

A STORY IN A SESSION

1. PLAYING WITH DOLLS A PLAN FOR 'MELANGELL' and 'PRINCE FOEL AND GWENDOLEN'

Two Yr.7 pupils from Newtown Afterschool Club working together and a Yr.8 pupil working individually

Meeting the story: Pupils listened to their chosen story.

Story bones: Pupils identified the main plot points of the story and wrote or quickly sketched these as bullet points.

Story scenes: The pupils created freeze-frames with toys and materials – one for each bullet point, photographing each freeze-frame when it was completed.

Most time should be spent on this part, encourage pupils (if they need it) to play, creating dialogue between the dolls / objects in the story and building the landscape of the tale. A lot can be accomplished in a short time. The play gives rise to excellent retaining of the story and a rich narrative.

Rehearse the story: Using the photographs as an aide-memoire, retell the complete tale. If time permits then continue retelling developing language, improving description, emotion through the voice etc.

Record the story: **Either** as an audio recording that can be put together with the photographs in a follow-up IT session. **Or** as a video, manipulating the dolls / objects through the story from one plot point to the next.

2. 'FREEZE FRAMES' A PLAN FOR 'THE ROBBER'S GRAVE'

Four Yr.7 pupils from Newtown Afterschool Club

Meeting the story: Pupils listened to their chosen story.

Story bones: Pupils identified the main plot points of the story.

Story scenes: The pupils created freeze-frames for these main plot points.

Allow plenty of time for this part, encouraging the pupils to take on different characters or objects and to feel the effect of becoming part of the story. This should help them generate the words they need to retell the tale.

Identifying gaps: Discuss with the pupils whether the freeze-frames they have created will tell the whole tale, or if it would aid the audience to have additional scenes.

Record the story: **Either** as an audio recording that can be put together with photographs of the freeze frames. **Or** as a video with the pupils moving through the story from one freeze frame to the next.

3. CARDBOARD 'TALKING' HEADS A PLAN FOR 'THE FIELD OF BLESSING'

Two Yr.7 pupils from Newtown Afterschool Club working together

Meeting the story: Pupils listened to their chosen story.

Story bones: Pupils identified the three locations and five scenes that can be used to tell the story.

Locations: The pupils created a simple 'revolving stage' from three rectangles of cardboard. Using highlighter pens augmented by stickers for speed, they drew a room interior on one, a burning field on another and a field of wheat on the third. The rectangles were then folded in half and stuck back-to-back with the folds as the centre point to create the three-set 'revolving stage'.

The pupils discussed what would be happening in each location while they worked, to help fix the story in their imaginations.

Characters: The pupils cut out and coloured a large head for each character, which they stuck onto a lolly-stick. This story needed only three characters.

Rehearse the story: Using the heads, the pupils developed a short dialogue (two or three sentences) for each scene. They checked that the dialogue would convey the whole story to someone coming afresh to the tale.

IN THEORY

The plan was to record the story, with the pupils improvising the conversations between characters while manipulating the heads, revolving the stage when the next location was needed.

IN PRACTICE

A love of melodrama stole the show, as can be seen in the resulting video.

What the dialogue should have conveyed:

- I. Richard Williams and his wife were hosting popular but banned prayer meetings in their farmhouse.
- II. The soldiers arrested him and burned down the farmhouse, his family went to live with a neighbour and continued working the farm.
- III. On Richard Williams' release he rebuilt his farmhouse and recommenced the prayer meetings.
- IV. The soldiers arrested him and this time burned the farm as well as the farmhouse, all that was left was one field newly planted with wheat. Again his family went to live with a neighbour.
- V. On Richard Williams release he and his wife surveyed the farm, to their surprise the one field was full grown and ready to harvest and each stem of wheat bore nine ears of grain. That would earn them enough money to rebuild the house and farm.

4. USING A STORYCOAT A PLAN FOR 'MAC THE PACKMAN'

Two Yr.6 pupils from Newtown Afterschool Club working together

Meeting the story: Pupils listened to their chosen story.

Story bones: Pupils identified the main plot points of the story and wrote these as bullet points.

The Story Coat: The pupils were given a story coat – a large jacket with plenty of pockets – and chose objects that helped tell the story to put in the separate pockets.

Rehearsing the story: Referring to the bullet points, the pupils began telling the tale, taking out the objects from the pockets as they were mentioned before replacing them. They interspersed the bullet points with written prompts to remind them to reveal objects and to help them remember the story.

Record the story: The story was recorded in front of an audience of club members at the end of the session.

5. CARDBOARD KAMISHIBAI A PLAN FOR 'THE HIDDEN TREASURE'

The Newtown Afterschool Club working together in two groups of 7 mixed age-ranges Yr.6 to Yr.9. Kamishibai making took one session (1 hour) – the recordings were made some weeks' later at another session.

A kamishibai is a box containing picture-slides to accompany the telling of an oral story. It is a Japanese artform that literally means 'paper drama'.

Meeting the story: Pupils listened to their chosen story.

Story bones: Pupils identified the main plot points of the story and quickly sketched a story board, making sure each member of the group had one picture to draw.

They discussed continuity – making sure characters and places appeared the same whenever depicted in the story – and agreed on features such as hair style / colour and clothes.

Making the kamishibai box: This is made from a shoe box, or a similar size box. Cut a hole in one side wide enough so that A4 landscape picture-slides can be seen through it and another hole in the top so that the picture-slides can be hung from long barbecue skewers.

Story scenes: Pupils then drew their scene, making sure all the drawing could be seen through the hole in the box.

Rehearse the story: Pupils practised telling the part of the story shown by their picture-slide.

Rehearsing the group telling: The slides were stuck on skewers and hung in order inside the box. The pupils lined up in the same order as the slides. After the first pupil had told the part of the story on the first slide, that slide was put to the back of the box revealing the next slide and the next pupil took over the telling.



Record the story: The videos were recorded during a later session, without any further rehearsal. One shows a pupil demonstrating the technique to friends who had not attended the initial session, the other a duo retelling their group's tale.

Notes:

- The kamishibai slides are much more effective when they are coloured in – black and white outline pictures are difficult for the audience to see.
- The kamishibai shown here were made in one one-hour session. In longer sessions it is worthwhile allocating extra time for the pupils to draw more detailed slides, as the more detailed the picture, the more the pupils will have thought about that scene and can use this information when retelling the tale.
- Pupils can also decorate the kamishibai box, or even create side-wings or a drop-down platform for it to mimic scenery that can also be used in the telling.