



Storytelling

Why should we use stories in language learning classes?

There are several reasons! A good story encourages us to turn the next page and read more. We want to find out what happens next and what the main characters do and say to each other. We may feel excited, sad, afraid, angry or really happy. The experience of reading or listening to a story is likely to make us 'feel' that we are part of the story, too. Just like in our 'real' lives, we might love or hate different characters. Perhaps we recognise ourselves or other people we know in some of the story characters. Perhaps they have similar talents, ambitions, weaknesses or problems.

Because of this natural connection with story characters, our brains process the reading of stories differently from the way we read factual information. This is because our brains don't always recognise the difference between an imagined situation and a real one so the characters become 'alive' to us. What they say or do is therefore much more meaningful. The words and structures that relate a story's events, descriptions and conversations are processed by learners in a deeper way.

Encouraging learners to read or listen to stories should therefore help them to learn a second language in a way that is not only fun, but memorable.

How else do stories help?

Stories don't only offer the young reader a chance to learn more vocabulary and develop their grammatical skills. The experience also creates an opportunity to develop critical and creative thinking, emotional literacy and social skills. As learners read a story, they will be imagining far more details than its words communicate. Each learner will, subconsciously, be 'animating' the characters and making judgements and predictions about events.

As a teacher, you can encourage creativity and critical thinking by asking learners in groups to develop characters in more detail, talk about the part of the story they enjoyed most/least or even write different endings. You can also discuss, in English or L1 if necessary, the story 'values', in other words, what different stories teach us about how to relate to others.

Stories also offer a forum for personalised learning. No two learners will feel exactly the same about a story and an acceptance of difference can also be interesting to explore and discuss in class.

How can we encourage learners to join in and ask parents to help?

If, at first, learners lack confidence or motivation to read stories in English, help by reading the story to them without stopping so learners are just enjoying the story, stress free, and following as well as they can by looking at the pictures. During a second reading you might encourage interaction by asking questions like *Is this funny, scary or sad?* (Starters) *Was that a good idea?* (Movers) *What do you think will happen next?* (Flyers). If the class is read to in a relaxed and fun way, learners will subconsciously relate to the reading and language learning process more confidently and positively. Of course, being read to by a parent at home, too, is also simply a lovely way to share quiet and close time. To engage

parents in the language learning process, you might share some of the above points with them and also direct them to an online video which describes language learning activities to do at home with their children www.youtube.com/watch?v=lvY_3vQSVTo

The Home FUN booklet has been specially designed for learners to use at home with parents. Activities are fun and easy to follow, requiring little instruction. The booklet aims to help learners show parents what they have learnt at school and to engage them in the learning process.

Further suggestions for storytelling

- Involve learners in the topic and ask guessing and prediction questions in L1 if necessary. This will engage learners in the process of storytelling and motivate learning. When you pause the audio during the story, ask learners ...
 - about the topic and themselves
 - to guess aspects of the story
 - to say how they think a character feels or what they may say next
- If you are telling the story yourself, support your learners in any way you can by adding your own dramatisation. For instance, you can read the stories with as much animation as possible and use props such as puppets or soft toys and different voices to bring the stories to life.
- Incorporate the use of realia into the storytelling process. For example, if you are using *Storyfun 1*, in 'Kim's birthday' you could set up the classroom to look like a party with balloons, cards and presents, and in 'Let's go there now' you could bring different sports equipment into the classroom to use.
- Once learners are familiar with the story they could even act out parts of the story in role plays. This will not only involve learners in the stories and add a fun element but can also help in practising and consolidating language.

Suggestions for using the story pictures

For skills practice

- Before listening to the story, learners look at all the pictures on the story pages and discuss in small groups who or what they think the story is about and what are the key events.
- Learners trace a picture (adding their own choice of extra details) and then follow your colouring or drawing instructions.

To encourage creative thinking

- Groups choose two people in a picture and imagine what they are saying to each other. They then write a question with answer or a short dialogue.
- Groups choose a background person in a picture and invent details about him/her. For example, how old they are, what they like doing, where they live, what pet they have.
- Groups invent details that are unseen in the picture, for example, ten things in a bag, cupboard or garden.
- Learners imagine they are 'in' the picture. What is behind / in front of / next to them? What can they feel (the sun, a cold wind ...), smell (flowers, cooking ...) or hear (birds, traffic ...)?

To revise vocabulary and grammar

- Learners find as many things in a picture as they can which begin with a particular letter, for example, f.
- Learners list things in a picture that are a certain colour or place. For example, what someone is wearing or what is on the table.
- Learners choose four things they can see in a picture and list the words according to the size of the object or length of the word. Learners could also choose things according to categories such as food or animals.
- Using the pictures to revise grammar, for example *This is / These are*.
- Choose a picture in the story and ask learners in groups to say what is happening in this part of the story.
- Practise prepositions by asking learners what they can see in a picture in different places, for example, in the box, on the table or under the tree.
- Practise question forms by asking learners about different aspects of a picture, for example: *What colour is the cat? How many ducks are there? What's the boy doing?*
- On the board, write the first and last letter of four things learners can remember in a particular story picture. Learners complete the words.
- Point to objects or people in a picture and ask *This/These yes/no* questions. For example: *Is this a shoe? Are these toys? Is this a boy? Are these hats?*
- Ask *yes/no* colour and *how many* questions. For example, point to an apple and ask *Is this apple blue? Can you see four apples?*
- Show learners a story picture for 30 seconds and then ask *What's in that picture?* Write learners' answers on the board.
- Ask simple 'What's the word' questions and build on known vocabulary sets. For example: *It's green. You can eat it. It's a fruit. (a pear / an apple / a grape / a kiwi)*

Suggestions for using the word list

At the back of the Student's Book, learners will find a list of important Starters words that appear in each unit.

- Play 'Which word am I?' Learners work in pairs, looking at the word list for the unit. Choose a noun and give the class clues about it until one pair guesses it. Don't make the clues too easy and focus on form first and meaning afterwards. Say, for example: I've got four letters. The letter 'k' is in me. You can sit on me. You can ride me to school. (bike)
- Divide the class into A and B pairs. Learner A sits facing the board. Learner B sits with his/her back to the board. Write four words (nouns or verbs are best) from the word list for the unit on the board. Learner A then draws or mimes them until their partner guesses them all and writes them correctly (with the help of Learner A who can only say *Yes, that's right!* or *No, that's wrong!*). When everyone has finished, learners change places. Write some new words on the board. Learner B in each pair mimes these words for Learner A to guess.
- Play 'Tell me more, please!' Choose a noun from the word list for the unit and write it on the board, for example: banana. Learners take turns to add more information about the banana. For example, Learner A says: The banana is long. Learner B adds: The banana is long. It's yellow. Learner C says: The banana is long. It's yellow. It's a fruit. Continue until learners can't remember previous information.
- Pairs work together to make as many words from the word list for the unit as they can, using a number of letters that you dictate to the class. Alternatively, use word tiles from board games or letter cards made by the class. These could also be used for spelling tests in pairs or groups.
- On the board, write eight words from the word list for the unit with the letters jumbled. Pairs work as fast as they can to find the words and spell them correctly.
- On the board, write eight words from the word list for the unit. Spell three or four of them incorrectly. Pairs work as fast as they can to identify the misspelt words (they shouldn't be told how many there are) and to write them down correctly.
- Play 'Make a word'. Each group chooses a word (four, five or six letters long) from the word list for the unit and creates it by forming a human sculpture, i.e. learners in each group stand in a line, using their arms or legs to create the shapes of each letter. Remember you may need two learners for some letters (e.g. k). When all the groups are ready, the words are guessed.
- Use the word list for the unit to play common word games such as hangman, bingo and definition games or for dictated spelling tests. A common alternative to the traditional hangman, which learners may enjoy, is an animal with its mouth open, with 8–10 steps leading down into its mouth. (You could use a crocodile at Starters, a shark at Movers or a dinosaur at Flyers.) With each incorrect guess, the stick person falls down onto the next step, and gets eaten if they reach the animal's mouth!

For more information on Cambridge English: Young Learners, please visit www.cambridgeenglish.org/exams/young-learners-english/. From here, you can download the handbook for teachers, which includes information about each level of the Young Learners tests. You can also find information for candidates and their parents, including links to videos of the Speaking test at each level. There are also sample test papers, and a computer-based test for you to try, as well as further games and songs and links to the Teaching Support website.

A few final classroom points

Please try to be as encouraging as possible when working through the activities. By using phrases such as *Now you! You choose! Well done! Don't worry!* (all on the Starters word list) you are also helping learners to feel more confident about participating fully in the class and trying hard to do their best. Make sure that everyone in your class adds to open class work, however minimally, and when mistakes are made, view them as opportunities for learning. Try not to interrupt to correct learners during open class discussion, role plays, etc. Doing so might negatively affect a child's willingness to contribute in future. It takes courage to speak out in class. Make mental notes of mistakes and then cover them at a later moment with the whole class.

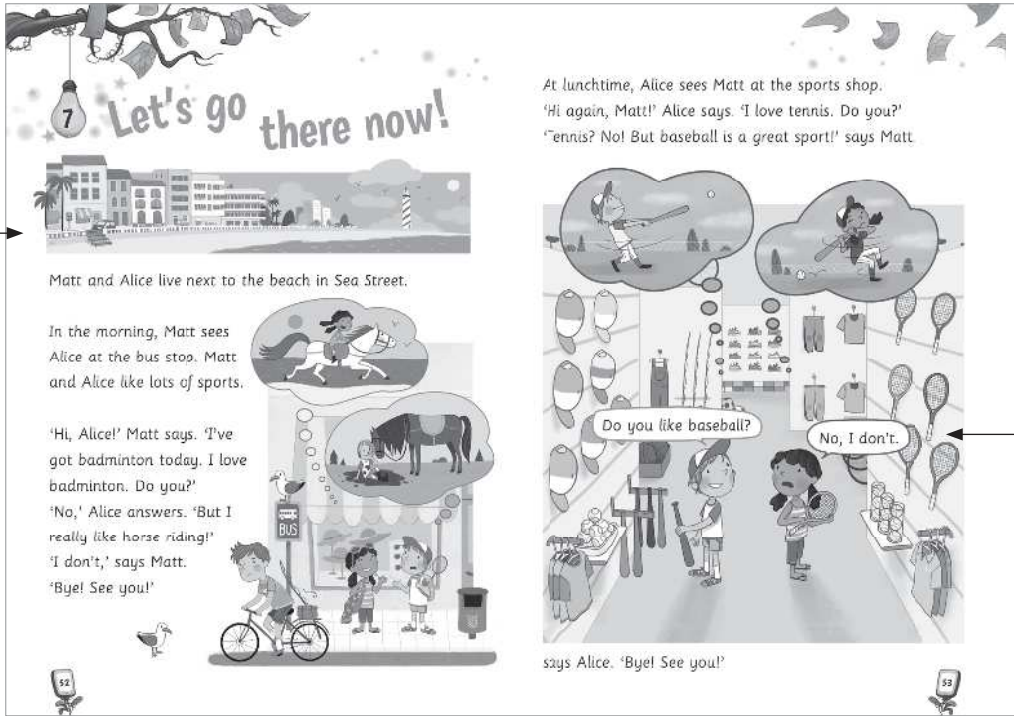
Have fun!

But most of all, please remember that an hour's lesson can feel very much longer than that to a learner who feels excluded, fearful of making mistakes, unsure about what to do, unable to follow instructions or express any personal opinions. An hour's lesson will feel like five minutes if a learner is having fun, sensing their own progress and participating fully in enjoyable and meaningful activities.

How is the Student's Book organised?

Story

Four illustrated story pages using language (topics, vocabulary and grammar) needed for the Cambridge English: Starters test.

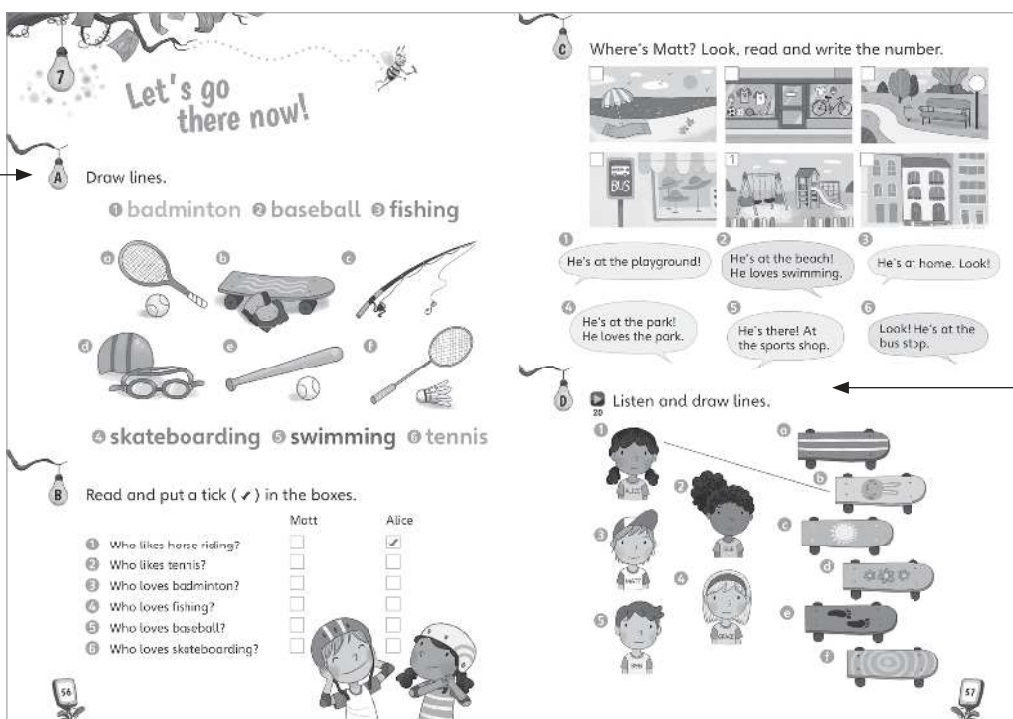


Vocabulary activity

Each unit of four-page activities opens with a vocabulary comprehension activity related to the key Cambridge English: Starters vocabulary presented in the story.

Value key phrase

A key English phrase in a speech bubble (sometimes in bold) within the story demonstrates the story 'value'. For example, *Appreciating differences and similarities* → "Do you like ...? Yes, I do. / No, I don't."



Practice for Starters activities

gently introduce learners to the style of the Cambridge English: Starters test tasks and cover the key skills, vocabulary and grammar necessary for the test. See → in the Teacher's Book for identification.

Skills

All activities develop reading, writing, listening and speaking skills useful for the YL tests.

Songs

Open activities such as poems and songs maintain learners' motivation and interest.