

Story boxes

A story box is a miniature setting, a shoe box-sized stage with a background and objects within it relating to either to a specific book, or to a common story scenario.

Story boxes are a great resource to support children's exploration of stories. They form areas in which to retell a favourite story, as well as creative arenas for children to make up new stories too – both encouraging talk, imagination and literacy skills.

Ideas – An arctic story box

Stick cotton wool to create a snowy setting inside the box and use glitter and PVA glue to make an icy pool. Then add some arctic animals and an igloo if you can find one.

How to make a story box

1. Find a shoe box (or similar). A shoe box is ideal – once your story box is made the lid can be used to help to store the box securely when it's not in use.
2. Cut down two of the vertical edges to create a flap on one side to open up the box. This is how the children can see into the box, and reach in to move items around as they're telling the story.
3. Decide on your theme – you might like to make one story box for a common story setting (such as forest, north pole, castle) and a second to use with a particular story, perhaps following children's interests in picking a current favourite.
4. Cover the inside of the box in materials, such as tissue paper or felt to recreate the setting of your choice.
5. Collect objects for the inside of the box which would be found in the setting, such as small people and other characters, items of furniture or buildings, and small and full-size objects found in the setting.

Ideas – In The Night Garden story box

Depending on the size of your box you could include the gazebo, the stepping stone path, the Tombliboo bush and washing line or Makka Pakka's cave, as well as the children's favourite characters.

How to use a story box

- Start off by working closely with the children to model how to use the boards. Once children have got used to them, they will be able to use the boards independently.
- Children will enjoy making up their own stories, naming the characters and leading them through the setting, meeting various objects on the way.
- Older children may enjoy retelling the story themselves using the box as a stage.
- Use the box to learn more about children's interests. They may provide you with inspiration for future learning and future book choices.

Ideas – A birthday story box

Cover the inside of the box in birthday wrapping paper and put party hats, presents, cake and a birthday card inside as well as some small people.

Sharing story boxes with parents

- Story boxes are another resource that can be lent out to parents to use at home
- Before you do, make sure you invite parents in to model how the story box is used.
- Encourage them to retell stories using it, and allow their children to use it to make up their own.
- Encourage parents to let you know how they got on – what did they notice about what kind of stories their child is interested in?

Ideas – A castle story box

Paint the box grey and fill it with a knight, a princess, a dragon, some castle furniture and a tower made out of a kitchen roll that children can erect when the box is open.

For more practical ideas, resources and more see our website at www.literacytrust.org.uk/early.