



Nested Boxes



Nested Boxes are a storytelling aid for those more complex episodic stories. They are great for repetitive, 'third time lucky', tales where three brothers, or three sisters, set off, one after another, to accomplish a difficult task and only the youngest, who is the last to attempt the feat, succeeds.

Like Story Cubes, Nested Boxes are used as a performance aid, but are usually a cooperative venture between three pupils who each perform one episode.

The boxes are nested together, one inside another with, maybe, a final surprise at the heart of the smallest box to give the story a triumphant finish.

The first part of the tale is depicted on the largest box and is obviously the first to be told. The second or middle box is then revealed and handed to the second pupil who tells their episode while showing the audience the pictures in turn. Finally the third, smallest box is revealed and the story taken to its conclusion by pupil three, who finishes by opening the box to reveal the proof of the tale's authenticity; for instance, "and this is the ring that the prince put on her finger".

Nested Boxes let pupils discover patterns in language and rhythm in spoken word. Pupils can have fun working together to utilize choruses to chant at, for example, the hand over points or to stress the repetitive nature of the quests.

It is important to stress to pupils that they are ALL performing during the entire story. Those not actively telling will be a model of an attentive listener for the audience, their reactions and movements will be picked up on quickly. They can lead the audience into a laugh or, if they seem disengaged, their audience will feel bored.

Storytelling teams will learn from one another, sharing the good points and giving each other confidence.

The example story for Nested Boxes, "Kotura, Lord of the Winds", is an abridged and adapted version of a tale of the same name collected and translated by James Riordan from his book "The Sun Maiden and the Crescent Moon – Siberian Folk Tales". If you would like to access a copy the book was published by Canongate Publishing Ltd. ©1989, and the ISBN codes are 0-86241-260-9 for the paperback and 0-86241-220-X in hardback.



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