



Science through Stories: Teaching Primary Science with Storytelling (Storytelling Schools)

By Jules Pottle, Chris Smith

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Collection of stories for teaching science in primary schools with a set of follow up activities for each topic. Stories cover commonly taught topics, designed to be learned and retold orally by students. Each story comes with engaging and inclusive ways to link that story to science teaching, English and other subjects.

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Editorial Review

Review

What a lovely idea- bringing story-telling into primary science! These days, literacy and numeracy seem to rule the primary school timetable and curriculum. In many schools these subjects can become a bit of dull chore. And if science gets a look-in at all, it is usually for at most, one rushed afternoon per week. It is therefore very good to find something that combines the exciting and motivating story-telling approach to literacy with science. It's a great way to make story-writing a somewhat more joyful experience and to get science to move up the agenda in your school. This book is full of delightful stories with a science theme which come from different genres. Some stories are well known such as the Giant Turnip with its link to forces; some have twists to a familiar story such as Jack and the Giant's Peach linked to plant life cycles and some have been specially devised by the authors to bring out science themes. One of these is The East and the West, a creation fable devised to help children learn about the way that a turning Earth gives us night and day. There are also great stories related to factual scientific events such as the tale of Mary Anning and her fossil collection. What all the stories share in common is that they would be a sure fire hit with children. As you read them, you can hear yourself telling them out loud to children. You can sense how readily the children would take to re-telling the stories for themselves and to go on to develop them further for themselves. So a big thumbs-up for the stories. As with all compendiums such as this, you will need to select or adapt the stories to match your school's science curriculum and your children's level. There is nothing to stop you looking at compasses whilst doing magnets (The Magic Stone) or going into parallel circuits (Lighthouse Keeper's Son) but neither of those science ideas are part of the new primary science curriculum for England. There is also a page with each story suggesting possible linked science activities. In the same way, the activities are often useful and interesting but don't always have a direct link to the statements in the curriculum. For example, the simplest story in the Physics section - suitable for those in years 1 & 2, is the Giant Turnip with its obvious links to pulls and forces. Sadly there is no work on forces in KS1 in the new curriculum. Sh - don't tell - but there is nothing to stop you doing the story with that age group. You just won't get to tick off NC statements as you do it. The science activities are not the central point of this book and they are there to help bolster up the science in the stories. You would need to add to them to cover important areas such as finding out children's ideas at the start of a unit of work so children can recognise what they've learnt. You would also need to develop your own activities to do with Working Scientifically so you can develop it beyond the basic fair test, as laid out in the new curriculum. But use the approach, dip into this treasure chest and even develop your own stories to match your current science ideas. The children will thank you for it. -- Anne Goldsworthy Sitting down to draw our thoughts together on this great resource book, I re-read the last Facts & Fiction and came across this from Martin Murrell's letter, 'storytelling is used by all good teachers of all subjects - and always will be.' Spot on for this book. The book is aimed at primary level (although I could imagine some of the topics could be used in year 7 at secondary schools and by special needs providers) and covers the three science disciplines. 24 topics are provided and there is at least one story for each topic. From a teacher's point of view the use of storytelling helps make sense of scientific concepts without oversimplifying them. In particular we felt it will make science appeal to boys and girls equally by encouraging teachers to think outside the box when teaching science. A particularly good example of this is the Chemistry chapter about the Uses of Materials with The Fairy Godmother's Day Off as the story (a comic alternative Cinderella story). The comedy of the story and the allusion to a well-known story make it very appealing. Having strong female characters in the story will engage girls who are often less confident scientists than boys. The activities suggested are very hands on - a treasure hunt to find materials and investigations to test the strength of materials. These will really capture the children's imaginations and enable them to achieve the learning objectives regardless of their ability level. The

activities can easily be adapted or extended. As a storyteller, I was impressed with the range of stories. They include folk tales, real life stories (eg Edward Jenner and the smallpox vaccine), mythology, fantasy, poetry and Jack stories. The stories are often funny and allowed to remain brutal when appropriate. There are two clear reasons to consider purchasing this book, particularly if you tell stories in schools as many of us do. Firstly you will have some great stories at your disposal. Secondly, it provides a fantastic model and guide for integrating stories into specific areas of the curriculum. The approach taken can be applied to any subject and indeed links with other subjects are suggested. I am already thinking about how to use The Pedlar's Dream for History, Geography, RE and I am sure there is a numeracy link in there somewhere... -- Facts & Fiction no. 96 by Neil Ruckman and Jennie Reed.

About the Author

Jules Pottle is a specialist primary science teacher and teacher trainer with Storytelling Schools. Jules is passionate about science and science teaching, having worked as a classteacher, science advisory teacher, co-ordinator and mentor for more than two decades.

Chris Smith PhD is a storyteller, musician, trainer and founding director of Storytelling Schools, where all children learn to be storytellers and transform their learning

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