

SESSION TITLE

STORY-TELLING AND CONTENT REVISION

**ACTIVITY IN A SENTENCE:**

Learners use story-telling methods to structure, revise and engage with learnt content.

DISCIPLINES INVOLVED IN ACTIVITIES:

This activity can be used with all subjects and can be adapted to compile, work with, and revise content as well as to suit teachers' and learners' needs and preferences.

The activity is also very suitable for language teaching, especially also in the context of Content and Language Integrated Learning (CLIL).

RECOMMENDED AGES:

Can be adjusted to most ages.

LEARNING ENVIRONMENT (CONTEXT SETTING):

Groups of 3 to 4 students; ideally every group has a somewhat individual space to work in (e.g., a corner in the classroom, a double-desk – the exact amount of space needed also depends on the mode of presentation, as acting out a sketch will require more space than e.g., staging a 'freeze-frame' with action figures or cut outs on a desk). The educator supports the individual groups where necessary.

LEARNING OUTCOMES:

Learners can:

- Can structure content in transferable packages
- Practice presentation skills
- Manage project-focused teamwork
- Negotiate meaning and representation

The activity allows to reference and "digest" inputs from experts, topics that were discussed in class, or experiences which were made outside of schools, and to engage with them in an interactive, emotional and socially collaborative way to better aid the retention of the acquired knowledge by translating the content into a creative medium. The activity can serve as a bridge between the world outside and what happens inside of schools, as well as between the different subjects at school, be they science-, humanities – or arts-related.

RECOMMENDED EXPERTISE:

The educator is not required to have any specific expertise.

If available, connections can be made with professionals/experts in the relevant areas to help with content or the presentation.

SDG LINKS:

- **Goal 4:** Ensure inclusive and equitable quality education and promote lifelong learning opportunities for all
- **Goal 14:** Conserve and sustainably use the oceans, seas and marine resources for sustainable development
- **Goal 15:** Protect, restore and promote sustainable use of terrestrial ecosystems, sustainably manage forests, combat desertification, and halt and reverse land degradation and halt biodiversity loss

TIME IT TAKES TO COMPLETE:

- Minimum: one lesson of 50 minutes
- If the presentation is a focus point in and of its own, additional time will be needed to practise telling the story and to produce any necessary props; this will depend greatly on the age group, available resources, and how elaborate the production can be.
- Time for the presentations depends on the number of groups and how elaborate the presentations should be. Drastically limiting speaking time to one or two minutes can be a fun exercise and forces students to focus on the essentials without getting side-tracked.

MATERIALS / RESOURCES NEEDED:

- Printed handouts, one set per group of 3-5 students.
- Smartphones or cameras.
- Can be adjusted depending on what is available, the subject, and the exact goal of the activity. E.g., pictures of relevant content, numbers, for a science class cards with relevant terms or formulas, eventually Rory's Story Cubes or something similar, action figures, pictures of characters, ...

USEFUL LITERATURE:

- Phillips, Louise. 2000. "Storytelling: The Seeds of Children's Creativity". *Australasian Journal of Early Childhood*, 25(3), 1–5. Doi: 10.1177/183693910002500302.
- Savage, Alice. 2019. *The Drama Book: Lesson Plans, Activities, and Scripts for English – Language Learners*. Branford: Alfabet Publishing.
- Wright, Andrew. 2015. *Creating Stories With Children*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Wright, Andrew. 2008. *Storytelling with Children*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

CONTENT FOR LEARNERS:

- *Handout 1, 'Mind-Map'*
- *Handout 2, 'Story Design'*
- *Handout 3, 'Storyboard'*

TIPS FOR SCALING FOR DIFFERENT AUDIENCES:

Ideally, per teacher there should not be more than four to five groups of three to four, at most five students. Suitability for a class will also depend on the number of students, on a class' motivation, and on how confident students are with working independently. The bigger the class, the more space will be needed, especially once groups proceed to practise presenting their stories.

The complexity of the story itself can be adjusted depending on the age group; the complexity of the task as a whole should be adjusted depending on the age group, group size, available time, and the desired outco-

me (process-oriented revision, goal-oriented presentation).

Scaling the activity up or down for different audiences also lends itself to individualization and diversification as motivated/gifted/faster students can easily be given more complex tasks or be encouraged to add more content/characters/background information of their choosing, or to work on a more elaborate presentation.

Activity

Introduction

Much in the same way as many other memory techniques, packaging content into pre-existing structures makes it easier to remember individual pieces of information as well as to establish links between the individual building blocks. Retention of content is further promoted by engaging with it(inter-)actively, by connecting it to emotions, and by comprehending connections between content items. As such, the activity can be used with all subjects and can be adapted to compile, work with, and revise content as well as to suit teachers' and learners' needs and preferences.

Once the stories have been created, students will enact these stories in several ways of varying degrees of complexity which draw on techniques also used in improv theatre and theatre pedagogy. In addition to class content and when it comes to storytelling, story elements from popular TV-series, films, books, comics (such as protagonists, narrative tropes, specific plot points or plot structure, specific characters, etc.) can be used to engage students further (e.g. *The Lord of the Rings* can be read in terms of environmental criticism (industrialisation and destruction of nature), *Spiderman* can be discussed in terms of genetic manipulation and what that means for the world and the individual).

Note: *The following instructions are to conduct the activity as a revision exercise, in this example to revise the thematic complex of biodiversity.*

Part 1: The Mind Map (10 – 15 mins)

Time is dependent on how fast groups can be formed and the specifics of the class.

- Form groups of three to four people. Each group should have a desk/their own space.
- Distribute the first handout, "Mind-Map".
- Ask students to write the main thematic complex that you will be revising in the central field. In our proposed example, this is 'biodiversity.'
- Give students five minutes to complete the mind-map, first adding topics you have talked about in class and facts that they have learnt, and then adding any further associations, ideas, and knowledge they might have, working steadily outwards until complete. They will need to hurry, but they are working together in a group, and they will also be able to return to the mind-map later.

Example:

Central field: biodiversity

Surrounding fields: fauna, flora, decline – why, effects of decline, why needed, ...

Further associations: buildings – cities – streets – highways – animals isolated – inbreeding or lack of breeding partners – not enough food, not the right food – animals killed when crossing streets – species extinction – solutions? – – > e.g., ‘green’ animal bridges over streets and highways that connect otherwise isolated habitats

Part 2: The Story

2.1 Designing the story (15 mins)

Experience has shown that this phase tends to take up most of the time. Some groups will require gently nudging/leading questions to identify the ‘plot’ etc., however, other groups will be very enthusiastic and overflow with ideas. Help them to pick a focus point, an idea they want to communicate, and to add more details once their basic storyline is complete.

- Distribute the second handout, “Story Design”.
- Talk about and explain the story elements mentioned on the handout. What elements does a story need?
- Ask students to pick one aspect of their mind-map and think about how they could use that aspect in a story.
- Guide students to pick a protagonist, a problem, and a solution to or consequence of the problem. Naturally, a story also needs a title!

Example:

Aspect chosen: isolated animals, green bridges as a solution

Story elements:

- **Protagonist:** e.g., a lonely boy fox looking for a girl fox/ a lost baby-deer, looking for its mother
- **The problem:** There are no girl foxes anywhere in his tiny forest, and he can’t leave/ the baby-deer got separated from its mother when they had to cross the street and it got scared and ran back: everybody fears the fast, roaring monsters with huge, glowing eyes.
- **Solution:** He wanders around for a while and in the end finds a green bridge that connects his forest to another forest where he meets a girl fox, and they live happily ever after. / The baby-deer finds the green bridge and reunites with its mother.

2.2 Staging in the Story (15 mins)

Depending on the students, they may choose/need to stage a single ‘frozen frame’ or put together a single ‘sculpture’, or they might work very fast and manage to create a sequence of frames or sculptures to tell their story.

‘Freeze Frame’/ ‘Sculpture’: Students (re-)create a moment of the story themselves, with each student taking on the role of an element in the picture, e.g., a roaring monster, two students building a bridge, a tree, ... In

improv theatre each image element can talk about who they are, what they feel like, etc. if encouraged to do so by the director.

- Distribute the third handout, "Storyboard".
- Ask students to decide on one to five key moments of the story: How could they communicate the entire story in a single image? What moments would they pick if they could pick three or five images?
- Students sketch their ideas in the fields in the story boards and write down notes. What do the characters/elements feel in that position? What would they say? They may also already start trying out poses.
- Students may pick any available materials as props.
- One student takes a photo of each of the 'frames'/ 'sculptures'.

Part 3: The Presentation

Students present their stories to the class, either by moving through the frames/sculptures or by showing the photos they have taken.

If moving through the frames/sculptures, the teacher or another student can signal, e.g. by touch, each element in the frame/sculpture individually (monologue) or all together (to create a soundscape) to talk about who they are and what they are feeling, what their purpose is, etc. Sentences should start with "I" in order to focus on the specific character/element.

Other students and the teacher/trainer give feedback. What was the story? What content did the story focus on? Was there anything that was especially cool?

Example:

The teacher moves around the sculpture of a baby-deer cowering under trees and lightly touches the shoulder of the student acting the part of the baby-deer. They talk until the teacher stops touching them:

"I am a baby-deer and I have lost my mother. I am lonely and afraid of the loud monsters with the glowing eyes. ..."

Documentation/Outreach:

Given more time and more resources, the frames/sculptures can be made more detailed/elaborate. The best photos for each frame/sculpture may be printed and put together on a poster. In addition to the title and the artists' names, image descriptions can be added (e.g., a description of what is happening or parts of the monologue of the picture elements). The poster can be put up at school etc. so that others may enjoy them and even learn something about an important topic.