



The **Storyshapes** are tactile prompts for storyshaping, designed to remind children of key story elements and spark their creativity. Both the Storyshapes and *Storyshaping* book and CD-ROM are available from Yellow Door. For further information visit www.yellow-door.net or call 0845 603 5309.

What is

Storys

Storyshaping is an inclusive and interactive way to create shared stories orally. As individuals or part of a group, children can explore and invent new places, times, characters, questions and ideas together, to build a collaborative story, both expressing their ideas and listening to others' ideas. It is a great way to develop story structure and story language through talk.

Storyshaping uses five story prompts, available as tactile Storyshapes. These represent the building blocks for a story: place, time, character, question and idea. If you don't have a set of Storyshapes, you can still use these five concepts as prompts for a shared class story

Look for inspiration for your class' storyshaping in a variety of books, stories, rhymes and imaginative play opportunities. Children's families could also become the inspiration for storyshaping – EAL parents could be invited to share stories from their culture, and grandparents to share their memories.

Speaking and listening

Following a storyshaping session, your story themes can be translated into play and learning to develop speaking and listening skills:

- ▶ Encourage the children



Place: Ask the children where their story takes place. Encourage them to respond, and accept all their ideas equally. Repeat their collective ideas back to them, adding descriptive story language where appropriate. Ask about the colours, sounds and smells of the place to encourage the use of adjectives for a more vivid description.



Time: Now ask the children when the story happens. Talk about the time of day, the weather, what day of the week or month it is, or if it is a special day.

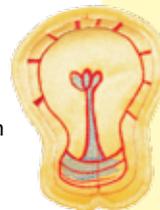


Character: Ask the children who their story is about. Elicit the character's name, age and occupation to build up a picture of them. Ask what the character is doing, encouraging the use of verbs and adverbs. Think about how the character is connected to the place of the story, and maybe even the time too.



Question: Ask what the character's question is – something they need to find out or a solution to a problem. Thinking about the character's thoughts and feelings, decide on a question together.

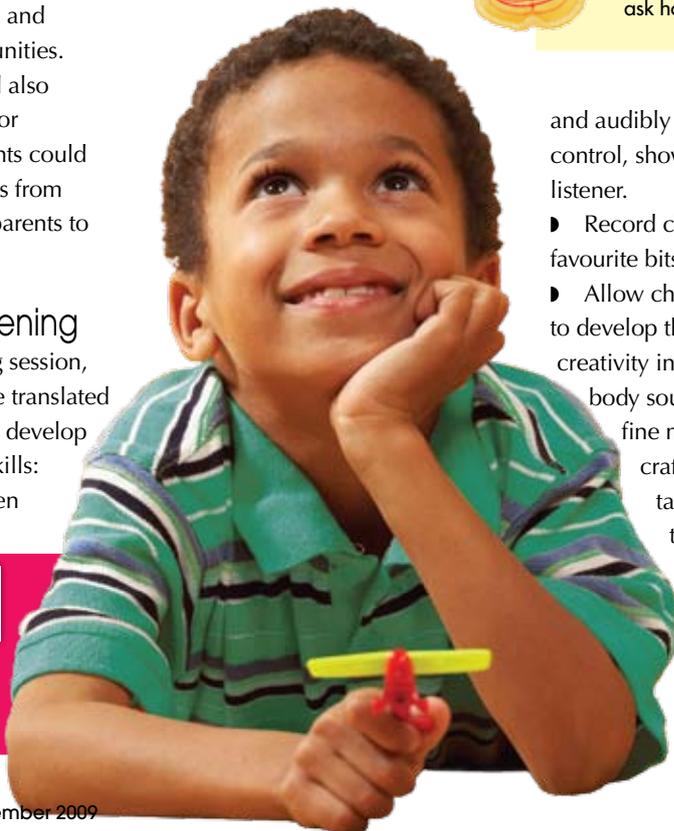
to retell their story, to listen to other retellings and to discuss unfamiliar words. Encourage children, through modelling, to speak clearly



Idea: Now ask how the character finds the answer to their question. Then, encourage the children to take their character on a journey to find an answer to the question. When the question has been answered, ask how the story ends.

and audibly with confidence and control, showing awareness of the listener.

- ▶ Record children telling their favourite bits of the story.
- ▶ Allow children to choose how to develop the story. Encourage creativity in all its forms, using body sounds, instruments, fine motor skills and crafts to extend the tale and explore it through small-world play opportunities using suitable toy characters and settings.
- ▶ Talk about the story's setting and



The ideas, activities and downloads in this article are taken from Yellow Door's *Storyshaping* book and CD-ROM by Julia Damassa and Meg Jones, and are reproduced by kind permission of Yellow Door. The Storyshapes and storyshaping concept were devised and created by Julia Damassa.



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physical journey. Discuss how time affects place, adding mood and atmosphere. If possible, visit a similar place to the story's setting, such as a wood, and describe the setting orally using alliteration, onomatopoeia and metaphor – eg, the wood might have a 'fresh forest fragrance' and 'crunching leaves that sound like hungry giants'.

Role play and drama

Consider how your story can be turned into opportunities for role play and collaboration:

- ▶ Encourage children to act out their story. Provide costumes, ask the children to look for props or to make their own simple puppets. They could role play different characters meeting each other, or combine characters from different stories you have created together.
- ▶ Talk about the character's feelings at different points in the story. Use hot-seating and thought bubbles to understand their emotional journey in the story.
- ▶ Make a story soundtrack using classroom instruments and improvised sound-makers. Half the group can play the sounds while the others move like the characters.

Capturing the story

Download the story planning page from www.scholastic.co.uk/literacytime, available in SMART Notebook, Promethean ActivPrimary and Microsoft PowerPoint. Show children the story planning page, and talk about the images of the Storyshapes



Storyshaping case study: 'Laura's Owl'

The Year 2 class shaped a story called 'Laura's Owl' about a young girl who carves a beautiful owl out of wood for her father then travels through a forest in China to give it to him. The children made owl sculptures which they painted and displayed. They discussed and role-played Laura's experiences and feelings in the forest, and wrote the dialogue of her meeting with her father as a play script. They also used feathers as inspiration for creative writing and poetry.

representing place, time, character, question and idea. As they created their story, children have already planned the story structure without being aware of it, with each of the Storyshapes representing a paragraph. Here are a few activities you could use to capture the oral story on screen or on paper:

- ▶ As a group, summarise each element of the story. Write or type this alongside each Storyshape. Work in five groups, and ask each group to create their part of the story, based on the summary. Each group then tells their part of the story, in order. Discuss whether the story worked, or how it could be improved.
- ▶ Jumble the Storyshape pictures and/or the written story summaries on screen and sequence the story.
- ▶ Use the Storyshape pictures on the story planning page to plan a sequence of drawings to tell the story.
- ▶ Talk about the elements of stories, eg, main character, sequence of events, openings.

Explore how other stories share a common structure with the children's story.

Ask the children what they want to do with their story to share it with other children and family members.

They might like to make a book, paint a picture or take photos of themselves in role to use in an ebook.

These activities help them become aware that 'their' words can be written down.



Julia Damassa also offers training in storyshaping, which builds on the basic storyshaping concept as outlined in this article. The training delivers practical techniques in making and telling stories, exploring the use of tools such as voice, eye contact, gesture, as well as the Storyshapes themselves. For more information visit www.storyshapes.co.uk.

STORYSHAPING
WITH THE STORYSHAPES

Why not take advantage of our special reader offer and get a 10% discount on the Storyshapes and/or Storyshaping book and CD-ROM?