

# ACTIVATING STORIES

Get ready to make storytelling come to life with these engaging arts activities

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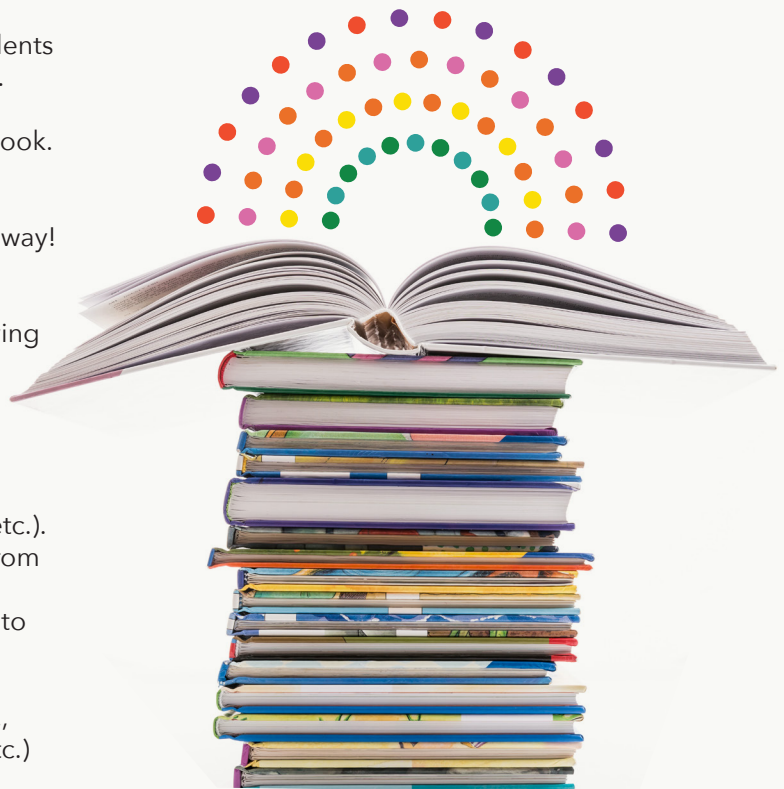


# IT'S A STORY WOOSH!

**Materials Needed:** A book of your choosing, simple musical instruments (optional)

Use this activity to implement theater techniques and bring a book you're reading with your students to life!

1. Choose a book you are reading with your students to explore through various theater techniques.
2. First, facilitate a traditional read-aloud of the book.
3. Next, tell your students that they are going to explore bringing this story to life in a different way!
4. As you read through the story page by page, ask for volunteers to do any or all of the following (start with one of these options, and layer as you go through the story!):
  - Pose as the characters on the page in the beginning of the story.
  - Take on different scenery elements (e.g., become trees, buildings or objects, etc.).
  - Have students say important lines of text from the story in unison.
  - Ask specific students posing as characters to say aloud what they think their character is thinking in that moment.
  - Have students create the soundscape (e.g., the sound of the wind, rain, a music hall, etc.) for a particular scene.
5. After you complete each activation of a page or two, have your students join you in saying, "Woosh!" to clear out the action and start fresh, bringing the next page(s) to life with new volunteers and theatrical elements.
6. Have your students join you in unison saying, "The End" when the story woosh is completed!



## REFLECTION QUESTIONS

*What did you enjoy about bringing this story to life?  
What other book have we read as a group do you think would be fun to do as a story woosh?  
What was challenging about this activity?*

# PHYSICAL PHABLES

**Materials Needed:** chart paper, markers

Use this activity to work with your students to become master storytellers and bring their own stories to life!

- Begin by asking students: *What are different ways to tell a captivating story?* Then, write down their suggestions on chart paper for reference.
 

**Note:** *Suggestions may include fun characters and character voices, moments of suspense, music, comedy, etc.*
- Tell students to get ready for storytime by saying, "Today you're not just going to listen to the story, you're going to become all of the elements that help make up the story." Then guide them through an exercise in which the students make up the beginning, middle and end of a story and you play the scribe! Don't forget that their story must have a moral or lesson learned!
- Once it's written, read through the story aloud once or twice for the entire group so they can get a sense of the story's flow. Then, go back through the book, highlighting vocabulary, characters, settings and other elements of the story using the following questions:
  - *What colors did you imagine in the story?*
  - *What objects did you hear about or imagine?*
  - *What characters were part of the story?*
  - *What did they like to do together?*
  - *Where do you think they lived?*
  - *How did the characters feel throughout the story?*
- Then, tell your students that they're going to bring the story to life by exploring engaging elements of storytelling. Select a few elements such as:
  - Tableau (frozen picture)
  - Participants as Characters (who/what is in the story)
  - Creating Physical Setting (where the story takes place)
  - Soundscaping (the background music, noise or soundtrack made with the mouth, body or found objects)
  - Thought-Tracking (hearing what individual characters are thinking at any given point in the story)
- Put all of these ideas into practice by leading students through a story woosh, in which they create moments of the story, while you act as the narrator and offer direction as the story is told.
 

**Note:** *It's best to activate the story one section at a time.*
- Once you've finished a moment or two of the story, have everyone say the word "WOOSH!" and make a sweeping motion with your hands, making way for the exploration of the next part of the story. Once you've repeated this for each moment of the story, you will have activated your very own fable!

## REFLECTION QUESTIONS

*What was it like to explore stories and make them come to life?*

*Did becoming different parts of this story help you better understand it? Why or why not?*

*What were some of your favorite moments to create?*

*What was the most challenging part of this activity?*



# MY FAVORITE STORY

Everyone has a favorite story. What's yours? Is it a fairy tale? Is it a story a friend or family member told you? Think about it! Then, put your illustrator cap on and draw your favorite part of that story in the space below!



## Unit Plan Brainstorms

### **PICTURE(BOOK) THIS!** (ENGLISH LANGUAGE ARTS, THEATER)

It's time for you and your students to become playwrights and composers and bring one of your favorite books from the page to the stage! Encourage your students to think about a book you're currently reading or have read as a group and how it could become a play or a musical. To begin the process, read the book aloud to them. Make sure to draw attention to descriptive language, different settings, characters, colors and emotions. Then, read select pages through a second time, asking students to take turns becoming the characters, creating songs and creating the set out of objects found at home!

### **A DAY IN THE LIFE OF YOU** (ENGLISH LANGUAGE ARTS, THEATER)

Turn your learning space into a theater and your students into puppeteers! Work with your students to create puppets (or shadow puppets) using paper bags or cutouts and popsicle sticks, and use them to tell the story of their daily lives! Once their puppet creations are complete, have students share aloud what/who their puppet is and how it could be used to help tell their story. Then, ask students questions about their daily life and routines, like: *What do you do before you get ready to learn? What is your routine during your school day?* Have students practice telling their stories with their puppet characters. Then have student volunteers perform their story, with the help of their puppet masterpieces!

### **LET'S TELL A STORY!** (ENGLISH LANGUAGE ARTS, THEATER)

Work with your students to activate a story that you are reading or have read as a group! Create puppets using shadow puppetry, paper bags or cutouts and popsicle sticks! Once the puppets have been created, students can share aloud what/who their puppet is and how their character engages in the action of the story. Then, perform your puppet masterpiece for friends or family!

### **FESTIVAL OF COLORS** (ENGLISH LANGUAGE ARTS, THEATER)

It's extremely important to recognize what makes us unique and beautiful in order to practice self-love. Tell students they are going to work together to create a talent show telling the stories of their individual uniqueness. Start by asking them: *What is your favorite color and why?* Next, ask each of them to share, verbally or physically, one quality or talent that makes them feel unique, like singing, dancing or creating an interesting noise they can make with their mouth. Direct each student to show off their quality or talent, while encouraging the rest of your students to cheer, clap and whistle in celebration of the other students' unique talents! Finally, tell students that they are going to put together their very own colorful festival of talents. Work with them to curate your very own *Festival of Colors*! Then, wearing clothing with their favorite color on them, have a vibrantly colorful talent show! Not only have you created a celebration of what makes your students unique, but you're also reinforcing a supportive and positive community!

## Unit Plan Brainstorms

### SHADOW PLAY (THEATER, VISUAL ART)

As a group, work together to create your own shadow animal menagerie and engage with shadow exploration and storytelling! Generate a list of animals your students know of or want to learn more about. Then, have each student choose an animal that they would like to explore further from the list. Next, have students create the face of their favorite animal out of construction paper, cardstock or paper plates to use as wearable masks.\* Have your students explore their animal's physicality with and without wearing their mask.

**Hint:** *To deepen this exploration, use recorded music or soundscaping (sounds created with the mouth or body) to create a more immersive atmosphere.* Using a flashlight, help each student explore their animal shadows on the wall. Finally, have your students put on their very own shadow puppetry showcase for a friend or family member!

**\*Teacher's Note:** For inspiration or to find different animal mask templates you can use for SHADOW PLAY, visit [www.firstpalette.com/Craft\\_themes/Animals/animalmasks/animalmask.html](http://www.firstpalette.com/Craft_themes/Animals/animalmasks/animalmask.html)

### ANIMAL BABIES: WHAT'S THE DIFFERENCE? (ENGLISH LANGUAGE ARTS, THEATER)

Animal babies and human babies are similar in many ways, but they are born and experience growing up very differently. As a group research project, work to find out how different woodland animals are born and nurtured once they come into the world. Then, create visual charts of the differences and similarities in characteristics between different types of animals, as well as the differences and similarities between animals and humans. Ask your students questions like: *How are humans and woodland animals alike? How are they different?* Next, ask students to choose a baby animal that they would like to embody. Then, ask them to find out the following about the animal they chose.: *What is your animal's daily routine? Where does it sleep? What does it eat?* Once each student has an idea of their animal, have them take the different traits of their animal, making sure to ask them questions like,: *How does your animal walk? What sounds does it make? How does your animal stand or lie down?* Finally, have students create a forest using objects found at home! Have them physically explore what life is like for baby animals in this environment, making sure to focus on relationships between different animals, the spaces they occupy in the forest and their respective daily routines.

### WE ARE FAMILY (ENGLISH LANGUAGE ARTS, THEATER)

Turn your learning space into a storyteller's haven by adapting a book you've read or are reading as a group! Together, work with your students to figure out the arc of the story by discussing who's in the story, where the story is set, what triggers the conflict and what the characters need to do to resolve that conflict. Then, develop a cast of characters and environments, make a script or narrative story and build puppets and scenery out of objects found in your home! **Note:** *This is a great time to find different ways to utilize the different objects found in your room's centers or specialty areas!* Once you've created your very own play featuring puppets, narration and/or spoken word and shadow puppetry, share your adaptation with a virtual audience!

## Unit Plan Brainstorms

### **ANYTHING CAN PUPPET IF YOU LET IT!** (ENGLISH LANGUAGE ARTS, HISTORY, THEATER)

You don't have to have a big budget to make a puppet. You just need to be creative and resourceful! Gather some miscellaneous objects found in your learning space, such as books, blocks or binders, to facilitate a puppetry exploration. Discuss with your students their prior knowledge of what puppets are by asking: *What is a puppet? Where have you seen puppets before? Have you ever used or made a puppet?* Then, tell them that anything can be a puppet if you make it so. Explain that, using the objects provided, they're going to make their very own puppet! Their task is to bring an everyday object to life, and give it a name and a backstory. Offer other prompts like: *Where are its eyes? What sounds, if any, does your puppet make? What is your puppet's superpower? Is it the same as your own superpower?* Finally, have a puppet show-and-tell-a-story so that your students, and their puppets, have their time in the spotlight!

### **THE STYLES OF PUPPETRY** (ENGLISH LANGUAGE ARTS, VISUAL ARTS)

Puppetry is an exciting and engaging mode of storytelling, but students might wonder: *What exactly is puppetry? When and how did it originate? How did it get its name?* Guide your students through a series of lessons focusing on the storied history of the many styles of puppetry by showing them artistic renderings, photos, and clips from movies and television shows that feature famous puppet performances like *Punch and Judy*, *Sesame Street*, *Mr. Rogers' Neighborhood* or *Fraggle Rock*! After you and your students have learned all there is to know about the many styles of puppetry, have students create their very own puppet out of paper bags, construction paper and other crafting supplies that might be found at home! Then, using their puppets, have them tell a story all their own!

### **THEY'RE THE MOST WONDERFUL TIMES OF THE YEAR**

(ENGLISH LANGUAGE ARTS, SOCIAL STUDIES, WORLD HISTORY, VISUAL ARTS)

Engage your students in a bit of personal storytelling! New York City is home to over 8 million unique individuals with countless ethnic and cultural backgrounds—and where there are myriad cultures, there are also myriad traditions! Work with your students to learn more about the traditions celebrated across different cultures throughout the year. Then, create opportunities for each student to share their favorite respective holiday traditions, or absence of traditions, and why their traditions are important to them. Have each student draw their favorite holiday tradition or activity and then create a virtual "*Festival of Us*" bulletin board that celebrates their unique holiday traditions!