

Story Activities in the Classroom

1. **Sequencing stories** - Tell a story in class or read it – a strong, short folktale. Have students draw a picture of their favorite part. After ten minutes, get together and have one student show their picture and tell what it represents. Stay by them in the front of the room and help them. Ask them where it fits in the story – beginning, middle, or end. Have them tack it on the wall or board accordingly – at the beginning, middle, or end, going left to right. Then have another student stand and share their picture. Ask them where it fits, before or after, and have them put it up. Continue in this way, adjusting the pictures according to the story. Depending on the size of the group, you may have the entire group share their pictures or instead ask if there are people who have pictures that show parts of the story that haven't been shown yet. You will probably get most of the scenes in the story, but you can ask what parts of the story are left out. **This exercise is especially good with primary grades – even kindergarteners can do it.**
2. **Scar stories** – in a circle, share one story about a scar you have and tell how you got it. Ask others in the circle how they got their scars. Be ready to ask leading questions to have them talk more.
3. **Thumb stories** – make up a fantasy/tall tale about your thumb ("My thumb is really a vegetable I refused to eat as a child and my parents glued it on me until I ate it. I haven't eaten it yet", or "This is really my brother's thumb. Mine fell off and my brother had an extra one..." Go around the circle and ask them for secrets about their thumbs.
4. **Trouble stories** – "What was one time you got in trouble?" – be ready to edit in the circle!
5. **"Once upon a time, when I was little..."** – share a story that begins in that way, then ask others to share a story that begins that way.
6. **Magic box** – In a cookie tin, or something similar (perhaps decorated in a fanciful way) and place an everyday object, i.e., paper clip, acorn, eraser, button, nickel, red crayon, etc. Say that it's a magic object that has a story. You may open up the tin and tell a story yourself, then ask if it has another story. This works as a recurring activity; once a week with a different object in it each time and each time you'll find students who can share a story. Keep an eye out for the one who hasn't shared yet.
7. **Who's story?** - Divide the class into groups of threes. Have each student tell a story in the small group about something funny that happened to them or a time they got into trouble. The incident should not involve anyone else in the class. When each student has told their story to the small group, have each group decide among themselves which story they like best. The chosen story will then be told to the class by all three students, **as if the incident really happened to them.** The class, having heard the three stories, can then direct questions to the individuals, trying to find out whose story it really is. Questions about people, places, time of day, consequences, are usually asked. The class then votes on whose story they think it is. This exercise brings out many things about story, but especially the importance of detail and the storytellers "believing" in the story. It is a good icebreaker for getting students to tell their own stories.
8. **Postcard stories** - Have each student decide where s/he would like to take a trip. Every day or week, for the length of the project, hand out a blank "postcard" - an index card works well, blank on one side, lined on the other. Have each student draw a postcard picture on the blank side of where they are, and on the other, write a story about what they have seen. Students will be interested in where others are going, too. Don't forget to have them address them and stamp them! At the end of the project, they'll have a whole trip in postcards.
9. Go to the 398.2 section of the library to find tellable folktales.
10. Draw a very simple map of the neighborhood you grew up in with squares for houses or apartments and name as many people as you can. Identify interesting people, scary people, where other children lived, where you bought things, places you were afraid to go, secret places where you went, special trees, etc. Have students draw similar maps and choose one or two things to share about the map.
11. A similar activity can be done with a holiday table – a simple map of who comes to Christmas, Thanksgiving, or Passover, what food is on the table, who brings it, what special things are done or said before, during or after the meal. Special "rules" that children know are there. What does it mean that we share food in this way?