

# Stories To Play With!

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*"The Storyteller LuAnn Adams is a bit of an alchemist herself turning an ordinary room into a fantastical landscape as she relates her vivid tales." -New York Times*

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### Stories To Play With!: *Vocabulary*

**The Storyteller** – In the early days, the keeper of history, culture & tradition. Storytellers were bearers of news, the keepers of culture, the historians & the entertainers. Traveling storytellers went from village to village with tales, songs anecdotes fables & news. They often created stories to teach important lessons.

**Stories** – Stories are the way that history, traditions & cultural values are passed on from generation to generation. Long ago, stories were often used to teach specific customs or ways of behavior that need to be reinforced or taught. Stories were also created & told as a way of explaining natural phenomena.

**Folktale** – A story, often with a known cultural origin, but whose authorship is not known. Folktales are stories that have traditionally been told, not written down, but passed from generation to generation, orally.

**Porquoi tale** – The How & Why Tales – Stories with a clear explanation of how some phenomena of nature was created or came to be. The stories often have a distinct Beginning, Middle & End & have a lesson or moral reason to be learned from the telling. Often, the Middle of the tale involves a 'magical' cause & effect that transforms/create the result that is stated in the title of the story.

### Stories To Play With!: *Before/After the Performance*

Here is a list of **10 storytelling activities for kids perfect for storytelling** from:  
<https://www.imagineforest.com/blog/storytelling-activities-kids/>

**1. Storytelling Prompts Jar:** Grab an empty jar from your kitchen and some torn up pieces of paper. On each small piece of paper write a random word or phrase. This could be anything, such as cat, princess or cow. Put all the torn up pieces of paper inside the jar. Then take turns to take out a piece of paper. Whatever the word is on that paper, that person must tell a story using that word or phrase. If your child gets stuck, you can use prompts, such as: "What does your character see or hear?" "Who else is there?" "What does the place look like?"

**2. Using Maps to Tell Stories:** This storytelling activity for kids was inspired by the old [pirate treasure hunt activity for kids](#). Ask your child to draw a map of a town, imaginary or real. They could include places such as a school, hospital, library, park and shops. Now with your map created, you can use it as a prompt for storytelling! If your map is of an imaginary town, you can imagine what it would be like to live there. Tell a story about the day-to-day activities in that town or of different scenarios. For example "Aliens coming to the town..." Of course you can still pretend that you're a pirate on a treasure hunt or a tourist trying to find your way around town!

**3. Paper Finger Puppets:** Finger cone puppets are extremely good for creating dialogue between characters. You can make some quick finger puppets out of paper. Your paper puppets can be any characters you like, such as some fairy-tale characters or even family members. Try practicing dialogue between the characters in different scenarios, such as "I'm going on vacation to..." For example "What is your character doing?" or "describe who your character is in this story?"

**4. Story Stones:** Story stones are smooth rocks that you can find at the beach or purchase at a craft store. You can use stickers, paints or magazine cut-outs to decorate your story stones. Depending on what is printed on the stone, you can use it in many ways. For example, as characters in a dollhouse or as building blocks. Similar to the storytelling prompts jar, you can randomly pick up a story stone or multiple story stones to tell a story.

**5. Story Cubes:** Just like the story stones and storytelling prompts jar, the stone cubes can be like dice and used to provide some inspiration on how to start your story. Create your own story cubes. Once done, you can toss the cubes around and see what object they land on. Whatever you land on, that's the object you can include in your storytelling! You can also use multiple story cubes to structure your story. For example, your story cubes can be used to decide on the hero in your story, the setting, the villain and any other extra props to include.

**6. Family Photos:** Get old family photos out and tell some memorable stories! Sometimes you can capture the most interesting things in photographs. You can play a game, such as tell a story in less than 10 photographs. Or flip through different photos, saying what you see in each one. Don't worry if your child keeps repeating the same story over and over again. Just provide them with some extra suggestions to help change the story.

**7. Make up a Giant Carrot story with the characters in your family!** Illustrate it & act it out with your family. You can use a turnip, pumpkin, cucumber or a vegetable of your choice.

**8. Draw a Picture Game:** This one is a fun group activity. Everyone starts off by drawing any picture they like on a piece of paper. Then they swap their drawings with the person next to them. That person now tells a story based on the drawing they have. This is a great game for bonding & you may get some funny stories out of your kids.

**9. Toy Box:** Your toy box is an excellent source of storytelling. Filled with dolls, Lego, animal pieces and who knows what else, you're spoilt for choice on story ideas. You can organize your toys into different story characters. Who will play the villain and who is the hero? And use your home as a setting, any other toys as props or side characters. Then let the storytelling

**10. Upcycled Story Magnets:** You can recycle any old books you no longer need. Cut out the images, stick them on a sheet of cardboard and add some adhesive magnets on the back. You can do the same with copies of family photos! And your upcycled story magnets are done! You kids will love sticking these story magnets on your fridge and re-arranging all the items to make a unique story.

*"More valuable than the treasures in a storehouse are the treasures of the body.  
And the most valuable of all are the treasures of the heart." – Nichiren Daishonin.*

## Stories To Play With!: *The Stories*

**The Hedgehog Tale** ...A little hedgehog who was born in the spring does not want to hibernate & tells his mother "I don't want to go to sleep!". A winter adventure & an encounter with a fox changes his mind.

**Brave Little Red** ...A rhythmic retelling of a classic Grimm's fairytale!

**Why Crocodile Does Not Eat Hen** ... Crocodile is determined to eat fat and juicy-looking Hen! But when she opens her mouth wide to swallow her, Hen calmly says, "Don't eat me, Sister" and Crocodile just can't do it. What does Hen mean? How can Crocodile be her sister? Does Hen know something Crocodile doesn't?

**How the Children Got The Sun Up in the Sky** ... One of the oldest tales in the world. An African/Bushman Porquoi tale of how the children got sun up in the sky. A boy is born with circles of light underneath his arms. He lights up the world and then grows old. He asks the children to throw him up in the sky!

**The Giant Carrot** ... A rollicking, cumulative tale of the characters in my family as they struggle to pull up a giant carrot.

## Stories To Play With!: *Discussion Questions/Some Things to Try!*

**The Hedgehog Tale** ...Can you think of another animal that hibernates? Frogs, Turtles, Bears, Snakes? Skunks? What do you think hedgehogs dream about when they hibernate? Draw a picture of the winter dreams that your favorite hibernating animal might have & share the stories that they might be having in their winter dreams!

**Brave Little Red** ...Can you think of a story that you have read or had read to you more than 10 times! How has your imagination added to the story when you have heard it over & over? Can you think of a story you might like to recycle or add details to, that are not in the book or original source of the tale? Write, illustrate & tell your new version of the story!

**Why Crocodile Does Not Eat Hen** ... Crocodile is determined to eat fat and juicy-looking Hen! But when she opens her mouth wide to swallow her, Hen calmly says, "Don't eat me, Sister" and Crocodile just can't do it. What does Hen mean? How can Crocodile be her sister? Does Hen know something Crocodile doesn't?

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## Stories To Play With!

### *LuAnn's Picture Book (& Audio Story) Recommendations*

<b>Abiyoyo</b>	retold by Pete Seeger
<b>Amy's Letter</b>	by Ezra Jack Keats
<b>The Boy &amp; the Ghost</b>	retold by Robert San Souci
<b>Brave Irene</b>	by William Steig
<b>The Cherry Tree</b>	by Daisaku Ikeda
<b>Chicken Sunday</b>	by Patricia Polacco
<b>The Empty Pot</b>	retold by Demi
<b>The Grain of Sand</b>	recorded on "Brave Little Red & other Tales" by LuAnn Adams
<b>Keep the Lights Burning Abbie</b>	by Peter Roop
<b>Maggie &amp; the Pirate</b>	by Ezra Jack Keats
<b>Nomi &amp; the Magic Fish</b>	by Phumbla M'bane
<b>Nyganara</b>	from "Third World Voice for Children" pgs. 25-28
<b>One Riddle, One Answer</b>	by Lauren Thompson
<b>Over the Deep Blue Sea</b>	by Daisaku Ikeda
<b>The Rough Face Girl</b>	retold by Rafe Martin
<b>The Snow Country Prince</b>	by Daisaku Ikeda
<b>The Twelve Days of Diving</b>	recorded on "The Tricky Caterpillar..." by LuAnn Adams

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## Stories To Play With!: Bibliography & Books for Teachers

- **Children Tell Stories: A Teaching Guide** By Martha Hamilton & Mitch Weiss
- **The Power of Story: Teaching Through Storytelling** By Rives Collins & Pamela J. Cooper
- **"I'm A Little Teapot! Presenting Preschool Storytime"** By Jane Cobb
- **Storytelling: Reading Aloud and Roleplaying with Children** By Bob Barton & David Booth

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## 30 Storytelling Tips For Educators:

Capture Your Students' Imagination! By Julie DeNeen

*Storytelling has been around as long as humankind. It is one of the most effective ways to communicate an important truth to another person. It gives meaning, context, and understanding in a world that is often filled with chaos and disorder. If a teacher becomes an excellent storyteller, he or she can ensure that any concept they teach will be remembered for years to come. Stories can be used to illustrate scientific or mathematical processes as well. Stories bring information, knowledge, and truth to life.*

**1. Every Part Must Be Essential** When you compose your storyline, be it a fictional story to teach a lesson, or a non-fiction example, make sure that each part of the story is essential to the ending. Each character, point, or principle must somehow relate to the main point you are trying to drive home. Let's take for example, a story about the planets. You may be trying to help students memorize the order of the solar system. Any tale you concoct to help illuminate the facts must be related to the planets. Keep the main thing...the main thing.

**2. You Must Have a Hook In Your Opening** You hook the listener in by presenting a problem that encourages them to keep listening. You can use this tactic in any lesson. For example, if you are teaching the concept of photosynthesis, start your story by imagining a world in which all the flowers didn't have leaves. You create a problem that the story (in this case photosynthesis) solves. In many cases, students don't realize how many principles they take for granted (gravity, light, etc.) Creating a world in which it is taken away reveals the ultimate importance of the process you are describing.

**3. Draw a Theme Out of Your Story** Stories have a depth of meaning when there is a theme. However, it isn't always easy to write a story with a theme in mind. Rather, write the story first- with all the points you want to cover. When you've finished, stand back from the story for a moment to see if you can draw out a theme.

**4. Keep It Simple** *If your audience is young, simple is best. Scientific principles like gravity and electricity can be difficult for young minds. Using analogies can help. For example, to explain an electrical circuit, describe how a train can only move along tracks that are connected to each other. A broken track means the train must stop and electricity is the same way.*

**5. Maintain Eye Contact** *Eye contact is most important. It not only helps keep a student's attention, but it also conveys a sense of confidence and truthfulness. Always look directly into your student's eyes. You will connect with them and keep their attention longer.*

**6. Use Vivid Language That Kids Can Understand** *Some psychologists argue that telling stories is one of the primary ways humans learn. Even if you are teaching science or math concepts, pick a word or two that your students haven't heard of before. Describe and define the word first, and then use it throughout the story. For example, if you are talking science, identify the word "energy" and then use it several times during your story. By the end of the story, they will have learned the concepts of the tale plus some vocabulary.*

**7. Use Movement** *As the storyteller, you can paint pictures with your body- using your hands, feet, legs, and head. Similarly, you can ask the students to perform movements during certain parts of the story. This will help activate their memory and keep their attention focused on what you are communicating.*

**8. Use Dramatic Pauses** *People often talk more quickly than the brain can process. If you pause at crucial moments in the story, you give your students the chance to think critically about the piece of information you have just given. Don't be afraid to pause, especially at a tense moment.*

**9. Change Your Voice With Different Characters** *It helps to make characters more memorable when you give them personalities. Part of that includes changing your voice with each character. Without visual props, the voice is one of the best ways to bring the character to life.*

**10. Make Your Ending Strong With an Important Take Away Point** *The ending is the last thing your students will hear. Whatever points and/or principles you think are most important, put them at the end. If you can make the ending one sentence, this is even better. Use alliteration, repetitive words, or a singsong cadence to help make it memorable.*

**11. Tell The Truth, Even When It's Difficult** *Adults are tempted to lie to children when the situation seems too complex or mature for younger audiences. However, telling the truth is always preferable, even if you have to adapt some of the details and adjust your language for younger audiences.*

**12. Make The Character Relatable** *The main character of your story must be relatable to your students. You want them to "root" for the character's choices and decisions. One way to do this is to make the character "feel" real. He or she shouldn't be perfect, but have weaknesses and talents just like we all do. Student's love to root for the good guy in a story. Keep in mind; it doesn't have to be human. For example, when you talk about pollution, make recycled paper the good guy, and aerosol cans the enemy. Anything can have a good and evil counterpart.*

**13. Have Your Story Provide An Answer To a Problem** *Every story has theme or meaning. When you can tell a tale that provides a solution to a problem, there is higher likelihood that the story will take on a deeper meaning when it solves a problem in real life. When you are trying to communicate facts (like multiplication facts for example) perhaps create a story in which a character must know those facts in order to divide her gifts up among her family members.*

**14. Know Your Ending Before You Begin** *Before you tell a story, know the ending. Good storytellers, when they begin to formulate their story, start at the end and work backwards. As you prepare, pick the ending first. Then think about the point that comes right before the end, then the point that comes before the point that gets to the end. Keep working backwards until you arrive at the beginning of your story.*

**15. Appeal To The Senses** *When preparing your story, activate as many senses as possible. The more a story activates the senses, the more memorable it becomes. For a lesson in geography, you can use a visual map first. Add a song to help memorize the countries or cities. Use props that the students can hold. Maybe you can offer a food from each locale, to activate touch and smell.*

**16. The Story Should Be "Trustable"** *Don't offer coincidences that magically solve the problem. Whatever world or situation your character is in, don't break its rules just to end the story.*

**17. Invite Interaction** *Depending on the subject, you may want to enlist your student's help in solving the problem. Perhaps you could tell the first half of the story and ask them to brainstorm an ending that solves the problem. Students can work in groups*

and learn from others who may have chosen to solve the story a different way. It helps students understand the idea that stories have multiple solutions.

**18. Make The Stakes High Against The Goal** Stories with a happy ending must first overcome obstacles. Before you get to the end of the story, you want to create dramatic tension that makes the listener think, "Will the character reach his or her goal?" A good story knows how to use tension. Whatever the hero wants, make it difficult for him or her to get there.

**19. Use Props** Almost any story can benefit from props, no matter what subject you are teaching. You can ask a student to hold the prop or even let students use the prop(s) in ways that create another problem in the story. Magicians often do this in their show. They ask someone to come to the front and help with juggling. Then, the magician allows the helper to "accidentally" break the plate that the magician plans to put together. This can work well in math. If you have a student manipulate a prop (like for example breaking several pretzels), you can then showcase the mathematical principles of fractions and division.

**20. Create The Extraordinary Out of The Ordinary** A story doesn't have to be dramatic in order to highlight a point. In many cases, taking a mundane event and looking at it from a different angle is just as profound. For example, if you are talking about accepting other cultures, try this. Pick a common ritual (like men shaving their faces), and tell the story from the angle of a character from another world that has never seen such a thing. Better yet, treat the students like they are from another world. "Did you know that I saw someone put a knife to his face the other day?!" Use different vocabulary words (like knife versus razor). "Then, he smeared this unknown substance all over his face and used the sharp edge of the knife to rub it off!" Your students might be shocked when you reveal that you were simply talking about shaving. Then you can go into the idea and philosophy behind prejudice and discrimination against other cultures that are unfamiliar.

**21. Set The Scene** It is crucial to create an environment for your story. Are you in the woods, on the beach, in a little apartment in the city, or on a different planet? Describe the surroundings, the weather, or the pre-existing conditions. Use rich detail so the students can picture the environment in their imaginations. Field trips are such a fantastic way to get into a different environment, but it isn't always possible. Words, descriptions of smell, sounds, and sights will make the story more meaningful.

**22. Use Music** Music is an excellent way to learn. If you are teaching the fifty states, a song with a catchy rhythm will help solidify the memorization process. Songs have long been used throughout history to help cultures preserve traditions and historic events.

**23. Create Fun Sound Effects** If it is a stormy night, enlist the help of your younger students by asking them to each be in charge of a "sound effect". Adding 'sounds' is fun to make a story participatory!

**24. Have Your Students' Retell It Back To You** Once you are done with your story, have the students form groups and retell the story in a different way. Perhaps, you can assign them the task of summarizing the story in a sentence. The important part about this concept is to get the student's involved in an active way. They've spent some time listening; now it is time to put it into action.

**25. Draw Real Life Connections** If your story teaches abstract concepts, find real life examples that make the information more meaningful. If you are trying to teach a history lesson, put the events in a different context. Imagine it now in the present day, with present situations. How would the scene play out in 2012 versus 1914? All of a sudden, history will feel much more "real" and alive.

**26. Use Repetition** This tip works well with younger students. Oftentimes, storybooks have a repeated phrase throughout the story (i.e. "I do not like green eggs and ham. I do not like them Sam I am). Do this when you start, in the middle, and at the end. Pick an important concept and repeat it over and over. You can describe the same concept with different words if you wish.

**27. Write Your Story In One Sentence Before You Begin** In order to keep your story simple and focused on what's important, narrow it down to one sentence. Start with the beginning, and then add the middle, and the end. In the sentence, you should get the main purpose of the story, as well as the competing concept that threatens the story's goal. Some people might think, "I can't narrow down my story to one sentence!" Yes you can. It will force you to iron out the most crucial points. Once you do this, expand the sentence into a paragraph. Then expand each sentence in the paragraph to its own paragraph. Continue onward until your story is complete.

**28. Avoid Detours** Simplify, simplify, simplify. Cut out characters, scenes, and information that do not somehow work towards the goal of the story. If you aren't sure if something is crucial or not, tell it to a friend or fellow teacher, and remove the parts in question. If the story still flows well and has meaning, then it wasn't necessary.

**29. Create a Timeline** Write a timeline of events for you to keep track of the order. You can even put up an empty timeline on the board, and as you tell the story- add the important events as they happen. Combine the idea of props and interaction into your timeline. When you are done, the timeline will be filled out, and act as a visual prop for your students.

**30. Don't Give Away Too Much!** When you tell a story that has some mystery, you invite the listeners to try to figure out the solution for themselves. When they do, chances are- it will be more memorable and long lasting. The key is to give enough

information so the student can solve the problem, but not so much that it is obvious. If you leave no trail of hints and clues, then it will be frustrating and impossible to solve. Invite your students into the storytelling process. Give them enough to understand and follow along, but not so much that you are spoon-feeding. Add drama, props, effects, and set the scene, so the listeners are drawn into the story; its characters, problem, and ultimately, the solution.

***“Tell me a fact and I learn. Tell me a truth and I’ll believe. But, tell me a story and it will live in my heart forever.” - Native American Proverb***

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## About **LuAnn Adams**

is an awarding-winning storyteller, recording artist, actor & author. She tells stories for children & adults at schools, theaters, libraries, museums, zoos, aquariums, wildlife centers, festivals, hospitals & special-needs learning centers across the United States—as well as in Vietnam, Cambodia & Egypt. Each storytelling performance inspires young people to discover their courage, explore the healing power of dialogue for creating choices & embrace their hope-filled dreams for a peaceful world.

LuAnn has performed at & received 23 touring grants from the **Cincinnati Playhouse** to create & perform multicultural storytelling programs for children & families in schools in the Ohio & Kentucky. Her animal storytelling programs have delighted visitors at national wildlife centers, zoos & aquariums New York & New Jersey for more than 15 years. LuAnn conducted storytelling master classes at **Northwestern University** in Chicago for five years. She has performed in Elementary & Middle Schools & for the **Clark County School Librarians Association (CCSLA)** annual meetings in Las Vegas. LuAnn has created, performed & conducted storytelling residencies extensively in NYC & East Coast schools for more than 25 years. For the past 5 years she has performed Civil War stories for History Re-Enactment Festivals in Minnesota, sharing stories with more than 20,000 Middle & High School students.

LuAnn created & will be performing ***“The Rabbit in the Moon & other Marvelous Tales of the Night Sky”*** at the Abrams Planetarium in East Lansing Michigan in March 2020. This is her 2<sup>nd</sup> performance series for the Wharton Center, she performed ***“Jaws, Paws & Claws – Animal Wisdom Tales”*** at the **Pasant Theater** in January 2017.

LuAnn is a member of the National Storytelling Network, New York Storytelling Center, Actor’s Equity Association & SAG-AFTRA. She has a BA in Theater Arts & Child Psychology from Macalester College & an MFA in Acting from the Mason Gross School of the Arts at Rutgers University. Her award-winning storytelling CDs may be found in schools, libraries & homes all over the world.

***“The storyteller LuAnn Adams is a bit of an alchemist herself, turning an ordinary room into a fantastical landscape as she relates her vivid tales.”***

***- New York Times***

Watch LuAnn’s Storytelling:

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LuAnn’s CDs are available for download & purchase at CDBaby.com, Amazon.com:

**“Jaws, Paws & Claws - Animal Wisdom Tales”**

***Won: The National Parenting Publications (NAPPA) Gold Award***

**“Tipingee, Brer Rabbit & The Mouse That Barked”**

***Won: The National Parenting Publications (NAPPA) Gold Award***

**“The Tricky Caterpillar & other Tales”**

***Won: The Parents’ Choice Silver Honors Award & The National Parenting Publications (NAPPA) Honors Award***

**“Brave Little Red & other Tales”**

***Won: The Parents’ Choice Recommended Seal & The National Parenting Publications (NAPPA) Gold Award***

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***“These excellent collections of well-told tales deserve a place in every library with an audio storytelling collection.” - School Library Journal***