How storytelling transforms learning

Webinar handout

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This is a three-phase framework for effectively integrating storytelling into English lessons.

Phase 1: Pre-story

In this phrase, the aim is to build context. Help students connect to the story before listening. Here are some activities you could use:

- Prediction hook: Show a video trailer or a movie poster and ask prediction questions.
- Physical connection: Use Realia (real objects) from the story (e.g., a stuffed rabbit for the story of the **Knuffle Bunny** – see how I taught it here https://youtu.be/vRhJkeCBc5Q?si=W0p_GW5w6RIT44z1).
- Warm-up games: Play interactive games – offline or online
- Pre-teach vocabulary: Use drills, chants, matching pictures – make it fun!

Phase 2: During the story

In this phase, the aim is to engage students**,** keeping them active and involved throughout. Here are some activities:

- Show character feeling: Pause the story and ask students to use emoji flashcards or gestures to show how a character feels at that moment.
- Prop interaction: Use low-cost props (blue fabric for waves, velvet pouch for mystery) to allow students to physically interact with the setting or object when mentioned.
- Students repeat key phrases or stand/sit when their name/a character's name is called.
- Students role-play dialogue at a key moment when you pause the narration.

Tip! Prepare your voice and props to bring the story to life. Your voice is the most important instrument you have when telling the story. Practice at least once before you tell the story.

Element	Technique for your voice	Example
Pace	Slow for suspense; fast for excitement.	*"Slowly... the door began... to open."*
Pitch	High for small characters; low for large ones.	Change pitch to signal character switch.
Pause	Most powerful tool—pause before climax.	Pause after questions for processing time.

Phase 3: Connect and extend (post-story)

The aim in this final phase is to help students connect the story to themselves. Use the **mentor text approach.** First, show the model story and highlight its structure (Opening - Problem – Resolution). Then, guide students to notice the author's craft (see language features below). Finally, students write a new version or alternative ending.

Language features to highlight	Why it matters
Transition words	Creates logical flow.
Sensory language	Makes scenes immersive.
Dialogue markers	Shows how characters speak.
Adverbials of time	Sequences events clearly.

Differentiation strategies

Differentiation option 1: Choice of output (Same story, different responses):

Student A (easiest): Draws a scene and labels words.
Student B (more challenging): Sequences pictures and says simple sentences.
Student C (challenging) Retells or rewrites the story in their own words.

Differentiation option 2: Layered participation roles

Role	For learners who prefer...	Task
Sound team	Low speaking load.	Make scene sound effects.
Actors	Medium speaking load.	Act gestures or repeat short lines.
Narrators	High speaking load.	Summarise or read story parts.

A recording of Claudia's webinar can be watched here: https://www.teachingenglish.org.uk/news-and-events/webinars/webinars-teachers/creative-lesson-planning-webinars