

Developing Literacy skills in the Outdoors – story-making

Key Stage 2 – Years 5 or 6

Objective: to support children’s speaking, writing and reading skills through a story-making activity inspired by a local green space. This also supports a number of other key aspects of child development such as creativity, physical well-being, social skills, and building confidence, self-esteem and emotional literacy.

Outcomes: the creation of a new story by the Y5/6 for a younger age group [Foundation/ KS1] that the children will publish. A copy will go in the school library and they will also read their story to the younger age group.

Check out <https://global.oup.com/education/content/primary/key-issues/boys-achievement/> and short video clips by expert Gary Wilson.



How to do this:

This activity is the middle part of a longer process that started weeks earlier. The teacher will have introduced the theme of story-writing/ creative writing, and children will have been assessed on their reading, writing and speaking skills [partly so we can judge the impact of the story-making activities at the end of half-term]. Of course the idea of creating one’s own stories may be new to pupils and therefore they may lack self-confidence. There are many way to introduce the idea of story-writing, one example is story-cubes which can be used in class in order to build self-assurance in the activity.

The teacher also needs to introduce the idea of creating a book, so a lesson on how books are made would be useful [maybe visit a local library, printers or publishers] or check out web-based publishing lulu, bookemon or blurb. You could of course present your story through drama and/ or a short film – see <http://middletonpark.aberdeen.sch.uk/live-learning/stickman-by-primary-2-and-3-june-2013/>

The book we are going to make can use actual natural materials [e.g. laminated pages] or it can be drawings or photographs [or a mixture]; it can have pages or be concertinaed/ folded – it could be a pop-up book or have doors to reveal images.

As the story/ stories develop in the outdoor space, record the process so it can be referred back to later. So we need to encourage the children to develop a story based on the outdoor environment.

Introduction 1 – story-cubes

Take the story-cubes outside as a starting point for creating and telling stories – the teacher can use the story-cubes to stimulate a story based on the surroundings, but why not introduce natural ‘story-cubes’ such as painted pebbles, pieces of wood with images on or simply use a bag of natural materials? Or ask the children in groups of three to explore the space first and come back with two interesting found objects. Children then take out objects from the bag or from the pile of found items, and that’s the start of the story. Encourage groups of 5 or 6 to start to develop a story around, say four objects initially, and see where that leads. Refer back to classroom learning around story-making (different types of story, the structure of a story, strategies for building suspense and tension, and developing character through description, action and dialogue, etc) but don’t worry too much at this stage as it’s not an easy process and we want to encourage confident learners.



Introduction 2 – create characters

Let the children explore the area. Children are going to create a number of characters from natural materials; in small groups children are asked to seek out a range of natural materials – you can use Dulux colour charts to help them select a variety of materials if you want. They can collect sticks, feathers, leaves, seed-heads, clay from streams, flowers, stones, grass etc, which you can add to by bringing string, pieces of material, pipe-cleaners and wool.

Then in groups of say four, children are asked to create a character from their found materials. You can supply card, tape and glue to help fix the characters, or the characters could be ‘free-standing’.



Image Nature Store



Introduction 3 – build on a familiar story

Use a well-known story, such as Stick Man by Julia Donaldson, and use this as the basis for your story – maybe create your own version of the tale by developing the next adventure of Stick Man. Or make Stick Woman, Child, Dog, Alien, and photograph him/her in different settings with backdrops and this, with the accompanying text written by the children, can be your story. You can read the story outside with the class first of course.

To help set the scene beforehand, you can show a video of Julia Donaldson reading the story:

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=o3ICfKhsOsY#t=37> and watch a short live production

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=R4a6zyox9B>

There’s even a book – 70 things to do with a stick: google ‘amazon 70 things with sticks’.