



Plot Patterns



***Presented by Lancashire's
Leading Literacy Teachers***

Pie Corbett's Action Bank

Key Connective	Suggested Action
<p>Once upon a time Early one morning Who First Next But Because</p>	<p>Open hand like a book. Hands to one side of head and pretend to wake up. Finger circle index finger in air. Hold up one finger. Two fingers pointed to the side. Fingers down. Hands out open palmed.</p>
<p>At that moment Suddenly To his amazement Unfortunately</p>	<p>Hands expressively open as if in surprise.</p>
<p>Luckily After/after that So Finally</p>	<p>Hands raised open as if thanking. Roll hands over in turning gesture. Roll hands forwards and open as if giving. Palm facing audience like a policeman stopping traffic.</p>
<p>In the end Eventually</p>	<p>Bring hands together as if closing book.</p>

Ideas taken from *The Bumper Book of Storytelling into Writing Key Stage 1* by Pie Corbett.
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Pie Corbett's Ideas for Creating a Storymaking Climate in School and the Classroom

1. Bring Back the Daily Class Reader

The class reader is one of the key ways in which we tempt children into reading. It is the prime way in which we establish a 'reading climate' – by putting them through the imaginative challenge of engaging with good literature. New authors can be introduced and books read that are beyond the children's decoding level. The teacher models enthusiasm and interpretation, savouring the narrative. If we want children to write well then they need to hear what good writing sounds like! The Primary Strategy calls this, the 'Read Aloud Programme.'

2. Introduce Daily Storytelling

Some schools now include daily storytelling as a routine across Key Stage 1. They aim to build up a bank of well-known tales as well as developing the ability to innovate and invent new stories. At Key Stage 2 many schools are ensuring that children work on a told story each half-term. In this way, children would have retold and developed a bank of some 50 stories by the time they leave primary school.

3. Establish a Literature Spine

Who are the key poets and authors that children should experience? Which are the stories and poems that all children should meet? Some schools have created a 'literature spine' that identifies the key texts that will be read each year. This ensures that children meet the great classics, from *The Iron Man* to *Tom's Midnight Garden*. Knowing the key texts also means that resources can be gathered (half class sets of key readers and bunches of five of other books). These collections can be supplemented with autobiographical detail, videos and material downloaded from author websites.

4. Identify Mentor Texts

The next step is to identify a few stories or books each year that will become key mentor texts – texts that will often be referred to as a frame of reference for writing – *Do you remember how Anne Fine started 'Bill's New Frock' – perhaps we could use that same approach here?* Which books, short stories or picture books could act as mentor texts? For instance, the opening of *The Iron Man* (Ted Hughes) acts as a good example of:

- introduce a monster in the first line;
- use three questions to get the reader wondering;
- use a repeated answer for emphasis.

The novel begins: *The Iron Man came to the top of the cliff. How far had he walked? Nobody knows. Where had he come from? Nobody knows. How was he made? Nobody knows.*

Jake, aged 9, reused this opening in his story about a dragon: *The dragon lurched across the hills. Where was it from? No one knew. Where was it going? No one knew? What had it come for? No one knew. But they would soon find out.*

It might be possible for each year group to have one or two stories that the class know really well and are used as touchstones, reminders and a resource to draw upon to influence their writing.

5. Establish Weekly 'Recommendations'

Hold weekly 'recommendation' sessions where you introduce children to books that they might enjoy for independent reading. Children take it in turn, on a rota, to make a recommendation. They should:

- select a text that they have enjoyed and think others will enjoy;
- introduce it briefly;
- read a well-prepared section – this will motivate others to read the book.

Weekly recommendations is an important part of creating a buzz about reading.

6. Increase Independent Reading

We know that our most proficient writers are avid readers. At key stage 1, we are good at monitoring independent reading and parents are more likely to play an active role in their child's reading. Once they hit key stage 2, this falls away. It is quite possible for children to drift through key stage 2, reading very little independently. We could:

- monitor independent reading more closely;
- establish quiet independent reading after lunchtime;
- make sure we have plenty of 'quick reads';
- develop a very strong reward system for reading books;
- make sure the books that children take home are those that they read with only a slight edge of challenge;
- reward parents/carers who support reading with badges and certificates;
- provide lunch clubs for those who cannot read at home.

7. Use of Reading Logs

The original NLS materials on reading introduced the idea of 'reading logs' but many schools have yet to establish these as a helpful strategy for developing reading. The log has in it a list of possible tasks. All the tasks need to be completed but in no particular order. Provide a strong reward for completing reading log tasks. Model and show good example so the children know the sort of thing that is possible.

8. Use ICT

We should also be building up class libraries of:

- CDs of poets reading poems;
- DVDs of authors and poets;
- hyperlinks to author sites;
- films of books.

9. Promote the Story at Bedtime

We need to be actively promoting family reading – workshops for parents and carers should be an annual event. It is useful to hold sessions where 'how to share a story' is discussed as well as sessions for different age groups where we introduce parents to different books that are relevant to their children.

10. Making Reading Visible

Keep your eye out for posters and images of males reading. Pin these up in central areas. Use the digital camera to take photos of members of staff reading, and display them. Take photos in 'silhouette' and pin these up with a competition – can you guess our mystery reader?

Ideas taken from *Jumpstart! Storymaking Games and Activities for ages 7-12*, Pie Corbett. A David Fulton Book. ISBN 978-0-415-46686-8.

More ideas about developing a reading climate can be found in the book.

Twenty things to do with a story

Here are a series of activities that help children engage with stories, deepening their understanding and enjoyment. It is really a checklist of possibilities. You are working with a story, what sorts of activities might help children deepen their understanding? The activities you choose depend on the story and what is needed.

Remember, it is worth loitering with a story so that children really know it well.

ART

Paint or draw key scenes from a story. Display these in a line to show the sequence of the story or as a book. Make models of key objects.

ROLE PLAY

Identify a scene and role play what happens. Pause at key moments and role play and then tell the next part of the story.

FREE ROLE PLAY

Provide a play area such as Grandma's cottage with dressing up clothes to play at the story.

SAND STORIES

Put models in the sand area for children to use when making up stories as part of play.

HOT SEATING

A volunteer in role as a story character takes the hot seat and is questioned by the class.

PUPPET THEATRE

Finger puppets used to retell the story.

AGONY AUNTS

A character visits an agony aunt or phones into a radio station for advice.

STATEMENTS TO POLICE

A wrongdoer from a story is questioned by the police for their account of the events.

TRIALS

Have the teacher in role as judge. Children work to defend or accuse a character.

ROLE ON WALL

Outline drawn with comments, questions, quotes, suggestions.

TV INTERVIEWS

In role as journalists, interview a character from the story. This can be followed up by a broadcast or writing a news report.

STORY SALE

Choose an object from the story and write a 'For Sale' notice.

LIKES, DISLIKES, PUZZLES and PATTERNS

Put children into pairs to make a list about a story or poem of likes, dislikes, puzzles and patterns. Pairs and other class members can provide answers and questions.

STORY POEM

Stop at a vivid moment in a story and use a simple frame to write a senses poem in the role of a character

PHONE A FRIEND

Back to back pairs use the phone in role as a character

MIMING SCENES

Mime a story. Can the rest of class guess the story?

MEETINGS

Hold a meeting of villagers to discuss the incident and perhaps vote upon what should be done.

GOSSIP

Two bystanders gossip about events in a story or what a character might be up to.

RECORD IT

Make audio CD's and DVD's of children telling stories.

THOUGHTS IN THE HEAD

Draw a cartoon and thought bubble for a character in a story or develop a monologue to say aloud.

Traditional tales guidance

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Derivation and range

The genre we identify broadly as **traditional stories** includes a range of narrative types that originated in the oral storytelling traditions of many cultures, including **myths, legends, fairy tales** and **fables**. Passed on from place to place by storytellers and handed down orally from generation to generation before the invention of printing, they relied on predictable story structures and repetitive, patterned language to make them memorable for the teller and listener. Many can be described as **folk tales** because they originally presented, explained and justified the beliefs of the ordinary folk and were passed on by them.

They served important social purposes and helped to forge cultural links between isolated communities before the days of instant communication and fast travel.

- Traditional stories were a way of sharing kinship, wisdom and experience.
- They passed on vital knowledge about everyday life (travelling through the forest alone can be dangerous) so many were originally told for children's benefit.
- They also depicted and exemplified spiritual beliefs and cultural traditions, giving people simple reasons to behave in certain ways. In the days before printed words, these stories (which included prose and verse narratives such as **sagas**, poems and songs) were at the heart of an individual's cultural inheritance.
- The stories influenced behaviour and united people in their culture so it was important that content remained constant, another reason for the patterning of structure and language that we associate with them. Successive storytellers might change the details but the core message or moral did not change over time or distance when the stories travelled further and merged with the traditional narratives of other cultures.

It was important that the audience listened carefully and remembered the content of these tales, so today they still measure up very well to the criteria we might choose for evaluating a story's quality. They are often humorous, exciting or intriguing. The features that help us to categorise traditional stories tend to be the same ingredients that make them entertaining, memorable and enduring.

Traditional stories have continued to develop and change through publication as printed and moving image texts, including live-action films, animations, multimodal texts and games. Modern adaptations sometimes increase the complexity of plot, merge stories from different sources or update the characters and settings. Even so, many new publications for children, including film and ICT texts such as interactive stories, use the same basic structural and linguistic elements as the traditional stories that were their precursors.

Most traditional tales use the same broad range of conventions and there is a lot of overlap between different types of traditional tales but **myths, legends, fairy tales** and **fables** can be identified as sub-classes. They each tend to have a typical purpose and conform to particular structural and language features.

The ways that different kinds of traditional stories use language for their own purpose and audience (vocabulary, patterns and structures, themes and styles) are closely linked with their essential qualities as texts. This makes them useful starting points for children to explore and compare the different effects of each and to try these out in their own writing. The 'conventions' of traditional

tales should not be viewed or used as rigid templates because their strengths as narratives derive as much from their diversity as any similarities between them.

Theme

Traditional tales deal with the big issues in life. Who are we and where do we come from? How do we deal with life's troubles and difficulties? How should we behave? What is the truth? What is our place in the big picture of things? Themes often explore the contrasts between universal concepts and these are frequently embodied as much in the main characters as in the plot:

- good and evil (Baba Yaga's Daughter);
- master and servant (Jack and the Giant);
- rich and poor (The Little Match Girl);
- wise and foolish (Little Claus and Big Claus);
- old and young (Blodin the Beast);
- beautiful and ugly (Beauty and the Beast);
- mean and generous (Pied Piper);
- just and unjust (Sir Gawain and the Loathly Lady).

Other themes include:

- a quest or search (ostensibly to find something and be rewarded, but usually a metaphor for another kind of search, including the search for truth or self);
- a journey (often a symbol of self-discovery);
- trials and forfeits (to test individuals' skills and strength, or their human characteristics such as intelligence, patience and endurance);
- the origins of the Earth, its people and animals;
- the relationship between people and the seen or unseen world around them (the importance of family and community connections, links between the human world and the world of fairies).

The plot of traditional stories usually encourages the reader/listener to explore the moral codes of the characters or examine the values they demonstrate through their actions. A basic and ancient cultural belief, value or message is often the underlying central theme of a traditional tale.

Plot and structure

Traditional tales often have very distinctive narrative plots and structures that mirror the classic features of oral storytelling. A fairly small range of basic plots crops up again and again but the settings, characters and language details make each story different and memorable.

For example, one of the most basic tales can be described as 'defeating the monster'. At the beginning of the story, life is happy for the main character but a monster appears to shatter his or her happiness. The monster is eventually defeated and all is well again by the end of the tale. Many traditional stories fall into this category especially if we include those where the 'monster' that threatens to destroy a happy situation is a metaphorical one such as poverty or disease.

The numbers three or seven occur frequently in European traditional tales (Three Billy Goats Gruff, Snow White and the Seven Dwarfs) and these same numbers often influence the structure of the plot. Goldilocks goes to the home of three bears and tries out three things in their cottage. There may be three sons, three terrains to cross, seven wishes to be made or seven things to be found. This structure

gives rise to repetitive, sequential organisation and accumulating patterns in the plot. These all help to make the narrative easy to imitate in oral and written form.

Typical plots and structures include:

- cumulative tales (The Enormous Turnip);
- journey stories (The Odyssey);
- sequential stories – a single event is repeated (Jack and the Beanstalk);
- wasted wishes stories (The Fisherman and his Wife);
- problem resolution stories (Anancy and Mr Dry Bone);
- turning point stories (King Midas);
- branching stories (The Firebird);
- circular stories (The Snow Queen);
- trickster stories (Hodja tales);
- rags to riches stories (Dick Whittington, Cinderella).

Although names and details may be different, the basic plot of many traditional tales appears in more than one culture. For example, the story of a foolish person who wastes their wishes and ends up with nothing reoccurs as a cautionary tale about the dangers of greed. 'Eat me when I'm fatter' tales (such as the Norwegian folktale 'The Three Billy Goats Gruff' or the Polish story, 'The Three Goats') appear as examples of cleverness overcoming danger.

Setting

The setting is more often an ambiguous backdrop than a particular place and time. Events generally occur at an unspecified time in the past and in a place that we can easily imagine but cannot place exactly on a map.

Specific detail of settings matches the type of narrative; common settings for fairy tales are castles, cottages, gardens and forests while distant landscapes and unspecified islands often feature in myths.

The action often moves across more than one country or type of terrain, especially in stories where we follow the hero's journey. These are sometimes revisited under different circumstances on his or her return journey. Some stories move the action to and fro between the real world and a fantasy world, encouraging the reader to compare or contrast the actions of the humans and the mythological characters.

Character

Characters are often portrayed as larger-than-life and their physical characteristics described in some detail. The frequent use of archetypes adds to the familiarity and predictability of the plot and can enhance a reader's experience. For example, in folk tales it is often clear from the outset who is the good character and who is not to be trusted. When we recognise a stereotypical villain entering the scene, the plot thickens and the suspense mounts.

These characters tend to perform a standard purpose in the way the plot unfolds. They often have little depth or development over time. For example, few villains in traditional tales reform their ways. (This is a noticeable and interesting difference between traditional stories and some other more complex and sophisticated narratives that children will meet as readers, viewers and listeners.) On the other hand the simplicity of characterisation, the predictable actions and extreme values of traditional archetypes make them accessible to children, especially for the purposes of imitation in their own independent writing or retelling.

The most common characters in traditional stories include:

- the trickster (clever but sometimes up to no good);
- the third child (apparently lazy or foolish but wins the day due to a kind heart and clever actions);
- the King (old and wise, cruel or foolishly proud);
- the Father (may be boastful or proud);
- the Mother;
- the Stepmother (often portrayed as cruel);
- the Queen (often plays a limited role);
- the Monster (the embodiment of evil);
- the Mentor (a wise person who holds important knowledge or gives the main character a helping hand);
- kind animals or creatures (help the main character in return for a kind act);
- wicked animals or creatures (trolls, goblins, wolves, foxes that pose a threat).

Principal characters in many traditional tales are often male, reflecting the male-dominated social and political culture of their origins and this observation can be an interesting historical discussion point. Later versions go some way towards redressing the gender balance and make useful comparisons.

Style

It is unsurprising that styles differ in stories that have origins in the oral traditions of many contrasting cultures. Style also sometimes differs between a version for oral storytelling and a more literary, published version that has been adapted over time for the written mode. Even so, the poetic, resonant language of the original oral stories is not usually lost in twenty-first century adaptations. Their imagery, structures and linguistic patterns continue to provide enjoyment, support memorisation and encourage colourful retelling.

Myths, legends, fairy tales and fables all have their own familiar style but some stylistic features appear in most types of traditional tales:

- rich, evocative vocabulary often with layered adjectives (the great big enormous turnip ... a wise old king ...);
- memorable language use (use of rhyme and alliteration: I'll huff and I'll puff ... Fee, fi, fo, fum ...);
- use of rhythm and repetition techniques such as refrains (He pulled and he pulled ... Rapunzel, Rapunzel, let down your golden hair ...);
- formulaic openings and endings (Once upon a time ... Long ago and far away ... And that's the way it was, and that's the way it is to this good day.);
- imagery is used heavily (simile, metaphor and symbolism evoke a particular mood, enhance a detailed description or help to create multiple meanings).

Traditional retellings sometimes retain the archaic vocabulary and clause patterns of much older versions. For example, they use verb forms and nouns no longer in general use and they position words and clauses within sentences in ways that sound unfamiliar today.

- Said the troll, "Who is that trap-trapping over my bridge?"
- 'T'was a dark, dark night ...
- Jack smote the giant on his bald pate.
- "How glad I am that ...
- ... from whence the voice came ...
- "Oh no," said he, "I care neither for your jewels nor your crown."
- Do you perchance have a crumb to spare...?
- That which you promised must you perform.
- Many leagues from the town, in a great forest, there dwelt a poor woodcutter.

Cinderella by Roald Dahl

She bellowed "Help!" and "Let me out"
The Magic Fairy heard her shout
Appearing in a blaze of light,
She said, "My dear, are you all right?"
"All right?" cried Cindy. "Can't you see
I feel as rotten as can be!"
She beat her fists against the wall,
And shouted, "Get me to the Ball!
There is a disco at the Palace!
The rest have gone and I am jealous!
I want a dress! I want a coach!
And earrings and a diamond brooch!
And silver slippers, two of those!
And lovely nylon panty-hose!
Done up like that I'll guarantee
The handsome Prince will fall for me!"
The Fairy said, "Hang on a tick,"
She gave her wand a mighty flick
And quickly, in no time at all,
Cindy was at the Palace Ball!
It made the Ugly Sisters wince
To see her dancing with the Prince.
She held him very tight and pressed
Herself against his manly chest.
The Prince himself was turned to pulp,
All he could do was gasp and gulp.



