

Family  
Literacy

# Storymakers





## Contact Information

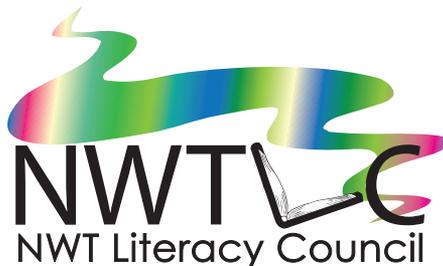
The NWT Literacy Council is a not-for-profit organization with a mandate to support literacy development in all official languages of the Northwest Territories. For more information, please contact:

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## Acknowledgments

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Contact the NWT Literacy Council to get copies of this resource. You can also download it from our website.

# Storymakers

Stories are important because they help us learn about ourselves – our culture, our language, our traditions – but also about the experiences of others. They also let us be creative and have fun!

When it comes to story time, we often reach for a book. Books are wonderful ways to tell stories, but they are not the only way! We can also tell stories through dancing, acting, playing, drawing, singing, painting, and speaking. Oral storytelling in particular is an important foundation for literacy skills.

Stories can be found in many surprising places, if you just take the time to look! We invite you to use this activity booklet to explore the many ways that stories can be told, and the ways that we can all become storytellers and storymakers.

# 1. Invisible Stories

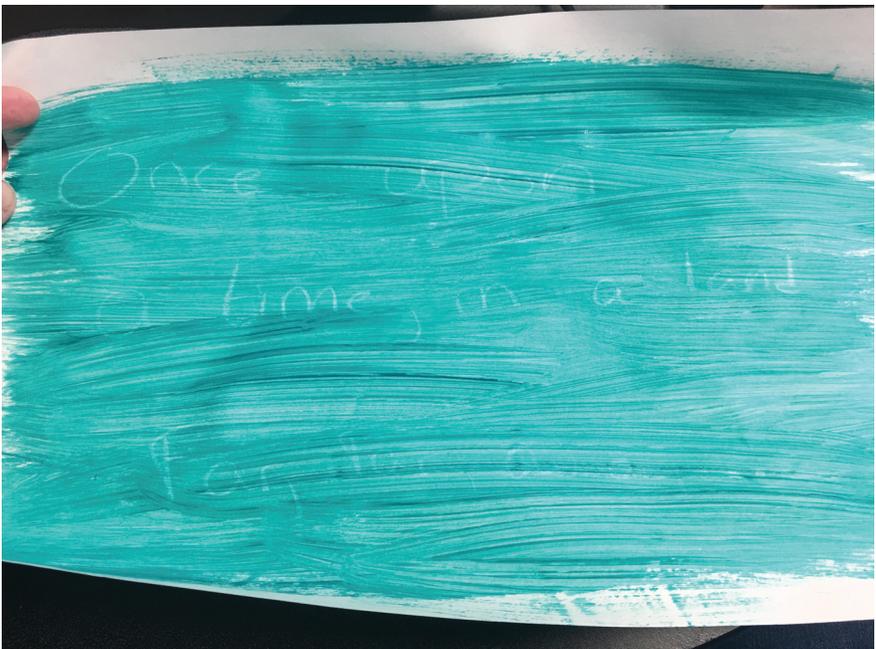
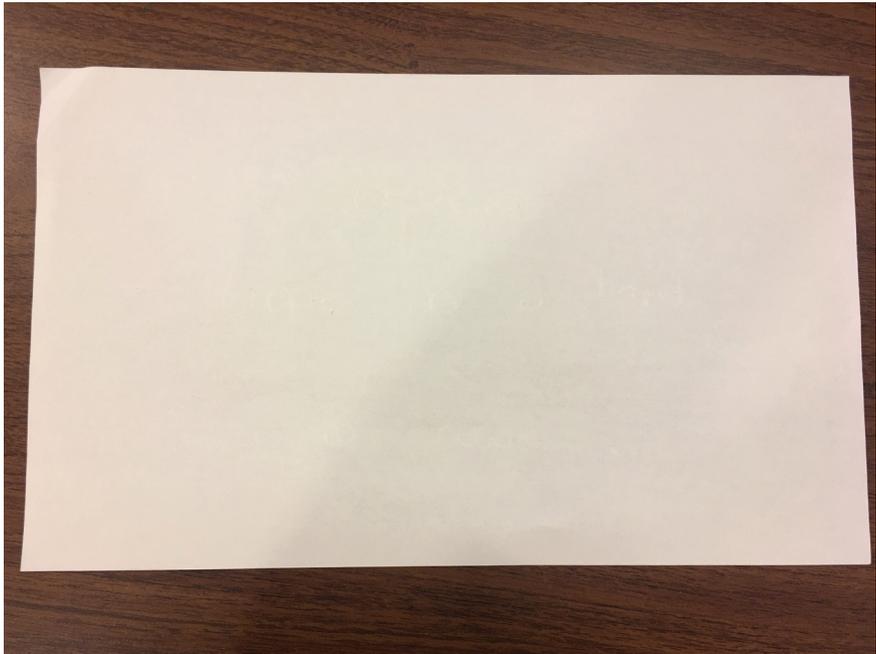
Using a crayon and paint, write or draw a story that only you know how to read.

You will need:

- White crayon
- Paint (watercolour are best)
- Paint brushes
- White paper

What to do:

1. Using the white crayon, write or draw your invisible message.
2. Paint over the crayon, with a thin amount of paint.
3. Let the paper dry completely.
4. As the paint dries, your secret message should start to appear through the paint.



## 2. Inkblot Stories

Double your fun with this creative twist on a classic craft.

You will need:

- Washable paint
- Squeeze paint bottles or paint brushes
- Paint trays (plates, yogurt lids, etc.)
- Paper (construction paper or white paper)
- Markers and/or pencil crayons (optional)

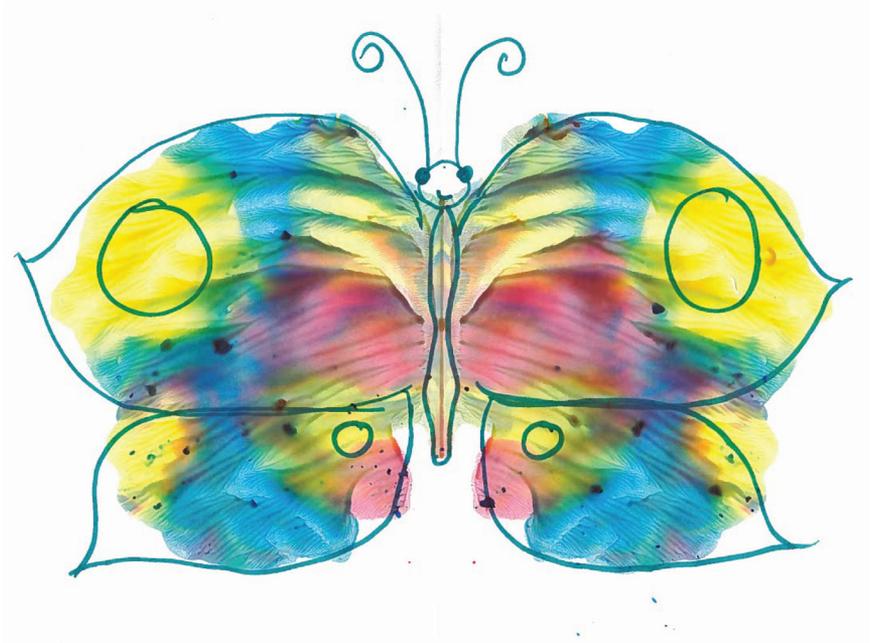
What to do:

1. Fold a piece of paper in half, and then unfold it.
2. Squeeze some paint drops on one side of your paper, or use the paint brush to paint a design. You can use all one colour, or a few different colours. Be careful to not use too much paint.
3. Fold the paper in half and press firmly to transfer the paint from one side to the other.
4. Unfold the paper to see what you have created.
5. What do you see in the paint blotches? Animals? Insects? Monsters? People? Ask the person next to you what they see in your painting. Maybe they will see something different than you do.
6. (If time) After the paint dries use markers or pencil crayons to turn your patterns into fantastical creatures!
7. You can make up stories about what you see in the painting.

Sources:

<http://www.theinkblotbook.com/for-educators-parents/>

<http://craftwhack.com/easy-art-projects-paint-blotting-with-preschoolers/>



### 3. Stories in the Snow

Bundle up, get outside, and find out what stories the snow has to tell.

What you need:

- A place to take a walk
- Warm outdoor clothing
- Snow



What to do:

1. Go for a walk outside. It is best if you can do this somewhere where the snow hasn't been walked on too much.
2. Look around you for tracks in the snow – animal tracks, skidoo tracks, people's footprints, or any other kind of tracks.
3. Think about these questions:
  - What do you think left these tracks?
  - What do you think the thing that left the tracks was doing?
  - Where do you think the thing that left the tracks was going?
  - Can you make up a story about these tracks to tell to someone?
4. Now it's your turn. Find a fresh patch of snow and make your own tracks. You might want to just make footprints in the snow, or you might want to try and make your footprints look like something else left them (maybe a dinosaur). You can use your hands, your feet, your whole body, branches, or anything else that you can think of. Do you think that someone who saw your tracks could tell who you are and what you are doing?

## 4. Language Bundles or Storytelling Bags

Language bundles, sometimes called “storytelling bags”, can be a source of inspiration for stories.

What you will need:

- A piece of tanned hide, a box, a basket, a bag or a piece of fabric
- Objects from the land like rocks, sticks, feathers, shells
- Small figurines, like houses, people, snowshoes, etc. (optional)

What to do:

1. Place your objects from the land and your figurines in your box, basket, bag or piece of fabric. You will use these objects to tell stories.
2. You can do this by yourself, or let your whole family or community bring something to your storytelling bag.
3. Use the objects in your storytelling bag to tell stories. Can you tell these stories in your language?



## 5. Accordion Stories

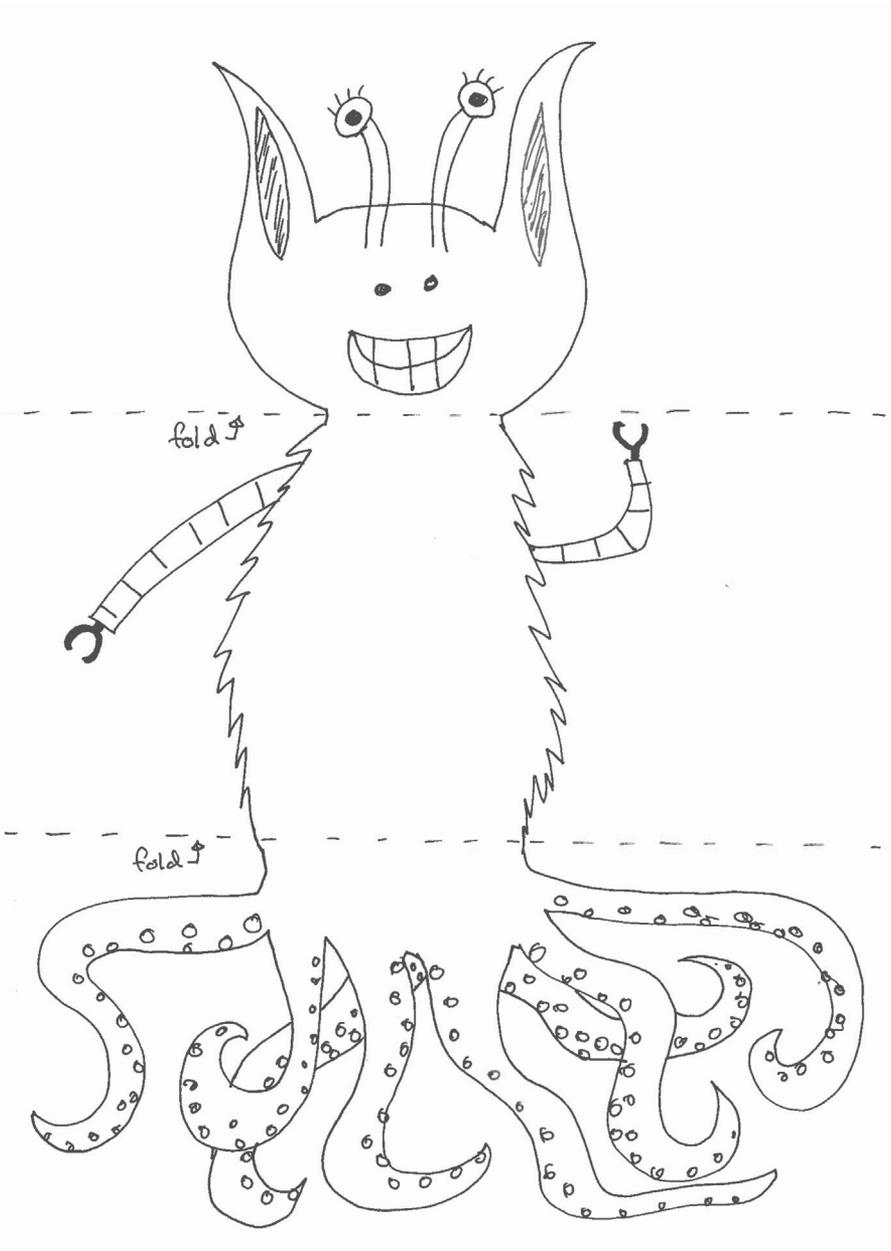
Work together with your friends to increase your creativity, and craft never-before-seen creatures.

You will need:

- Paper
- Markers, crayons, pencils, pens or pencil crayons

What to do:

1. Sit in a circle. Give everyone in the circle a piece of paper, folded into three sections.
2. Have everyone draw a head on the top section of their paper. You can draw an animal head, a human head, an alien head - be creative! Just make sure your drawing crosses over the fold a little bit so that the next person knows where to start their drawing!
3. Fold your drawing backwards and pass it to the person on your left, making sure that they can't see your drawing. On your new piece of paper, draw a body.
4. Once again, fold your drawing backwards and pass it to the person on your left, making sure that they can't see your drawing.
5. On your new piece of paper, draw some legs. When you're done, unfold the paper and show off your wacky creature! Can you think up a name for the creature you helped to create?



## 6. One Word Stories

Start with a single word and see where your story goes.

You will need:

- Room to sit in a circle
- A little creativity

What to do:

1. Sit in a circle and choose someone to start.
2. They will start the game with one word.
3. The person next to them will repeat the word and then add another word to the story. Sometime you can say two words at once if it makes more sense, for example, "a raven".

Eg: 1st person, "Today..."

2nd person, "Today I..."

3rd person, "Today I saw..."

4th person, "Today I saw a raven..."

5th person, "...Today I saw a raven singing!" Etc...

4. Continue to go around the circle adding words until everyone in the circle has a chance to contribute, or you think the story is over.
5. The important thing is to encourage creativity and storytelling, rather than deciding what makes sense and what doesn't!

## 7. Family Storytelling

Storytelling is a great way to share family or community history, foster family literacy in the home, and build literacy skills for storytellers of any age.

You will need:

- An invited storyteller – this can be an older family member or a community member

What to do:

1. Start by asking your invited storyteller to tell a story about an important family or community event.
2. Next, ask a child to re-tell the story in their own words.
3. It is important to be supportive if the young storyteller misses a part of the story.
4. Help the young storyteller pronounce the names of people, places, and events in the story. This can be a good opportunity to build vocabulary in your language.

Source: <http://www.getreadytoread.org/early-learning-childhood-basics/early-literacy/promoting-family-literacy-raising-ready-readers>



## 8. Elder Stories

Elders are respected knowledge holders with a lifetime of stories to share.

You will need:

- A space for storytelling
- An elder to invite to speak with you
- A gift to thank the elder

What to do:

1. Invite an elder to come share stories with you.
2. Make sure to have an appropriate gift to thank the elder for taking the time to come speak with you.
3. Before the elder comes, you can brainstorm a topic you would like to hear them talk about. Eg: harvesting food from the land, a community event from the past, stories from their youth, etc.
4. Remember to be respectful when asking questions, and thank them for their time and knowledge.



## 9. Charades

You don't always need to use words to tell a good story.

You will need:

- Cards with pictures clues or word clues on slips of paper
- A timer
- Space to move around

What to do:

1. Split your group into two teams. The two teams will take turns acting out clues and guessing.
2. You can use picture cards as clues, or you can have an older child or adult read clues from slips of paper and whisper them to the 'actors'.
3. Remember - no speaking or props allowed!
4. For each new round, each team will pick a different member of their team to act out the clue. Once the timer starts, the actor will have one minute to pick a clue and act it out. If their team guesses the clue before the time is up, they can take another clue and act it out. You can act out as many clues as your team can guess within the time limit.
5. Hold on to the clues that you have guessed to keep track of your points!
6. When the time is up, it is the other team's turn to act and guess. If the first team was acting out a clue when the timer ends, the second team starts with this clue.
7. Switch back and forth until all of the clues have been guessed.
8. The team with the most clues guessed correctly wins.

## 10. Snack Time Stories

What adventures did your food go on before it reached your plate?

You will need:

- A healthy snack
- A healthy imagination

What to do:

1. Tell the children that you are going to have snack time soon, but first you are going to tell a story.
2. Explain what the snack will be and ask the children questions about where the food came from. If it is from the store, where did it come from before that? If it was harvested on the land, who harvested it and when? Was it grown in a garden?
3. Based on these answers, tell the story of the food. Be creative! It's ok if you don't know all the answers. If your snack has several ingredients, you can choose one to focus on in your storytelling.
4. For example, if you are eating a snack with wild cranberries in it, you could tell a story like this: *Once there was a little cranberry plant growing on a hillside covered in birch trees and Labrador tea. In the spring, as the snow melted off the hillside, the little cranberry plant stretched itself out along the ground. The sunshine and water helped it grow bigger and stronger. As summer passed, the little cranberry plant blossomed and was covered in light pink, bell shaped flowers. As summer rushed towards fall and fall rushed towards winter, the beautiful pink flowers transformed into*

*dark red shiny berries. After the first frost, the little cranberry plant had many visitors who came asking for its berries. As long as they didn't take all of its berries, the little cranberry plant was happy to give its berries to the birds and bears and people that came asking because it knew that its berries made them happier and healthier.*

5. This can be a great opportunity to teach children about how country food is harvested and prepared, and give thanks.
6. Lay out the snack and enjoy!

# 11. Storysacks

Bring stories to life by borrowing or creating a Storysack.

You will need:

- A Storysack from the NWT Literacy Council OR
- The NWTLC's Storysack Manual to help you create your own

What to do:

1. Storysacks usually contain a high quality picture book, props or costumes for acting out the story, an audio recording of the story, a non-fiction book and an idea card with activities to do together. You can also make Storysacks for oral stories or legends.
2. Caregivers and children use the characters and props to act out the story as they read together.
3. If you would like to borrow a Storysack from the NWT Literacy Council, contact us at [nwtliteracy@nwtliteracy.ca](mailto:nwtliteracy@nwtliteracy.ca) or (867) 873-9262. We have a [wide selection](#) available that you can borrow for up to two weeks. We will ship the storysack to you, and you ship it back when you are finished.
4. If you would like to make your own Storysack, visit [www.nwtliteracy.ca](http://www.nwtliteracy.ca) and look under our resources section to find the [Storysacks Manual](#), which will guide you through how to create a storysack. You can also contact the NWT Literacy Council and request a print copy of the manual.



## 12. Everyday Stories

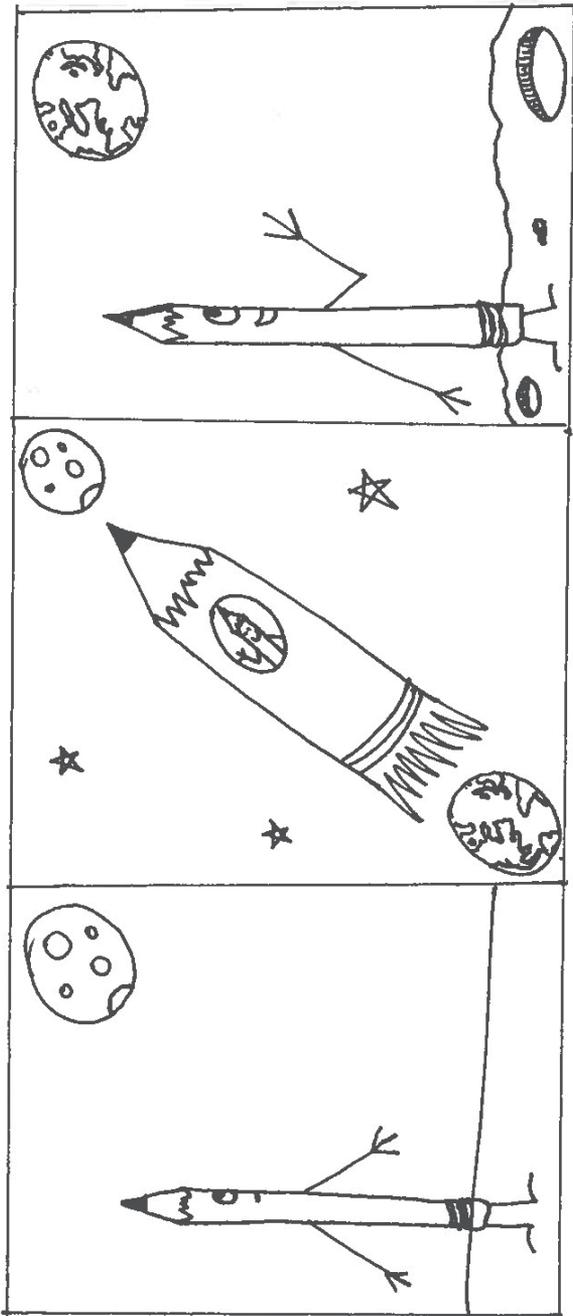
If everyday objects could talk, imagine the stories they would tell.

You will need:

- A random collection of objects. This could include pencils, rocks, pieces of hide or fur, plastic toys – whatever you have available.
- Paper
- Markers, crayons or pencil crayons

What to do:

1. Have each child pick an object from the collection.
2. Ask them to think about the object they picked - from when it was created, all the way to where it is now. Has it been a long journey? Do you think this object is happy where it is? Do you think it dreams of doing something else?
3. Give the children paper and markers, crayons, or pencils and encourage them to draw a picture, or a series of pictures, of their object going on an adventure. It could be an adventure the object has already been on (eg: a pencil's journey from the factory where it was made to the community center where it is being used) or an adventure they think it would like to go on one day (eg: a pencil visits the moon!).
4. Encourage them to be creative and silly!
5. The activity can pair well with the book *The Day the Crayons Quit*, by Drew Daywalt. This story is told through a series of letters from crayons to a boy named Duncan, explaining why they have run away.



## 13. Story-disk Chain

Make a pretty and portable storytelling aid.

You will need:

- Pencils
- Small jar lid (for tracing)
- Box board (from cereal boxes, or elsewhere)
- Scissors
- Paint and paint brushes
- Thin black markers
- Hole punch
- String

What to do:

1. Use the pencil and jar lid to trace eight circles on your box board.
2. Cut out the circles and paint both sides in a bright colour.
3. Once dry, use the black marker to draw a simple image on each disk. You can draw people, places, animals, numbers, emotions, plants, or anything else you can think of to draw. If you want, you can choose your images based on something you have done, for example a memory of a favourite day.
4. If the disks start to curl, you can put a heavy book on top of them to flatten them out.
5. Use the hole punch to make a hole on each side of the disk.
6. Look at the images on your discs and arrange them in an order that would make sense to tell a story.

7. Use the string to tie your disks together in the order you have chosen. Keep the knots loose so that you can change the order of the disks if you want.
8. Now, you can use your story disk chain to tell a story. Use the images to make up a story, and tell it in the same order every time. After telling the story a few times, can you tell the story without using the story-disk chain?

Source: *Show Me A Story* by Emily K. Neuburger



## 14. Story Time

Children benefit from reading together right from the time they are born. Check out the NWT Literacy Council's *Snuggle Up Together* Resource for lots of book ideas.

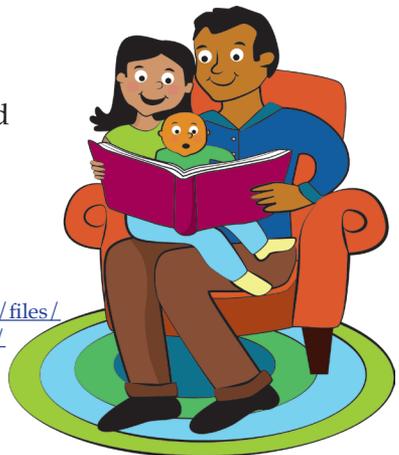
You will need:

- A selection of age appropriate books
- A comfortable place to sit

What to do:

1. When you are reading with a child, let your child choose the book.
2. Find a comfortable place to read.
3. Talk about the book first. Ask questions like: "What do you think this book is about?" and "Do you like the picture on the front cover?"
4. Read with lots of expression and enthusiasm.
5. Ask your child to help you read. Fade your voice when you come to a repetitive phrase.
6. Talk to your child while you read to them. Ask them questions about the story.
7. Have fun!

Source: [http://www.nwtliteracy.ca/sites/default/files/files/Family%20and%20Community%20Literacy/NTLC\\_Snuggle\\_Up\\_Together\\_Booket\\_WR.pdf](http://www.nwtliteracy.ca/sites/default/files/files/Family%20and%20Community%20Literacy/NTLC_Snuggle_Up_Together_Booket_WR.pdf)



## 15. Dress-up Stories

Give children the tools to be creative and you will be amazed with the stories they come up with.

You will need:

- Costumes (old Halloween costumes, silly hats, parka covers, scarves, etc.)
- Toys (toy tools, dolls, mini trucks and cars, kids canoe paddles, stuffed toys, plastic toys, etc.)
- Big cardboard boxes
- Whatever you have on hand
- Lots of space to move around



What to do:

1. Play activities are fun, spontaneous, and open-ended.
2. Lay out the costumes and props and make sure there is room to play.
3. If you have very young children, make sure that the costumes and props don't have small parts that they could choke on.
4. Allow the children to lead the play and follow their lead.
5. Have fun!

## 16. Sing Your Own Story

Rewrite old songs and give them a new life – your own.

You will need:

- Song or nursery rhyme lyrics
- Instruments (optional)
- White board, chalk board, or chart paper
- Markers or chalk

What to do:

1. Pick a song or nursery rhyme with a tune that most people are familiar with and sing the song together.
2. Once everyone is comfortable with the song, write out the words on a white board, chalk board, or chart paper.
3. Are there words of the song that you want to change?  
Eg: Old McDonald had a *Trapline* instead of Old McDonald had a Farm. Make your changes to the lyrics that you have written out.
4. Sing your brand new twist on an old song! Encourage people to sing and play along with their instruments.



## 17. Fill In The Blanks Stories

These stories are missing some key words and they need your help to make them complete.

You will need:

- Chart paper
- Markers

What to do:

1. Write out a short story on a piece of chart paper, leaving some of the words blank. You can make up your own story, or you can use the template below.
2. Read the story aloud to your group and use verbal prompts to help them fill in the missing parts of the story. For example, you could say something like this, “It fell over with a loud *blank*. What kind of noises do you make when you fall over? *Crash? Bang? Splat?*”
3. Once you have filled in all of the blanks, read the story over again with dramatic voices and gestures. If you want, you can get your group to help you act out the story!

The \_\_\_\_\_

Today, I went for a walk. On my walk I saw a \_\_\_\_\_.  
It looked so \_\_\_\_\_, and it smelled \_\_\_\_\_. The \_\_\_\_\_  
didn't see me though, so I kept on walking. Oh, no! I stepped on a  
\_\_\_\_\_ and fell over with a loud \_\_\_\_\_. It was so loud that  
the \_\_\_\_\_ turned and looked right at me. I felt so \_\_\_\_\_  
that I \_\_\_\_\_ all the way home. What a story! Who would believe it?  
Next time I go for a walk, I think I'll take a friend with me and  
maybe they'll see the \_\_\_\_\_ too!

## 18. Story Dice

Inspiration is as easy as rolling dice!

You will need:

- Wooden blocks
- Paper and pencil
- Ball-point pens or fine tip markers
- Coloured pencils

What to do:

1. Brainstorm a list of categories for your dice, eg: people, places, weather descriptions, wild animals, etc.
2. Under each category, come up with at least 6 things for each category (one for each side of your dice). Discuss how you would draw these things on your dice, and decide on the image you are going to use.
3. Draw your chosen images on the wooden blocks – your dice. Use the ball point pen for the outline, and the coloured pencils to fill in your image.
4. Once you are done making the story dice, you can use the dice by yourself or in a group. By yourself, roll the dice to inspire a story or a drawing. In a group, take turns rolling the dice and adding your combination of images to the group's story.
5. You can roll all of the dice at once, and create your story based on all of the elements you get, or roll them one at a time, adding to the story as you go.

Source: *Show Me A Story* by Emily K. Neuburger



## 19. Story Maps

Bring your storytelling to life with a map of an imaginary world.

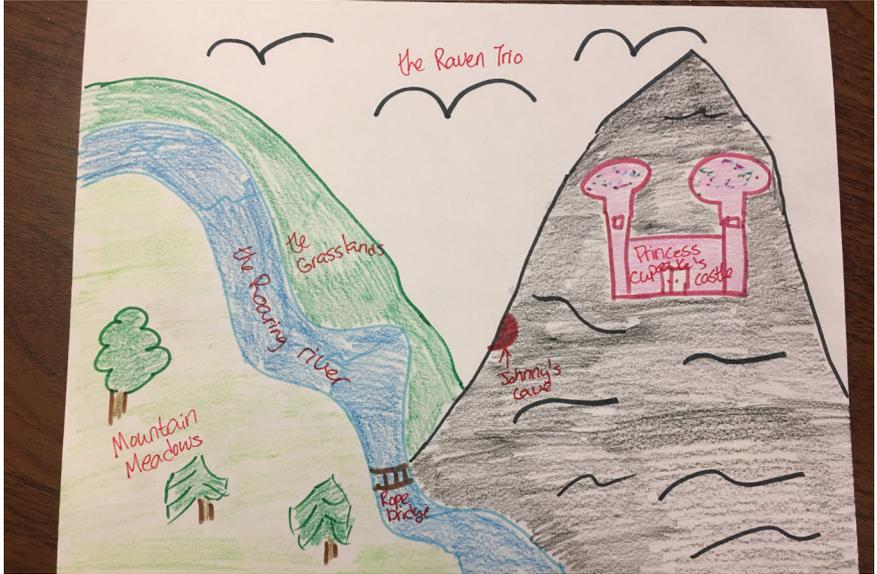
You will need:

- Paper
- Pencils
- Scissors
- Markers and coloured pencils
- Old magazines and newspapers (optional)

What to do:

1. Ask children to picture an imaginary land and help them to think about the unique feature of this land. Does it have mountains? An ocean? A forbidden forest?
2. On a piece of paper, draw the outline of your imaginary land and any important geographical features (lakes, rivers, mountains, enchanted forests, etc.).
3. Use the markers and coloured pencils to add small details (eg: trees, buildings, flowers, bridges, etc.) and colour to your map. Adults can help with labeling of features and place names. You can also cut out images from newspapers or magazines to add details to your map.
4. You can also create story maps of familiar places, or of places you want to travel to one day.
5. Once you are finished your map, you can use it to illustrate stories about your imagined landscape, or set it on the floor and use it with small toys during play time.

Source: *Show Me A Story* by Emily K. Neuburger



## 20. StoryWalks®

Make reading an interactive event with pages from a book and activities to go with them.

You will need:

- A StoryWalk® from the NWT Literacy Council
- Time and space outside to set up the StoryWalk®

What to do:

1. In a StoryWalk®, the pages of a story are placed along a path outside and groups walk from page to page, reading the story and participating in activities as they walk from beginning to end.
2. If you would like to like to borrow a StoryWalk® from the NWT Literacy Council, contact us at [nwtliteracy@nwtliteracy.ca](mailto:nwtliteracy@nwtliteracy.ca) or (867) 873-9262. We have three different StoryWalks® available that you can borrow for up to two weeks. We will ship the StoryWalk® to you, and you ship it back when you are finished.



