previous word.

Slide 33. Word Game

Use a vocabulary-recycling game appropriate to the story and learners.

Slide 34. Question Cards

Give students question cards and ask them to answer individually, in pairs or in groups.

Slide 35. Guided Fantasy

Use a guided-imagery script to extend learners' imaginative and sensory engagement with the story.

Speaker's note: The complete classroom script belongs in the Teacher's Classroom Materials / Teacher's Resource Pack.

Slide 36. Musical Chairs

Use an adapted version of Musical Chairs linked to story language or comprehension.

Slide 37. Yes/No Contest

Use rapid Yes/No questions to review story comprehension or vocabulary.

Slide 38. Dictation 1 / Dictation 2 / Dictation 3

Use successive dictation stages or different dictation formats to recycle and assess language from the story.

Slide 39. Shouting Dictation

Students dictate missing words or parts of a text to one another across a controlled distance.

Slide 40. Running Dictation (Wall Dictation)

Divide the class into groups and appoint a secretary/writer in each group. Runners read a text displayed on the wall or board, return to the group and dictate it to the writer.

Slide 41. Reading Dictation

Read the words or sentences three times. First, students listen for overall meaning. Second, they listen and write. Third, they listen again, check and correct their work.

Slide 42. False Dictation

Dictate deliberately false or incorrect sentences. Students identify what is wrong and write corrected versions.

Slide 43. True/False PPT Presentation

Use a PowerPoint presentation for a True/False comprehension activity.

Slide 44. Banko Quiz

Use the Banko Quiz format to review the story in teams or groups.

Slide 45. Quiz — PPT Presentation

Use a PowerPoint quiz to review and assess understanding of the story.

Slide 46. Question Summary

Reconstruct the story through teacher questions and student answers.

Slide 47. Student Summary

Students summarise the story in their own words.

Slide 48. Act with Costumes

Students act out the story using suitable props, materials and costumes.

Slide 49. Project — Make Your Own Book

Students create their own book based on the story.

Slide 50. Five Senses

Students identify words, events or details in the story connected with touch, taste, smell, hearing and sight.

Slide 51. Quiz

Use a short quiz at the end of the storytelling cycle to assess students' understanding of the story and key vocabulary. Different task types such as reading comprehension, True/False, opposites and scrambled words can be included.

vocabulary. Different task types such as reading comprehension, True/False, opposites and scrambled words can be included.

Speaker's note: The quiz provides a simple record of individual achievement and can be used together with other evidence such as dictation results, class participation and homework in the Student Progress Report.

Slide 52. Student Progress Report

Keep a record of learners' progress throughout the storytelling programme, including quizzes, dictation, classroom participation, homework, behaviour and teacher comments.

Speaker's note: A real 2000–2001 classroom report survives in the archive. Any version shared publicly should anonymise student names.

Slide 53. Original CD — More Listening Activities

Use the original CD and additional listening activities for further practice.

Speaker's note: The archive CDs contain teacher and student resources for eight fairy tales and can be presented as evidence of the wider classroom-materials archive.

CLOSING

Now I'll try to answer any questions you may have.

Many thanks for your attention.

EDITORIAL NOTE FOR THE ARCHIVE

These Speaker's Notes are designed primarily to support the presenter, but they can also be shared on the ELT Archive website. Detailed ready-to-use classroom materials — scripts, worksheets, question cards, dictation texts, quizzes and related resources — should be collected separately in the Teacher's Classroom Materials / Teacher's Resource Pack.