

Story Spine

Once upon a time....

And every day....

And every day...

And then one day....

And because of that....

And because of that....

And ever since that day....

- 1) For this activity, students should be able to refer to the “spine” -- posted on the wall or perhaps a hand-held printout.
- 2) The goal is to be able to tell a story as a group that follows this structure, one person at a time. I recommend having them in a whole-class circle to play the story as a whole-class. Don't talk about structure yet-- let them play a few times and discover the structure together with your side coaching.

Eventually, you can guide them into seeing how the structure flows:

Person #1 introduces the main character (and perhaps the setting and character's motivation);

Person #2 picks up from #1 to continue developing character(s) and plot;

Person #3 Continues developing the plot (perhaps adding complications);

Person #4 adds the climax, or a turning point in the plot;

Person #5 adds the “falling action” -- the result of the turning point;

Person #6 adds more “falling action” --results of #4 or #5;

Person #7 Adds the “moral to the story” type of closing.

- 3) Practice a few times as a whole group, then break them into groups (4-7 members-- size does not matter). In those groups, they should tell multiple stories, each time starting with a different member of the group.
- 4) Teacher should roam the room and give encouragement and coaching.
- 5) After a chosen amount of time -- teacher discretion-- inform the groups that they should use the next four (?) minutes to rehearse “re-telling” their best story. For fun, encourage them to choose the story that had the best “lesson-learned”
- 6) Use the last 10 minutes of class for group “performances” of them retelling their story.
- 7) Closing: Referring to the “Reasons why we tell stories” that you developed today, which of those reasons did we experience in our stories today?
- 8) If you are a teacher who gives homework, you can assign this to be done at home; others might preview it for the next class:

Write at least one story that follows the “story spine” structure.

Once upon a time....

And every day....

And every day...

And then one day....

And because of that....

And because of that....

And ever since that day....

Note: These Questions can be used at the end of day 1 or the beginning of day 2. This is where all students practice sharing a story they created. This is leading up to the day two activity, where a group of students will create an improvised scene based on one of their story-spine stories --

- Listen to each group member’s story.

- Ask questions about one section of the story that you think needs more detail.
- As a group, decide which moment in their story would make the most dramatic two minutes (in real time) of the story