



St Swithun's Class Storytime

WTD



Intent:

Making sure that children become engaged with reading from the beginning is one of the most important ways to make a difference to their life chances, whatever their socio-economic background. For this to happen, however, children need to learn to read as fluently as possible and be motivated to continue reading.

The main aim of storytelling is to breathe life into the words, capturing children's attention rather than simply entertaining them.

Reading aloud therefore requires preparation. How to emphasise particular words, phrases and sentences needs planning so that the children understand the story as a whole. Rehearsal and frequent practice also improve the story-teller's confidence.

STORYTIME WTD

- ✓ Storytime is sacrosanct so all children attend – no interventions to occur during this time
- ✓ It will last 10-15 minutes
- ✓ Storytime happens EVERY day (this can be beginning, middle or end of the day)
- ✓ Reading can be done by any adult who is prepared (good for children to see different adults reading if possible)
- ✓ Additional staff to either listen to the story (as a role model) or work outside the classroom so they don't disturb the session
- ✓ Children to sit comfortably – either on carpet or move their chairs away from their table
- ✓ Ensure you read with lots of exaggerated expression so that the children are captivated
- ✓ The **first reading** should be left to weave its own magic, with no questions, no explanations and no requests for the children to predict what might happen
- ✓ On the **second reading**, asides, voices and actions can explain the meanings of new words in context. If you feel a word needs explaining please do this yourself don't ask the children to clarify.
- ✓ **When the children know the story well**, dramatising the story can be motivating, and it can hold their interest and focus.
- ✓ Role play can help children to reflect on how a character might think, feel and behave at key moments, and explore motives and intentions. Asking all the children to adopt the same role at the same time is an opportunity for everyone to participate. For example, saying 'Hello, wolves! Show me your paws, show me your twitching nose, show me your sharp pointy teeth...' puts all of them quickly into role as the wolf, not just wondering about pretending to be one, which might be the case with simply saying, 'Imagine you are the wolf'
- ✓ If the story is read aloud in a similar way each time, the children can gradually join in with particular words and phrases, and even respect the pauses.

Preparing a reading

Seating	The teacher should sit on a low chair, so that all children can see the book easily, and make sure that everyone is comfortable.
Voices	Choose the best voice for: - the narrator: a neutral voice that won't detract from the characters' voices or a voice that gives away what the narrator is thinking - the main characters: high- or low-pitched? quick or slow? Not everyone can imitate accents successfully, but real life offers a multitude of voices to draw on: the needy 'Could you make me a cup of tea?'; the 'I'm so disappointed in your behaviour'; the voice for interviews; the 'furious' voice when something goes wrong. Remember, the voices have to be maintained for the whole story. If there are too many, it can be difficult for the children to identify them.
Pauses	Decide on the best places to pause to convey shock, concern or, sometimes, just to tease. Pausing builds anticipation.
Word meanings	Wait until the second reading to explain words. Tell the children the meaning: if they already know it, there is no point in asking; if they don't, the question is pointless and encourages only guessing. If only a few children guess, it will distract others from the story. Even if some children do know the meaning, it might not be, in any case, the correct meaning in the context of the story. Use short asides to explain a word or a specific use of a familiar word to avoid disrupting the flow, such as '<i>leapt</i> – that's a big jump' or – in the context of the story – '<i>a spin</i> – that's a fast ride in a car'.
Asides	Use asides to show reactions to particular events: 'I can't believe he did that!' 'Oh, my goodness. He's not happy.' 'Whatever will he do next?'
Memorable words and phrases	Colour your voice to give words meaning: whooped, wondered, wailed or to convey an action: sprouted, quivered, squirmed. Emphasise memorable words and phrases. These will feed into children's vocabulary and awareness of the syntax of literary texts and increase their comprehension. Use phrases from the story later in different contexts, when children know it well. For example, when they recognise: 'Is there room on the broom for a dog like me?', they can enjoy being asked, 'Is there room at the table for a teacher like me?'
Illustrations	Decide which pictures to show – and when. If you have decided to show a picture, give the children enough time to look at it.

Choosing books to read aloud to children

Literature is probably the most powerful medium through which children have a chance to inhabit the lives of those who are like them. All children need to imaginethemselves as the main protagonist in a story: celebrating a birthday, going shopping, being ill, having a tantrum, having their hair cut, worrying about a new sibling, being the superhero, going camping, visiting the seaside and having adventures.

Children also need to learn about the lives of those whose experiences and perspectives differ from their own. Choosing stories and non-fiction that explore suchdifferences begins to break down a sense of otherness that often leads to division and prejudice.

The challenge is to make sure that the right books support all children to thrive, whatever their background. Teachers need to choose those that will engage all ofthem emotionally. As Maryanne Wolf wrote:

We know that emotional engagement is the tipping point between leaping intothe reading life or remaining in a childhood bog where reading is endured onlyas a means to other ends.⁴¹

Teachers are the best people to promote a love of reading because children, particularly young children, care what their teachers think about the stories they readaloud. If teachers show they love the story, the children are likely to respond in the same way. However, this does not mean that teachers should choose only the booksthey loved as children.

Choosing books:

Does the book:

- elicit a strong response – curiosity, anger, excitement, laughter, empathy?
- have a strong narrative that will sustain multiple readings?
- extend children’s vocabulary?
- have illustrations which are engaging and reflect children from all backgrounds and cultures?
- help children connect with who they are?
- help children to understand the lives of people whose experiences and perspectives may be different from their own?

See [Reading framework Teaching the foundations of literacy - July 2021 Jan 22 update.pdf](#)