

# The Storyteller Reflection

To develop storytelling skills inspired by puppet play

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### Timing

10 minutes

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### Space

This activity works best with kids gathered together at a rug or in a story area. They should not have their puppets with them.

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### Additional supports

Visit  
[TeachwithArtsConnection.org](http://TeachwithArtsConnection.org)



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### Preparation

As your students play with their puppets, listen and watch closely for their most promising story ideas. You will need to find a story that you can retell with accuracy, enthusiasm and confidence.

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## 1. Set up for storytelling & listening

### Sample Script

- **Put the puppets to sleep-** “Everyone, put your puppets to sleep in your puppet folder and return to the rug with empty hand.”
- **Establish hush & listening-** “The puppets are sleeping at our desks so we are going to speak quietly and listen carefully.”
- **Amplify student expertise-** “I saw and heard all kinds of amazing stories in your puppet play today! I want to try to retell one of the stories that I heard. I might need your help.”

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## 2. Model retelling a puppet play story

### Sample Script

- **Model retelling the beginning-** Once upon a time, there was a rock star on stage under a bright spotlight. She was singing and dancing and all of her fans were cheering! Let’s all cheer!
- **Model retelling the middle-** All of a sudden, she tripped and fell! She hurt her knee! To make things worse, there were vampires in the audience and they started to creep up on her! Show me with your facial expressions how you would you feel if you were being attacked by vampires!
- **Model retelling the end-** Luckily, there was a doctor in the audience too. She saved the rock star! The doctor said, “Get away from her! She needs a purple sparkle band aid! Let’s all get out a band aid and put it on our knee!”

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## Tips for step 2

- **Add audience participation** (sound effects, facial expressions, gestures, opportunities to add details verbally. For example “Turn and tell a partner what color band aid you would get”)
  - **Remember that the children are the experts in their stories.** The child who’s story you are retelling may correct you on details. Be gracious and model being willing to revise your retelling. For example: “My mistake, she didn’t just fall suddenly! Her arch enemy the bunny rabbit covered the stage in candy so that she would trip! I must have missed that part of the story when I was watching!”
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## 3. Students retell a puppet play story

Find another story to retell. Ask “Did anyone notice a good story idea?”

### Sample Script (beginning)

- **Prompt retelling the beginning.**  
Teacher: Where was the dragon? Child: Cave  
Teacher: What were they doing? Child: Sleeping
  - **Translate short answers into storytelling sentences.**  
Teacher: You could say, “Once upon a time a dragon was sleeping in their cave!” (prompt group or volunteer child to repeat.)
  - **Prompt audience participation.**  
Let’s ALL make snoring noises like the dragon.
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### Prompts for retelling the beginning

- Who were the characters?
  - Where were they at the beginning?
  - What were they doing?
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### Storytelling sentence starters for the beginning

- One day, morning, afternoon, evening, night
- Long, long ago

## Steps to facilitate...

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### 3. Students retell a puppet play story

#### Sample Script (middle)

- **Prompt retelling the problem.**

Teacher: What was the problem? Child: The mouse was stealing

Teacher: How did the dragon feel? Child: Raaaaaawr!

Teacher: What did the mouse say? Child: squeak

- **Translate short answers into storytelling sentences.**

Teacher: You could say, “Suddenly, the dragon heard the sound of a squeaky mouse!” (prompt group or volunteer child to repeat)

- **Prompt audience participation.**

Let’s ALL make the sound of a mouse!

Let’s ALL roar like the dragon!

- **Prompt retelling reactions to the problem**

Teacher: What did they do? Child: Run away

Teacher: Where did they go? Child: All around

- **Translate answers into storytelling sentences.**

Teacher: Say, “The dragon chased the mouse all over the cave!”

#### Prompt audience participation.

Let’s ALL say “The dragon chased the mouse all over the cave!”

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#### Prompts for retelling the middle

- What happened next? Was there a problem?
- What did they say? How did they feel?
- What did they do? Where did they go?

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#### Storytelling sentence starters for the middle

- All of a sudden, suddenly...
- Just then...
- Then they realized, then they noticed

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### 3. Students retell a puppet play story

#### Sample Script (end)

- Prompt retelling the middle.

Teacher: How did the story end? Child: The mouse went home

Teacher: How did they get away from the Dragon? Child: sneak into a hole.

Teacher: How did the Dragon feel then? Child: “Nooooooooooooo!”

- Translate answers into storytelling sentences.

- Teacher: You could say, “Finally, the mouse escaped into a small hole!” (prompt whole group or volunteer child to repeat)

**Prompt audience participation.** For example...

- Teacher: Let’s ALL say “Nooooooooooooooooooooo” like the Dragon!

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#### Prompts for retelling the end

- Did they solve their problem? How does the story end?
- How could the problem get solved? How could this story end?
- How do the characters feel at the end? What do they say? What do they do?

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#### Storytelling sentence starters for the end

- Finally...
- Luckily...
- Unfortunately...
- At long last...

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### 4. Round of applause for the storytellers!

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### **Vary your vocal expression**

You are modelling storytelling skills. Think about how you can change the quality, range, volume, pitch, rhythm, tempo and pace of your voice to make the story that you retell as engaging as possible!

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### **Connect to your audience**

Engaging storytellers make eye contact with their audience and encourage them to enter into the storytelling world.

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### **Let the kids help you**

If modelling storytelling is challenging or stressful for you, ask the kids for help. For example, “Kids, I’m not really sure how to make a witch voice, could someone give me an idea?” The purpose of the reflection is to build a routine of improving our storytelling skills together.

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### **Mind the balance of speaking and doing**

Moments of audience participation are needed for kinesthetic & Multilanguage Learners to stay engaged in this verbal reflection process.

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### **Make literacy connections explicit**

This reflection deals with elements of story that the students will recognize from their literacy instruction. Look for ways to encourage those connections. Consider referring to visual aids, anchor charts or examples of students work hanging in the classroom

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### **If a story is repetitive, wandering or absurd,**

1) Try to figure out what the child is entertained by, and give the entertaining idea some time to play out 2) Add audience participation if the students’ focus is waning. 3) Talk about what they find interesting with enthusiasm. For example “I notice that you are really having a good time having the coconut fall on the monkey’s head over & over!” 4) Ask the student if they want help adding a problem or a solution, but don’t force them to. Give the child a round of applause for sharing their idea (even if it never formed into a story). Use what you learned to inform the story making through play strategy you will introduce in the next session.

