

## Non-Limiting activities.

### Introduction

I call non-limiting activities those which promote creativity, imagination, critical thinking, and give the students a voice. I feel that as teachers, we are conditioned to base all follow-up activities to a reading, a story or a video on comprehension questions and vocabulary which turn out to be more often than not memory tests. (See Mario Rinvoluceri's fantastic talk on this<sup>1</sup>). Instead of asking the students what the woman used to make the Gingerbreadman's eyes, or what the man was wearing, I suggest the activities below. In most of these follow-up activities, you are also assessing how much of the story your students have understood, while the students don't feel tested all the time, and have an opportunity to be heard.

These ideas were written for primary teachers, but can easily be adapted for all ages and type of stories. For very young children, which have a limited knowledge of English, discussions, for example, could be done with the children talking in L1 and the teacher speaking English. Again, it is another way of assessing how much of the story they have understood without them feeling they are being tested.

The ideas were also written for orally told stories but can be adapted for readings in a textbook, novels which are part of the curriculum, videos, listening exercises, etc.

### Ideas:

- Students relate the story to their own lives.

If I tell the story of Mbongoro, I can ask the children to think of a time they were in difficulty. What did they do?

The donkey and the lion skin: Have you ever been bullied? Do you know anyone who is often laughed at? What is the best way to respond?

Papa Legba: Have you got a best friend? Have you ever had a fight with your best friend? What happened? What do you think his/her version was?

A ghost story: have you ever seen a ghost? Or thought you had seen one? What happened? Do you believe in ghosts. Why/ Why not?

A character: Do you know anyone like that (the wolf, the fox, the cat)? How are they similar? What did they do/What have they done in the past?

- Have a list of all sorts of different questions and students decide on which they would like to answer. (Mario Rinvoluceri). You can then put them into pairs and tell each other which questions they answered.

---

<sup>1</sup> Mario Rinvoluceri at SOAS: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=8rDu5w4UFmA>

- Character activities:

1. Children describe a character from the story. (e.g. using language, she's got brown hair. She is wearing ..... She is kind ... The others have to guess which character she is talking about. (note: sometimes, the children 'see/imagine' the characters differently. This will also lead to a discussion!)
2. Each child draws a character from the story. The others ask yes/no questions. 'Do you live in the forest? Are you an animal? Etc). – Andrew Wright activity
3. Prepare an interview of a character and present it in front of the class.

-Hello Mr little pig from the straw house and welcome.

-Hello!

-Why did you make a house of straw?

-Because it was easy and quick and very nice

-Did you hear the wolf coming?

-No I didn't?.

- How did you feel when he knocked at your door?

4. Tell the story from the point of view of one of the characters. –  
-The Gingerbreadman meets a friendly animal in the forest. What does he tell him?  
-'The True Story of the Three Little Pigs! By A.Wolf' by Jon Scieszka
5. If you were such and such a character, what would you have done? Why do you think he/she acted like that? (Example, the villain in a story.)

- Scene activities:

1. Each child chooses a scene in the story and draws it/sketches it. He becomes the protagonist. The class asks yes/no questions. Are you in the woods? Are you screaming? Etc. They guess the scene.
2. Students choose a scene and mime it silently in front of the class. The others have to guess.
3. Andrew Wright: draw two pictures from the story, one of a scene they like, and one of a scene they don't like. They show the class and tell them why they don't like it/like it. If they can, write a sentence under each picture.

- Discuss the story as a class. Did they like it? Why/why not? How would they change it to make it better?

Many more activities to be found in:

Mario Rinvoluceri: 'Once Upon a Time' (for adults and children)

David Heathfield: 'Storytelling With Our Students' (for adults and children)

Andrew Wright: 'Storytelling With Children'

Lesson plans around stories on my website: [rebeccaemaire.wordpress.com](http://rebeccaemaire.wordpress.com)