



# Community Expressive Arts

## Telling Stories



### BACKGROUND

Young people love to tell stories. When asked, they will almost always have something to tell you about, and will happily do so. Oral storytelling is an essential part of every traditional culture in the world. It promotes a sense of humor and drama, as well as an appreciation for people of all ages and cultures. Without pictures to look at, listeners tune in to the storyteller's voice and facial expressions. Learning to be a good listener encourages sensitivity to the feelings of others.

### LIFE SKILL AREAS

- Fine-motor skills developed through drawing.
- Social skills developed through interaction and asking questions.
- Communication and language-art skills developed through discussion and storytelling.
- Self-understanding skills developed through learning about one's family and perspective on different generations.

### OBJECTIVES

- Realize the culture and background of your community.
- Develop positive attitudes about intergenerational relationships.
- Gain self-awareness and self-esteem through creating stories.

### GROUP SIZE


6-8 children per adult volunteer

### TIME FRAME

This lesson is designed for a group meeting between 30 and 60 minutes. Each activity will take about 5-15 minutes to complete.

### IDEAS FOR THE VOLUNTEER

- Choose one or two of the following activities from each section.
- Try to create appropriate atmosphere by decorating the room with posters and props, using costumes related to the activity, pre-meeting preparation by the 4-H members, thinking about special seating arrangements, and playing background music.



**ALABAMA  
COOPERATIVE  
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SYSTEM**

Chuck Hill and Molly Gregg,  
4-H Specialists

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## Getting Started

### ACTIVITY *Exploring Tales*

**Materials:** books

Take a group trip to the library. If a trip is not possible, one or more leaders or youth can go to the library independently and bring books of folk tales from various cultures.

Gather an assortment of books containing tales from around the globe. The leader or an adult volunteer should read the tale aloud while the rest of the group listens. Each story should take five to ten minutes to read. A story could be from a picture book, with a few words on each page or from a collection of short tales.

**Application:** Talk about each story after it has been read. What was the story about?

What did you like best about the story? Who was your favorite character and why? Did the story make you look at life in a new way? How? Additionally, have a volunteer storyteller tell the same story to the group, without reading it.

(Note to the storyteller: Speak clearly. Change your facial expression and tone or voice to make the events and characters come alive. Use hand gestures and body movements, too.) Talk about the difference between listening to a story being read from a book and being told from memory.

## Digging Deeper

### ACTIVITY *Listen, Children, and You Shall Hear*

**Materials:** paper, pens, and art materials

Think of an older person you know who is good at telling stories. It might be a grandparent or a great-grand-parent who tells tales about long-ago times. Maybe the stories are about your own heritage. Ask the person if she/he could visit your group and tell a story. Before the storyteller visits, talk to the group about listening. A good audience is an important part of storytelling. When the person visits, listen. Tell the storyteller what you especially liked about the story. Ask questions about the story, the storyteller's experiences, and the storytelling process. Have the children create pictures or written pieces related to the story or something that impressed them about the storyteller. Gather the creations and send them to the storyteller as a "thank you" for sharing with the group.

**Application:** Have the children create pictures or written pieces related to the story or something that impressed them about the storyteller. Gather the creations and send them to the storyteller as a "thank you."

## Looking Within

### ACTIVITY *Stories from Nature*

**Materials:** paper, pens, and art materials

Focus and develop your imagination by recreating natural events as stories.

Have the children think of a sequence of events that happens in the natural world. For example, a caterpillar turns into a butterfly, a seed grows into a tree, a cloud "fills" with water and bursts with rain, a tadpole becomes a frog, a baby bird hatches, eats, grows, and learns to fly.

Encourage them to write or draw the events that make up the sequence. Include details such as colors and sounds.

**Application:** Have the children turn these events into an interesting story to share with the group.



## REACHING CONCLUSIONS

### *ACTIVITY Facing a Challenge*

**Materials:** pens, paper, and index cards

Think of a time when you faced a challenge and succeeded. For example, it could be a time when you:

- made a new friend
- learned how to do something new
- solved a problem in your life
- helped someone
- did something special for someone

Write or draw about what happened. Use lots of details.

On index cards number and briefly describe events in the order they happened. Tell the story using the index cards to your group. As you listen to others tell their stories, listen politely, giving them all your attention. Ask questions to help children clarify their ideas and help other children to have a better understanding.

**Application:** Have the children think of times in their lives that made them proud after facing a challenge.

## Going Beyond

### *ACTIVITY Act Your Age*

**Materials:** costumes and props

This activity could take place in a single time period or several. If the children show interest, present the story as a play for the children's relatives.

There are many ways to tell stories. Choose a story with the children. Create a play using the action and some of the words in the story. The action, words, and costumes will be the children's own unique interpretation of how they understand it, just like professional actors, which makes this activity so much fun.

## *ACTIVITY "Sing It"*

**Materials:** costumes and props are optional.

Think of songs that tell stories. Sing the song and then have someone tell the song like it was a story.

### Reading Adventures

This listing of reading materials can be used as background information, for sharing before the group activity to set the stage for learning, or for sharing afterwards to reinforce the activity.

*A Big Golden Book of Riddles, Jokes, Giggles, and Rhymes*, by Linda Williams Aber

*Hey Listen to This; Stories Read Aloud*, by Jim Trelease

*Tell Me a Tale*, by Joseph Bruchac

*Every Child a Storyteller: A Handbook of Ideas*, by Harriet R. Kinghorn and Mary Helen Pelton

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