



HOW TO USE STORYTELLING FOR ART WORKSHOPS

General Objective

This practical sheet aims to introduce storytelling into the concept of the arts. Storytelling can help bring students closer to the world of art, creating a bridge to facilitate the artistic expression of people with difficulties and breaking down differences by promoting inclusion. In this practice sheet, you will be able to:

- ✓ Discover what storytelling is
- ✓ Use storytelling to introduce students to the world of art
- ✓ Break down different ways of using storytelling

You will need:

- Inspirational objects for storytelling, such as magazines or manuals
- Stationery: Colored pencils, pens, markers
- Computer with internet connection

Challenges and context

The storytelling methodology aims to **support and improve social inclusion through a fun and educational approach to art**. This methodology has had positive practices in the art world, as artists have always told stories throughout history. In addition, people have used art to communicate their experiences, fantasies, and mythology, from cave paintings to graphic novels.



Therefore, visual narratives, such as fairy tales, can be an **excellent theme for an art project**. The main aim is to help students become creative storytellers and artists simultaneously, promoting inclusion and breaking down differences. It is essential to explain that stories have been passed from one generation to another throughout history. Some of these stories were told verbally, while others were told visually on walls, textiles and paper. Because of its universal appeal, storytelling can be found in almost every culture.



Adaptation

Stories have accompanied the evolution of humanity since ancient times. People want to feel a sense of acceptance and belonging for who they are, not for what society thinks they should be. **Student engagement also depends**

on positive storytelling. Engagement is a student's choice, and a student will only engage if they feel that their current situation takes their story in the right direction. Students also need to think that they can relate to the storytelling going on around them, sharing essential experiences and feeling connected to the stories of colleagues. Storytelling is also a crucial part of recognizing success. When celebrating a student's efforts and achievements, it is important to tell their story and allow others to share their stories and anecdotes about the person being honored. This makes their achievements 'come alive', effectively showing what 'good' looks like while allowing emotional connections to be made in the class.



Compelling storytelling involves following a few **guidelines** to help pupils be involved in the activity, motivating them to do their best and encouraging them to participate inclusively.

First of all, when composing your plot, **make sure that every part of the story is essential for the ending.** Every character, point or principle must relate to the central issue somehow. Everything that does not influence the outcome in some way (directly or indirectly) can be removed from the story. It is also essential to **present a problem that encourages the student to listen.**



Consider that it is not always easy to write an account with a theme in mind. Instead, **write the story first with all the points you want to cover; when you have finished, step back from the story for a moment to see if you can come up with a theme.** This is especially important when your report refers to episodes from the past. History can be a dull topic without much real-life application. Themes help to connect the past with the present and the future. Remember that complicated stories are not necessarily better. If your audience is young, a simple story is the best choice. **Keep eye contact active,** as it is one of the most important **non-verbal ways** to connect with other people. Not only does it help support a student's attention, but it also conveys a sense of trust and sincerity. For example, if you teach scientific or mathematical concepts, choose one or two words that your students have never heard before. It is, therefore, crucial to clarify the meaning of these words before using them in the story. Popular television programs use this

method. **Minimising vocabulary will reduce the power of your account.** A great help comes from using movement, as a storyteller, and you can paint pictures with your body, using your hands, feet, legs, and head. Similarly, you can ask students to make movements during certain parts of the story.

Equally important is **to pause**, as people often talk faster than the brain can process, which leads to confusion and lack of clarity. Using a break at crucial moments of description makes it possible for pupils to process the information by reflecting critically on the explanation. **Changing the voice with different characters** helps maintain attention and make the characters more memorable when giving them a personality. Consider that when you can tell a story that provides a solution to a problem, the account is more likely to have a more intense meaning by solving a real-life situation. Also, before you tell a story, you need to know the ending. Know where you are going so that your account does not take paths that distract your listeners.



To invite pupils to interact, **open an invitation for questions at specific points** in the story. When your students can offer their predictions, they are more involved in the future and the story's ending to see if they were right. It is

essential to create an environment for your report. Are you in the forest, in the desert, in a small house by the sea or in space? **Describe the surroundings, the weather or the prevailing conditions.** The use of music is crucial because it is an excellent way to learn and memorise long lists. Songs have been used throughout history to help cultures preserve traditions and historical events. “What might be impossible for the human brain to do without music (such as memorising the periodic table of elements) becomes possible when you create a song with a recurring refrain” (DeWilde Jordan, 2019). Finally, **write a timeline of events to keep track of the order;** you can also put an empty timeline on the board and, while telling the story, add the critical events as they happen.

Practical examples and inspiration

The benefits of introducing storytelling into the school environment are manifold, but it is essential for inclusion. It is a compulsory choice, arising from the intense activity with which the most innovative technologies change our lives. Therefore, storytelling applied in education is a means that can be used to broaden and deepen the classical methodologies usually used in education. In classrooms where storytelling is used, considerable improvements in learning have been recorded.

To bring storytelling into schools and keep up with the digitalization of the new generations, the most effective method is to use a digital storytelling program. We have selected the most appropriate one for teaching in schools, Storybird.com. It is possible to use this fantastic tool as a free writing station for students, helping to stimulate various writing tasks or peer workshopping. Storytelling is also easily linked to multiple school subjects; using a bit of imagination can help history, science, and even maths.



Storybird provides users with monthly challenges that help students think about different storytelling techniques, a particular illustration or to use guides or interactive courses to lead your students to learn something new about writing. These curriculum guides and courses offer students structured lessons and activities and some bonus features (e.g. more challenges and stickers). For teachers, it is possible to assign assignments and correct and revise stories submitted from the free class account.

Additional resources

<https://storybird.com/>

<https://www.teachingenglish.org.uk/article/storytelling-benefits-tips>

https://www.researchgate.net/publication/349759776_Storytelling_Techniques

<https://storytellingschools.com/>

<https://theartofeducation.edu/2019/06/21/creative-storytelling-in-the-art-room/>

