



The Art of Storytelling

Pre-K through Grade 5, written to Grade 2 standards

Storytelling is at the heart of communities worldwide and central to our work at the Skirball. We focus on the art of storytelling because of its power to foster empathy, ignite imagination, and inspire action. Aboard Noah's Ark at the Skirball, we tell culturally diverse flood stories from around the world. Although certain elements are unique to each story, they all share overarching themes: huge storms, safe shelters, and new beginnings. Just as important as telling stories is listening to young people share their own stories. This lesson does just that!

Objective

Students will build listening and speaking skills by watching a cultural flood story, discussing its big idea, and drawing upon personal experiences to make connections. After analyzing the story, students will apply their creative writing skills by drafting a story about overcoming a challenge.

Materials

- "Storyboard Organizer" worksheet
- Optional virtual tools: **Flipgrid**, **storyboardthat.com**

Class Activity

1. Watch the Noah's Ark welcome video with your students.

¡Ver en español!



Welcome to Noah's Ark

5:36 min.

Take a peek inside Noah's Ark at the Skirball, the award-winning exhibition that brings to life a timeless story about overcoming challenges, celebrating community, and the role each of us can play in helping build a better world.

2. Have a class discussion about storytelling.

- Why do we tell stories?
- What stories do you know and who tells them?
- Who is included in the stories? Who is missing?

3. The two videos shared here are some of the most frequently told stories aboard Noah's Ark. Choose one of the videos to share with your students. Show it all the way through for comprehension.



A Lenape Flood Story

7:33 min.

Join Noah's Ark educator Dillon for a story adapted from one told by the Lenape, an Indigenous people of the northeastern woodlands of Canada and the United States. Watch how animals work together to overcome a challenge and learn that even small acts can make a big difference.



A Maasai Flood Story

5:45 min.

Join Noah's Ark educator Dena as she shares a lyrical adaptation of a story told by the Maasai, a group of people from Kenya and Tanzania in East Africa. Take part in a journey to find land alongside a lion, a cheetah, a dove, and a vulture who makes a surprising discovery.

Note: The storyteller has chosen to respectfully pay homage to the East African dialect based on active research.

4. Watch the video again to analyze the story by identifying key details. Like all stories, these stories have a beginning, middle, and end. In the beginning there is a "storm" or challenge, in the middle there is an "ark" or action, and in the end there is a "rainbow" or moment of celebration. Think about the story arc and discuss the questions below.

Beginning

Storm | Challenge

- What characters stood out to you?
- What is the setting, or where does the story take place?
- What was the obstacle or problem?

Middle

Ark | Action

- What were some moments of a character taking action?
- How did the characters work together?

End

Rainbow | Celebration

- What was the solution that solved the problem?
- How did the characters feel afterward?

5. Have a class discussion about the story you watched.

- What do you think the big idea of this story is?
- Several animals described the skills, strengths, and talents they could use to help find land. What special skills do you use to help others?
- Talk about a time when you believed in yourself and overcame a challenge.

Student Instructions

- Write your own story using the “Storyboard Organizer” worksheet. As an optional step, you can use **storyboardthat.com** to illustrate your story online.
- Optional: Reflect on what you’ve learned about yourself as a writer and storyteller using the “Self-Reflection” worksheet.

Share Out

Participate in a storyteller circle for students to share their stories with one another. Encourage students to listen for commonalities and ask questions.

Theater Arts Activity

Rewatch the flood story and look carefully at the way the storyteller tells the story. What do they do with their hands, their voice, and their eyes to draw the viewer into the story? Oral storytelling strategies may include eye contact, breath, audience engagement (such as asking questions), hand gestures, and voice fluctuation. Have students make a list of strategies they would like to try when telling their own stories. **Practice with Flipgrid!**

Cultural Connections

Learn more about the cultures reflected in the stories using the resources below:

Lenape Culture

Native-land.ca: An interactive map of native territories across the globe. Look for the Lenape territories in the northeastern woodlands of Canada and the United States. Then, find what Native land you are on. Follow the resources listed on the site to learn about Native people, history, and culture.

Nanticoke and Lenape Confederation Learning Center and Museum: A space dedicated to sharing the tribal history and culture of the Delaware Bay.

Stories of the Lenape People: A compilation of Lenape stories, told by Chief Robert Red Hawk Ruth.

Maasai Culture

Maasai Association: A community-based nonprofit dedicated to preserving and celebrating Maasai cultural heritage.

Art & Life in Africa: A freely accessible educational resource on African art, culture, life, and history. Learn more about the Maasai people **here**.

Curriculum Connections

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY: RL.2.2, RL.2.3, RL.2.5, W.2.3, SL.2.2, SL.2.4, L.2.1

California Arts Standards: 2.TH:Cr1, 2.TH:Pr4, 2.TH:Pr6, 2.TH:Re8, 2.TH:Re9

Connect with Us

Our educators are here to help! If you would like to talk with us about how best to facilitate this activity with your students, please email teacherprograms@skirball.org.

Storyteller (your name!): _____

Storyboard Organizer

My main character is:

Other characters in my story are:

The setting of my story is:

The main obstacle or problem my characters face is:

My characters' strengths are:

The actions the characters take to face the challenge are:

My main character solved the problem by:

In the end, the characters feel:

Reflect: What do you want your audience to remember after hearing or reading your story?

Name: _____

Self-Reflection

Wow, you brought a project to life! Reflect on what you learned about yourself.

Project title: _____

I am proud of: _____

My greatest challenge was: _____

I learned: _____

My favorite part was: _____
