



Jumpstart Imitation Games

– activities to deepen children’s understanding of a story

Over time, you will develop a range of activities that help children to deepen their understanding of a story. Here are some common activities that teachers draw upon at the stage of imitation:

- **Dressing up clothes** – build a bank of clothes/props for each story for role-play and performing.
- **Retell** – in pairs or round a circle. This can be word-by-word or sentence-by-sentence. You can hold races (babble gabble), mime it or play tennis with the story.
- **Gesture** – children decide on a gesture to go with a section of the story. Stand in a circle and take it in turns to make a gesture perhaps with a word or phrase that sums up that part of the story. Everyone copies the gestures in turn.
- **Favourite lines** – go round a group/circle with everyone saying their favourite line or word.
- **Character graph** – draw a feelings graph. Label with story quotes.
- **Role on the wall** – draw an outline round a child. Gather quotes from the story to build an impression of evidence from the tale.
- **Freeze frame** – children form a tableau at a key moment and can monologue or be interviewed.
- **Hot seating** – child or adult in role as character is interviewed. A variation is to be in role as news reporters and either create an article or film a news clip.
- **I can see** – pause at a key moment. Each child is in role – what can they see, hear, feel – what are they thinking, feeling, hoping regretting? This game helps children become part of the story.
- **Gossip** – a character from the story gossips with someone else who is not in the story about what is happening.
- **Agony aunt** – a character in a dilemma visits an agony aunt.
- **Phone a friend** – sit children back to back in role as a character; a child phones a friend to talk about what is going on.
- **Trial** – put a character such as the troll on trial.

- **Writing in role** – this could be a message, letter, diary entry, advice note, police report... Children talk and then write in role.
- **Story boxes or museums** – develop using images, photos, texts, objects from the story.
- **Miming scenes** – miming a scene from a story. Can the others guess which scene? Miming what might happen next.
- **Role-play** – this could be re-enacting a scene or role-playing the next scene, or a scene that must have happened but is not in the story.
- **Free role-play** – providing a play area (such as a bear’s cave or Grandma’s cottage complete with dressing up clothes) acts as a simple invitation to ‘play’ at the story.
- **Act the story** – works well if the teacher narrates the story as the children act it out.
- **Puppet theatre** – finger or stick puppets (or felt boards).
- **Making ‘News’ programmes** – pretending to be interviewers and putting on the ‘News’ – interviewing the Goats about the Troll.
- **Objects or costumes** – telling the tale of the character, or placing an object from a story in the centre of the group to then decide what should happen.
- **Role-play area** – turning an area into a three bears cave or Grandma’s Cottage.
- **Cut up stories** - literally cut up a story into sections or pictures and the children have to re-sequence them and use this to retell their story.
- **The missing link** – a sequence of images from a story with a key section missing. Children draw and tell the missing section.
- **Cloze procedure** – choose a section that you want to focus upon, eg characterisation. Omit key words for the children to complete.
- **Retell and sketch** – you read a section or tell it: the children have to listen carefully and rapidly sketch the scene. Follow this with the next suggestion.
- **Listen and retell** – now read the same section aloud and the children have to then retell or write it down, recalling as much as possible.

- **First thoughts** – After hearing a story, everyone thinks of a word that captures their feelings or that seems to sum up a key theme in the story. On the count of 3, all say their word aloud. Collect and discuss.
- **Best lines** – everyone selects their favourite line and says them aloud.
- **Riddles** – write riddles for objects in the story.
- **Create a text to go with the story** – a postcard arrives for Jack; the diary entry of a guard in Icarus; a wanted poster for the Troll.
- **Wondering** – take each character in turn and generate questions that we would like to ask the character.
- **Pause a story** – and write messages, advising a character or warning them. Draw a map for a character on a journey. Provide the old lady with a gingerbread recipe. Populate stories with texts.
- **Create a shoebox of story mementos** – items from a story, eg a slipper, a kitchen rag, a torn fragment from a dress, an invitation.
- **Character blog** – children or the teacher creates a blog for a main character.

Jumpstart Innovation Games

– activities to deepen children’s understanding of a story

Over time, you will develop a range of activities that help children to generate and develop ideas to create a new version of a well-known tale. It is worth working on stories section by section. Nearly always, changes start with altering the map before telling – however, it can help to retell and just see where it takes you. Here are some common activities that teachers draw upon at the stage of innovation:

- **Wallpaper maps** – Use a roll of wallpaper for the map of the original and then let children make changes and work in pairs retelling.
 - Alter the map and retell new version – use postits.
 - Retell in pairs, developing ideas. Focus on one aspect at a time:
 - Changing characters – Altering the locations – A different time of day
 - Using the weather to create a mood – Building description
 - Altering what is said – Changing what happens – Deciding on a new dilemma
 - Changing the direction of a story – Finding a new opening – Finding a new ending.
- **Provide toys and figures** for children to select and then include in their new version.
- **Retell using a map** and make simple substitutions.
 - Retell using the map and embellish, adding in detail.

- Retell using a map and make considerable alterations:
 - Alter the nature of the main character;
 - Turn a scary setting into a cheerful one;
 - Change the ending so that it is sad (or happy);
 - Alter the opening – make the main character sound unpleasant;
 - Make the villain into a good character;
 - Give the main character a mobile phone;
 - Just after the start of the story, the phone rings;
 - A message arrives or is found that alters what happens next;
 - The main character decides not to seek his fortune;
 - The villain has a lie-in that morning;
 - The police arrive before the crime happens;
 - The doorbell rings and a woodcutter appears.

- **Use an image** and discuss how the character, setting or event might be used within the tale.

- **Retell a story from a different character's view** – or retell a story in a letter, diary or as a news item.

- **Retell – but change the genre** so that Little Red Riding Hood becomes a detective story.

- **Shrink a story** down to a 100 words tale.

- **Draw a cartoon version** (or create one using ICT). If possible, use ICT to create a comic version and publish.

- **Generate language banks** – this is essential for many children, especially if they have a limited vocabulary. Use first hand experience (objects or location writing) or images as a focus for generating language banks in a rapid brainstorm. Use images.

- **Revisit the original story and write down key sentence patterns** that might be useful in a new version. Experiment by innovating on these. Store in writing journals for use.

- **Create description banks** – build banks of language and ideas to help children create new settings, characters or events.

- **Create character banks** – list ideas for different character names and types but also use images to generate descriptive ideas, similes, adjectives and verbs to help build characterisation. Think about expressions, role-play conversations and act out scenes.

- **Selecting a good opening** – discuss and list different angles for opening a story. Skim through books and collect different strategies.
- **Selecting a good ending** – discuss how a story might have an alternative ending. List ideas and test some out by retelling or using shared writing.
- **Creating suspense and action** – use images or locations or darken a room and light a candle to generate language for suspense. Create a chase scene in the hall or playground (with ‘no touch’ rules) and then rapidly generate language.
- **Using mime** – develop scenes using mime and write the accompanying dialogue.
- **Backtrack** – use a map to backtrack from the key dilemma and change the events leading up to the crisis. Discuss what might happen if the characters took a different route or a different sequence of events occurred. How might this alter the events and the crisis?
- **Challenge** – Instead of starting by changing the map, provide a challenge and ask the children to begin by telling so that the imagination works as they are retelling, eg provide an object or image to include. Younger children often need to see or hold something for it to work its magic.
- **Use music to create mood** – try playing music as children retell to create a different mood.
- **Change direction** – begin by enacting the opening scene and letting it move in a new direction. This could be accomplished by a knock at the door, a phone ringing, someone arriving. Send a child into a role play with a specific task such as – make the characters leave the setting, do not allow the characters to leave, persuade the characters to go to the town, tell the characters you have passed your exams, etc.
- **Change direction with a letter** – write a letter or postcard and literally intervene in a role-play and deliver it. Make sure that whatever is written will steer the story in a new direction. For instance, a letter might arrive at Jack’s house to say that the local council want to chop down the beanstalk as it is blocking light to nearby cottages.
- **The 50-word challenge** – challenge the class to rewrite a story in fifty words. When they are shared, see if everyone can guess the tale.

Jumpstart Invention

– activities to develop children’s ability to invent stories

Over time, you will develop a range of activities that help children to develop new stories. Here are some quick ideas:

- **Dressing up clothes** – provide dressing up clothes, or have an adult dress up to visit the class in character and then interview them as a class.
- **Story box** – bring in a box of objects: everyone chooses an object that has to be in the story.
- **The Lion, the Witch and the Wardrobe** – children have to choose an animal, a character and a place, then weave a story.
- **Buttons and shells** – collect buttons or buy one of those baskets of shells. Everyone has a button or shell. What does the shell say, if held to your ear? Who owned the button?
- **Story mountain connectives** – in groups of five pass a story round a circle. Each person starts with (in order): once upon a time/ one day/ unfortunately/ luckily/ finally.
- **Secrets** – think of a character who has a secret: What is it? What happened? What happens next?
- **Start with a character** – what does your character want? What might get in the way? What obstacles to they face? How might this be resolved?
- **A monster appears** – at home or in school; a dragon takes up residency in the school bike sheds.
- **Email** – an email arrives from the story collector. Unfortunately, all the stories have been lost. Everyone writes a story for the collection.
- **Lower the blinds. Light a candle** – everyone has to write a story that starts with someone in a dark house or dungeon lighting a candle.
- **Bring in a story box** – every day a new object is found in the box. What story accompanies the object?
- **Story trail** – create a story trail round the school. At each stopping point there might be a word, sentence, object, character or clue to collect and use in a story.

- **Group stories** – children work in groups to devise a story. Each person writes a different section or chapter. Journey stories are easiest when each chapter is another mini adventure on the traveller’s way.
- **Promenade a story** – when working on a long story (see group stories above), everyone can write a section (or paragraph) and then choose where they would like to retell the tale. The class promenade around the school, stopping at various points for a retelling of the next section. Which places have the best atmosphere for certain parts of the story?
- **Accompanying texts** – enliven a story by writing the accompanying texts, so you have the main story plus a postcard, a letter, a diary entry, an advert, a map, a text message, an email, a letter to the news paper, a news report or bulletin, a poster, a set of instructions, a character’s biography, a police log, etc.
- **Plot patterns** – before writing, children should jot down the plot patterns they know (warning, quest, portal, etc) and the techniques they have (suspense, action, etc) and stories they enjoy. Discuss drawing on these.
- **Story maps** – let children draw stories and retell in pairs before writing so that they have time to let the story evolve.
- **Escape** – a tiny message arrives in class. A character is imprisoned but has managed to get the message out tied to a pigeon’s leg! How will they escape and what might happen on the journey home? Map it and tell it before writing.

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