









Using
storytelling
to talk about...

Self-confidence & self-awareness

Stories, Poems and Activities to teach and learn in the Early Years

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Published by Practical Pre-School Books, A Division of MA Education Ltd, St Jude's Church, Dulwich Road, Herne Hill, London, SE24 0PB.
Tel: 020 7738 5454 www.practicalpreschoolbooks.com
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Design: Mary Holmes [fonthillcreative](http://fonthillcreative.com) 01722 717036

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ISBN 978-1-912611-35-5

Introduction

About the series

This book is part of the '*Using storytelling to talk about...*' series which gives teaching practitioners the support and resources to develop and use storytelling and poetry/song performance skills in the Early Years Foundation Stage. Each book has specifically-written short interactive stories and poems/songs that are linked to the three different learning and development areas, 'Personal, social and emotional development', 'Understanding the world' and 'Health and self care'. The prime area 'Communication and language' is a running thread throughout all five books.

How to use the series

All the stories and poems/songs deal with issues or experiences that would be familiar to young children. They are short, interactive and simple to perform, with repetitive texts that offer the children the opportunity to respond and join in at their own level of understanding and language development.

The stories and poems/songs can be used in a variety of ways, for example:

- as a 'Let's have a short story (poem/song)' session at a set time each day or on a particular day of the week.
- as a way to help introduce, support or consolidate a topic or theme.
- by choosing a themed story/poem to support or discuss a particular issue, e.g. sharing.
- as an assembly or class performance resource.
- as a book corner recording for play sessions or quiet time.

How to use this book

This book contains eight themed sections that are linked to different early learning goals listed in the focused learning and development area. Each section has a story or a poem icon to show what type of text it is. Use the contents page to select the theme or type of text that you require.

Each section is divided into the following parts:

A. Teacher's notes

- **Theme name:** main learning skill or idea focus behind the story or poem/song and accompanying activities.
- **EYFS learning objectives:** relevant early learning goals from the book's main learning and development area.
- **What you need:** list of resources such as props, images/pictures, puppets and resource sheets.

Before the story or poem/song

- **Getting ready:** tips on what resources to collect, prepare and have ready in advance.
- **Introducing the story or poem/song:** suggestions on how to stimulate the children's curiosity and imagination

about the theme, story or poem, e.g. telling and sharing an experience, introducing a character puppet and using props or images .

- **Performance suggestions:** suggestions on how to tell or perform a story or poem/song, e.g. body movements, use of voice and child participation ideas.

After the story or poem/song

These two parts are designed as springboards for further exploration and discussion about the story or poem/song as well as its theme. They could be carried out straight after the story or poem/rhyme or over several days or weeks.

- **Ideas to reinforce the theme:** discussion ideas, activities and question examples to help consolidate the children's understanding and response to the story or poem/song and its main theme.
- **Consolidation activities:** interactive activities to reinforce the story or poem/song and its theme, e.g. using puppets, circle games, music, performance ideas, role play, parachute games and display suggestions.

B. The story or poem/song texts

Body and voice actions suggestions are included for some of the stories and poems/songs. As you get to know the stories and poems/songs, you may want to add in your own ideas and actions.

C. Related activities within the learning environment

A mix of child-led and adult-led cross-curricular activities relating to the story or poem/song and its theme. The activities can be carried out within activity stations, play or in specific learning sessions. Areas include: literacy, mathematics, art and craft, environment, small world play.

D. Resource sheets

Most of the stories and poems/songs have character or picture images. These can be copied onto card, laminated and used as puppets or as story support. Other resource sheets include games, activity cards or templates.

Other resources

Storytelling and performance evaluation record

Use this record to self-evaluate your storytelling skills and performance after each of the stories and poems/songs and for future sessions.

Observation suggestions and chart

Use 'Observation suggestions' and 'Observation chart' as an assessment guide to help you identify and note the developing skills, knowledge and attitudes of individuals or groups of children.

Preparation

One of the most important elements of story telling and poem/song performance is good preparation. Areas to consider before you see the children are:

1. Choosing a place to read or perform

Choose a comfortable and spacious area to tell stories or perform poems and songs. This could be in a book corner or a place where there is a big rug for the children to sit on. Make sure that there is room for the children to move if they will need to use body actions.

2. Look, read and learn the texts

a. Reading the text – If you prefer to read the text to the children, practise reading it out loud several times on your own. Note any need for voice intonation and expression and simple body actions as well as repetitive words or phrases that the children could join in with you.

b. Learning a story or poem/song

- Read the story or poem/song out loud to yourself several times so you get to know the plot, characters, actions, voices and repetitive texts.
- Split the story or verses into easy sections to learn off by heart.
- You don't have to learn it exactly word for word but try and learn the repetitive text and choruses.
- Story memory aid: Have the skeleton of the story with the main repetitive words/phrases by your side or put it into a 'prompt envelope'. If you forget the story, tell the children that a character has sent you a letter or card about what happened next.
- Poem/song memory aid: Have the verses on a sheet of paper near you or add the verses onto the storyboard so you can read them if needed.

c. Props

Use props to introduce a story or poem/song, enhance the telling and message, encourage interactive participation by the children or aid discussion after the telling.

Prepare or collect your props before the session and plan out how they will be used. Have them close at hand and if possible away from the children's reach. If you need to show a number of props then make sure they are laid out in the right order so that you don't need to work out where each one is while you are performing.

When selecting props, think about the story or poem/song and decide which props would work well, e.g. a bucket and spade for a sandcastle story.

d. A special story and rhyme basket/box

Have a story basket (e.g. picnic hamper) or a box with a lid in which to store the props suggested in the story or poem/song. Over time, the children will become eager to find out what is in

the basket/box for that session. Keep them guessing or offer little clues, e.g. In the basket is something we can use to build sandcastles. What is it?

e. Story board – a visual aid

Some young children find visual images help reinforce story events or characters. These are especially useful for children who speak English as a second language. One way to do this, is to have a good sized storyboard in which you can attach pictures and characters (see Resource Sheets) before and during the performance or telling. Attach a sticky backing so they can stick easily onto the board.

2. Starting the session

Develop a routine where the children know that it is story time or poem/song time. Make sure children with sight or hearing disabilities are near to you and if possible, have adult support on hand for children with physical or learning difficulties.

Start with a simple rhythm or chant as a clear signal that it's time for stories or poems and songs, e.g. a clapping rhythm, word sounds or 'Time to sit, time to listen. 1–2–3 it's story time!'

Introducing the story or poem/song

It is important to engage the children's imagination and curiosity before you start telling your story or poem/song, e.g. a related prop such as baked bread for exploring senses; introducing a character image or puppet; using an image to encourage discussion or make up a small story about your own life that links to the story or poem/song theme.

Performance skills

A storyteller can use a range of different methods to tell a story or perform a poem or song to a young audience. These include:

- speaking slowly and clearly to a point behind the group so that all the children can hear you
- looking around the group while you perform so that every child feels involved
- using different voice tone to distinguish between different characters and their moods, as well as highlighting sound effects, actions and events
- using body actions to illustrate movements and expressions
- using a small number of props
- involving the children where possible, e.g. join in with actions, words, sounds
- improvising the text or actions if you can't remember the words or in response to the children's involvement or reactions
- positively acknowledging any interruptions and then weaving back to the story.
- revisiting the story or poem/song several times so that the children recognise it and join in with words and phrases.

The most important thing is to enjoy, share and have fun with the stories, poems and songs!

Theme: Our different skills

Learning outcomes

Children at the expected level of development will:

- show an understanding of their own feelings and those of others
- set and work towards simple goals (ELG: Self-Regulation)
- be confident to try new activities and show independence. (ELG: Managing Self)
- work and play cooperatively and take turns with others (ELG: Building Relationships)

What you need:

- Our special story and rhyme basket/box (optional)
- Otto the Octopus – story
- Story board (optional)
- shell (optional)
- 'Otto the Octopus' characters/puppets – Resource sheet 1 (RS1)
- 'Otto the Octopus' template – Resource sheet 2 (RS2)

Getting ready:

Copy and cut out the 'Otto the Octopus' characters/puppets – RS1' for use or display during the story. Have the puppet of Otto the Octopus available (or in 'Our special short story and rhyme box').

Introducing the story

Show the children 'Otto the Octopus' puppet and ask if they know what he is. Point to a tentacle and say the name for the children to repeat. Count out the tentacles with the children. Explain that this is a story about how Otto became fed up with his eight tentacles. Read out the story.

Performance suggestions

Use body actions and voice intonation to show the octopus's movement and mood changes throughout the story. If performing the story, you may want to use the puppets (or let children hold them up). They could also be used as pictures on the story board. At the end of the story, discuss what Otto is doing in the picture.

Ideas to reinforce theme

- With the children, talk about and mime Otto the Octopus's tentacle actions, e.g. cooking, tossing a pancake, baking, juggling and playing instruments. Move arms busily about. Compare the arm actions with the gentle floating and swaying of a seahorse. Ask: *Why did he want to be a seahorse? What was he happy at the end of the story?*
- Highlight how Otto the Octopus was good at using his tentacles. Highlight how everyone is good at something (physical and mental skills). Share something that you think you are good at (which the children can relate to). Ask: *What do you think you are good at?* Ask specific questions or make observations to encourage contributions from reserved children.

Consolidation activities

Puppets

Use the puppet figures to extend the story or change the character focus, e.g. *What would a seahorse miss if it wished to be an octopus? What special skill would it have?*

Role play

Talk about feelings and manners. Discuss being kind, patient or polite, being good at sharing and so on. In pairs, ask the children to act out scenes showing which of these things they are good at. Ask some of the pairs to re-enact their scene to the whole group and talk about what is happening.

Display

Create a 'My special skill seascape' display with an enlarged picture of the magic pearl, seahorse and fish. Add all the children's 'I'm good at...' octopus cards (see 'Art and craft'). Add labels and names if children have not added them to their octopus. Use for discussion.



Otto the Octopus



Otto the Octopus had the best restaurant in the ocean. Fish swam from miles around to eat there.



Being an octopus, Otto had eight tentacles, which was very useful in a busy restaurant. He could cook a curry, toss a pancake into the air and bake a cake, all at the same time, thanks to his eight tentacles. He could also juggle the plates, cups, knives, forks and spoons, all at the same time, thanks to his eight tentacles. He could even entertain all his customers, thanks to his eight tentacle band.



"It must wonderful to have eight tentacles and be able to do so many things," said the fish. But Otto didn't think his eight tentacles were wonderful.



"My tentacles never keep still," he moaned. "I just want to stop! I hate being an octopus."



One day, Otto closed the restaurant and sat in a quiet spot on an oyster shell.



"I wish I could just float and swim quietly about the ocean like a pretty seahorse," sighed Otto.



Suddenly he felt strangely light and all his eight tentacles disappeared with a POP!



"What's it like being a seahorse, Otto?" asked a tiny voice.



Otto swung round and saw a beautiful glowing pearl.

"Who are you?" asked Otto.



"I'm a magic pearl. If you sit on my shell, I have to make your wishes come true."



"Fantastic!" said Otto. "No more tentacles, no more work. I can just float and swim quietly around the ocean."



So...



Otto floated gently along the bottom of the ocean.



He swam quietly near the top of the ocean, and he hovered elegantly above the coral.



Otto enjoyed being a sea horse, but after a while he started to feel a bit bored.



He saw some small stones on the seabed.





Otto the Octopus



"Great!" he cried. "I'll do some juggling."

He tried to juggle but he didn't have his eight tentacles to help him.



Then he saw some large shells.

"Wow!" he cried. "Those would make great drums."



He tried to play the shells but he didn't have his eight tentacles to help him.

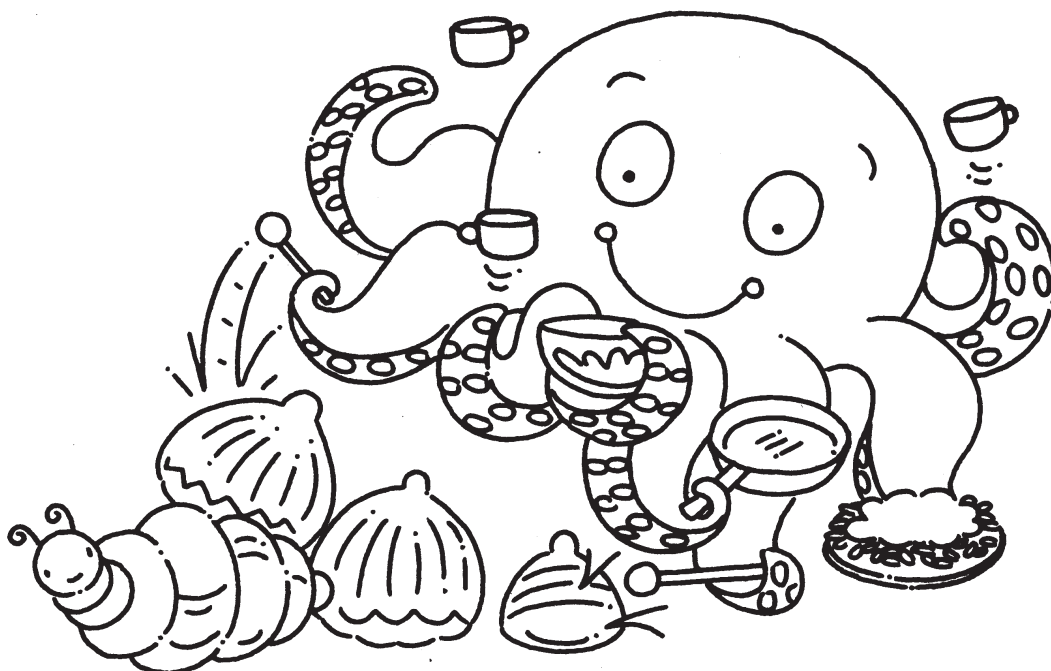
"This is silly," said Otto. "I never realised how much I would miss my eight tentacles."



So Otto swam back to the magic pearl. Sitting on the shell, he said loudly, "I enjoyed being a seahorse but I wish to be an octopus again. I can do so many different things with my tentacles."



That night, Otto the octopus had a party in his restaurant. Otto and his eight tentacles cooked, juggled, and played music all night. Otto was finally happy, though he did make one more wish – a holiday, once a year, to rest his eight tired tentacles!



Related activities within the learning environment



Literacy

Look at the letter 'o' in pairs or group. Set out twelve pictures of objects of which eight begin with 'o', (octopus, orange, otter, ostrich, owl, onion, oven, olives, one). Ask the children to select them and place them on each tentacle of a large copy of 'Otto the Octopus' template – RS2'. Let them trace the 'o' in the air.

Leave out copies of 'Otto the Octopus' characters/puppets – RS1' for the children to decorate and make into their own puppets. Encourage them to use the puppets to retell the story in their own words or create new stories such as a talent show under the sea.



Mathematics

Use 'Otto the Octopus' template – RS2' to encourage addition and counting skills using his tentacles. Write the numbers by the tentacles to help with number recognition. Ask: *How many circles and ovals can you count?*

Encourage the children to discuss what maths activity they like doing or believe they are good at. Give them more of these activities for them to enjoy or to extend their skills.



Art & Craft

Make copies of 'Otto the Octopus' template – RS2' and stick each picture onto front of folded A3 cards (reduce template size for A4 cards). Let them decorate the octopus and then copy/trace or write above it, '*I am good at...*' or '*(name of child) is good at....*'. Inside the card, the children draw or stick in pictures of what they are good at with the words to complete the sentence, '*...swimming.*'



ICT

Find and set up a simple webpage which shows the children all about the different skills and features of animals and sea-life.



Exploring

Set out bikes and soft play apparatus to reinforce the children's physical achievements.

Using damp sand, encourage the children to make sand sculptures or a sand café for Otto the Octopus.



Visitors & trips

Invite someone who can juggle to perform and talk to the children. Have a fun follow-up session, juggling beanbags or soft balls.

Resource sheet 1

'Otto the Octopus' characters/puppets

Copy and cut out each image for discussion, matching and game activities.

