



The Big Idea

Create your unique version of any story, learning the storyteller's skill of identifying a story's "bones" then "dressing it up" with imaginative details of your choosing - making it "your own!"

You'll Need

- Imagination
- Paper for writing on
- Pen or pencil
- Stories document (attached)
- Step-By-Step video tutorial:
www.think360arts.org



The Plan

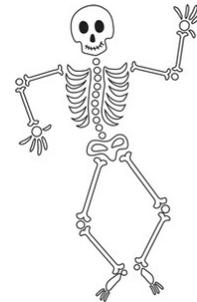
Step 1 - Watch the 1st section of the video, until you're asked to pause it.

Step 2 - Read "The North Wind and the Sun." (It's best to read it out loud!)

Step 3 - What are "story bones?" **You can think of the "bones" of any story as the fewest sentences you can use to tell the story.**

An example for the Wind and Sun story:

- *Wind and Sun argued about which was strongest.*
- *They held a contest to see who could take the coat off a man.*
- *Wind blew hard but the man held onto his coat more tightly.*
- *Sun then became gently warmer and warmer.*
- *The man felt so hot he took off his coat.*
- *Moral: You can sometimes get your way better with gentleness than by force.*



Step 4 - Time to analyze! Instead of skin, hair, clothes, etc. that go on real bones, here are some ways of dressing up the story's bones:

- Dialog (characters speaking words; not just describing what they did and said)
- Character personality (Was Wind boastful or kind? Was Sun angry or calm? What were they like?)
- Descriptions of the characters' actions (What did the Wind blow around? What were the reactions of the animals and people to Wind's blowing, and to Sun's warmth?)
- Details about the setting of the story (Where did the horseman stop his horse?)

On a sheet of paper, write down the ways the storyteller in the video dressed up the story's bones. Or, tell your ideas out loud to a partner. Really explore how the story bones got dressed up!



The Plan cont.

Step 5 – Watch the 2nd section of the video.

Step 6 – Choose one of the folk tales provided, then on a piece of paper **write out the “bones” of the story, using the fewest sentences you can to tell what happens**, like in the example above of the Wind and Sun.

Step 7 – What details will you add to “dress up” the bones of the story? Take time to have fun and imagine...

For each character in the story:

- What is the character like physically?
- How does the character move?
- Choose a part in the story; imagine what the character is feeling then.
- Does the character have a voice? How does it sound?
- Will any character speak? What words will they say?

Think about the setting:

- In your imagination, what can you see in the story, what is around the characters?
- What can you imagine hearing? Smelling? Feeling?

Step 8 – Watch the 3rd section of the video.

Step 9 – Have fun imagining more and telling your story, and try this with other stories!

Teaching Artist Tip

- Try your ideas out loud - that’s what makes storytelling different from story writing - we use our voices and our physical expressions to tell a story to someone!
- When you practice out loud you can sometimes get good ideas to try that don’t occur to you when you think silently. You can practice your “dressed-up” story to a family member, to yourself in a mirror, to a friend in an online chat, or even a pet or stuffed animal!
- Have fun with creating dialog for your story’s characters - it’s often more interesting for both you and your listeners when you say what the characters are actually saying to each other, rather than just describing what they say and do. You can try different voices for different characters, too.

Going Further

- Try this with ANY story - folktales, legends, ghost stories, true-life stories, and more.
- You can find stories to learn and tell in many places such as your own books at home, online or a library. Search for folktales, fairy tales, legends and fables from around the world!
- Family stories can be especially fun and/or meaningful to learn and tell. “Telling Your Own Stories” by Donald Davis is a wonderful resource book for finding and telling personal and family stories.



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Stories – for “Making Any Story Your Own”

“The North Wind and the Sun” (short written version of the same story as in the video)

The North Wind boasted of great strength. The Sun argued that there was great power in gentleness.

"We shall have a contest," said the Sun. Far below, a man traveled a winding road. He was wearing a warm winter coat. "As a test of strength," said the Sun, "let us see which of us can take the coat off that man." "It will be quite simple for me to force him to remove his coat," bragged the Wind. The Wind blew so hard, the birds clung to the trees. The world was filled with dust and leaves. But the harder the wind blew, the tighter the shivering man clung to his coat. Then, the Sun came out from behind a cloud. The sun warmed the air and the frosty ground. The man on the road unbuttoned his coat. The Sun grew slowly brighter and brighter. Soon the man felt so hot, he took off his coat and sat down in a shady spot. "How did you do that?" said the Wind. "It was easy," said the Sun. "I lit the day. Through gentleness I got my way." (By storyteller Heather Forest, storyarts.org)

This version is very different from the one told in the video – but you can tell that it's the same story. Both versions started with the “story bones,” then each storyteller “dressed it up” with their own choice of details and language.

This is what experienced storytellers do to make a story their “own” – and you can do it, too!

Three short traditional stories

Choose one, write down its “bones” on a sheet of paper. Then choose how you will “flesh it out” and “dress it up.”

1 – A Flock of Birds (a story from India)

There was once a flock of birds that were peacefully pecking seeds under a tree. A hunter came along and threw a heavy net over them. He said, "Aha! Now I have my dinner!" All at once the birds began to flap their wings...together! Up, up, up they rose, taking the net with them. They came down on a tree and as the net snagged in the tree's branches, the birds flew out from under it to freedom. The hunter looked on in amazement, scratched his head and muttered, "As long as those birds cooperate like that with one another, I'll never be able to capture them! Each one of those birds is so small and yet, together they could lift the net!"

2 – The Honest Woodcutter (an Aesop's fable)

"Woe is me!" a poor woodcutter cried when he dropped his ax into a deep pond. A friendly spirit appeared before him with a silver ax and asked, "Is this yours?" "No," said the woodcutter. The spirit returned with a golden ax and asked, "Is this yours?" "No," the woodcutter said. Then the spirit appeared with his plain wooden ax. "That one is mine!" said the woodcutter happily. "You've been so honest," said the spirit, "take the silver and golden ax too." On the way home the woodcutter met a rich merchant. When the rich merchant heard the woodcutter's tale, he ran to the pond and dropped his own wooden ax in. "Woe is me!" he cried. The spirit appeared with a silver ax. "That one is mine!" the man said quickly. "You KNOW it is not," said the spirit and disappeared. The rich man's wooden ax stayed on the bottom of the pond.

3 – A Big Quiet House (a Yiddish folktale from Eastern Europe)

There was once a man who wished his small, noisy house was larger and quieter. He went to the wise old woman of the town and explained his need. She said, "I can solve your problem. Just do as I say. If you have a chicken, some sheep, a horse, and a cow," she said, "bring them into the house with you." "That's a silly thing to do," thought the old man. But he did it anyway. His house was already small, and with all those animals in it, there was no room at all. He returned to the old woman and cried, "I need more room! The animals are so noisy I can't think!" "Take all those animals out of your house," she replied. When he had put all the animals comfortably back in the barn, the man went into his house. To his amazement, it suddenly looked remarkably bigger! Without the animals inside, his house was now quiet too!



The “bones” of the final story in the video:

*Mother Mouse and her babies went for a walk. They met a cat.
The mother mouse barked at the cat. The cat ran away.*