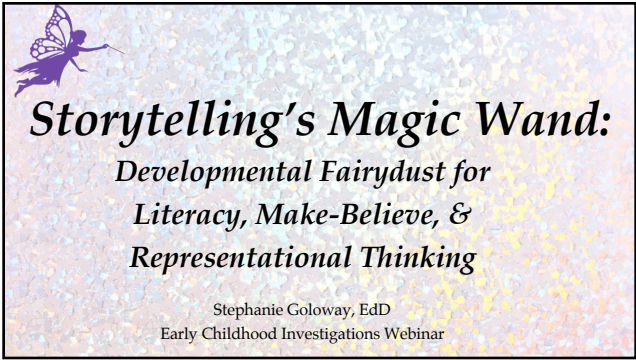


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1



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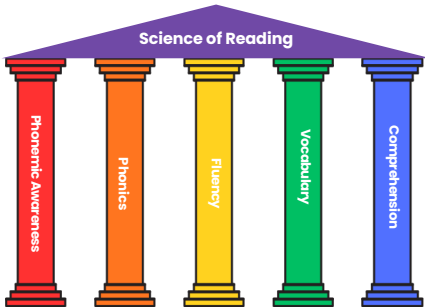
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Once upon
a time,
there was a
boy named
Al...



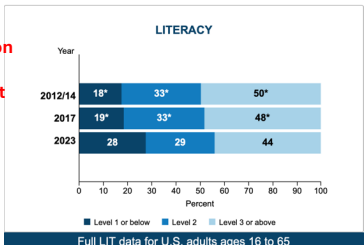
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5

Something’s not working...

43 to 52 million
adult
Americans at
Level 1 or
below!!!!

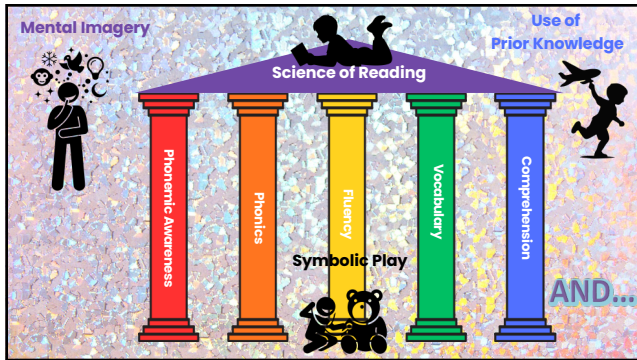


57% of US
adults
between
16-65
read
BELOW
Level 3

U.S. Department of Education, National Center for Education Statistics. (2024). *Highlights of the 2023 U.S. PIAAC Results Web Report* (NCES 2024-202). Washington, DC. Retrieved June 12, 2026]
from <https://nces.ed.gov/ipeds/data/2023/piaac-results.asp>

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**What’s Storytelling?
Why Storytelling?**

- We are storytelling animals...
- Literacy
 - Oral Language & Vocabulary
 - Story Structure: How story works
- Representational Development
 - Mental Imagery
 - **Symbols:** Using, building, making, moving, etc.
 - PLAY!

An illustration showing a group of people in silhouette. One person is standing and gesturing while telling a story to a group of seated people.

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What IS Representational Development?
Re-Present (what’s not present)



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Mental Imagery

As It Is Thinking
*Seeing/hearing/feeling things as they are, but
in your mind's eye*
Examples:
• Baby discovering giraffe under blanket
• Toddler holding baby doll and rocking
• Young child listening to a story and seeing
the the bear in their head



11

**Use of Symbols
(Symbolic Function)**

As If Thinking
Using an object AS IF it is another
Examples:
• Baby holding pizza to ear AS IF it is a
phone
• Toddler scribbling AS IF they are writing
• Young children making-believe: playing
AS IF they are doctors, superheroes,
princesses, mommies, etc.
• Child writing AS IF the squiggles on the
page were actually dinosaurs and
mountains
• Child writing words AS IF the objects
were present



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**1**

**2**

**3**

**5**

**4**

**6**

POLL

Which of these is a symbol for cat?

- A. 6
- B. 1, 2 and 3
- C. 3, 4, and 6
- D. 4, 5 and 6
- E. All of the above

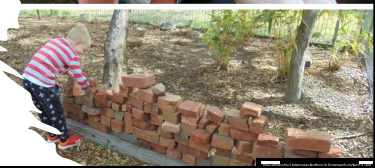
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Imagination!

What IF Thinking:
Transforming and recombining images, symbols and ideas into something new to you

Examples:

- WHAT IF this cookie came alive and started to talk?
- WHAT IF I glued these buttons onto my rocket ship ...if I pushed them could it fly?
- WHAT IF I used these old bricks to make a monster-proof barrier on the playground?



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Representational Development, Ages 2-7

Using SYMBOLS in all the ways!

Gestures/Movement

Reading

Writing

Speaking

Listening

Mark-making/Drawing

Constructing/Making

Make-Believe/Pretend



STORYTELLING

Mental Imagery

Symbolic Function

Imagination

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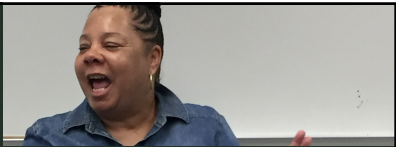
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Storytelling in Early Childhood

- **Storytelling: Standards and Guidelines**
- **Children as Storytellers**
 - Make-believe play!
 - Storytelling/storyacting
 - The Story Center
 - Story props in other centers
- **Grown-ups as Storytellers**
 - Reading vs. telling stories
 - Oral storytelling throughout day



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Grown-ups as Storytellers	
	The Yeah Buts... Pop yours in the chat! 💬 • But I am not a storyteller... • I don't have time... • I already read to children... • You don't know MY kids...they will never sit and listen! • ETC.! • (we've ALL thought these!)

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What stories should I tell?

- **Think of the last story you heard...**
 - Personal stories
 - Class-inspired original stories
 - Folk and fairytales
- **Developmental characteristics and..**
 - Length, complexity, rhythm, rhyme, movement...



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POLL

Why might children still be fascinated with ancient folk and fairytales?

- A. They have short, straightforward and simple plots.
- B. The characters focus on action, not intention
- C. Most mention magic which parallels cognitive development
- D. The “little guys” win if they are kind, brave or smart.
- E. All of the above

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Fairy Tales and Early Literacy

- Rich but accessible language (Vocabulary,, Phonics, Phonemic Awareness, Fluency)
- Constructing mental imagery
 - Generic locations
 - Stock characters
- How stories work: Comprehension
 - Simple, predictable plots
 - Shared themes, characters, motifs
- Prewriting: Oral Tradition
- Found in every culture in the world
- Fairytale imagery in play, and in cultural context

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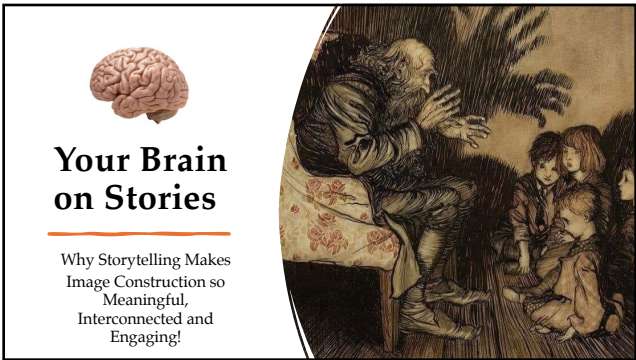
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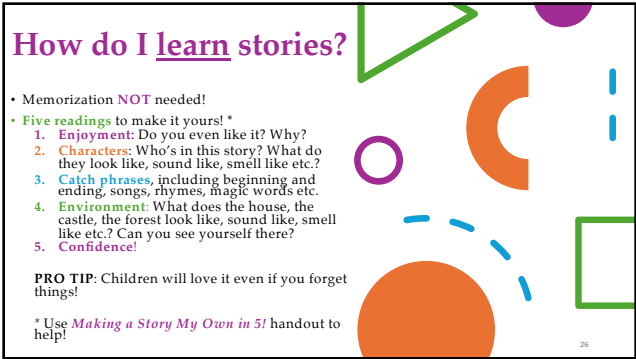


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When do I tell stories?

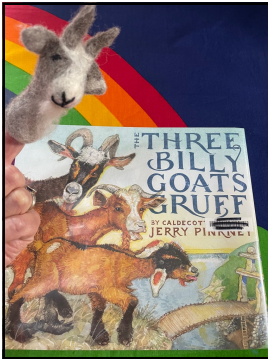
- Circle Time
- Repeated stories
- Serve and Return
- Interaction
- Movement

But ALSO...

- Transitions and Routines
- Centers and Small Group
- Outside and Playground



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Story Magic during Routines and Transitions:

- **Arrival/Attendance** Move their Billy Goat over the Bridge
- **Line Leader:** Littlest Billy Goat Puppet
- **Circle Time** Start (or End): Pass the Billy Goat “Over the Bridge”
- **Choosing Centers:** “Who’s that tripping over my bridge to the blocks?”
- **Rug waiting time:** “Troll” Yoga (Lion pose) or Bridge pose!
- **Waiting** to go to the restroom, playground etc.: “The Troll Says”

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Vivian Paley’s Storytelling/Storyacting Process

(Check out Laura Shea’s ECI session!!!)

- ✏ Child dictates story to scribe.
- ✏ Children gather.
- ✏ Author chooses role s/he will play.
- ✏ Teacher chooses children for other roles.
- ✏ Children act out story while teacher reads story.



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When we tell children meaty, meaningful and “tongue-polished tales, we

- Expose them to interesting, **rich vocabulary**
- Practice and strengthen their capacity for **mental imagery** and **symbolic thinking**
- Expand their treasure chest of “**story schemas**” like “characters,” “setting,” and “plot.”
- Offer their **brains** “equal opportunity” to take risks and develop resilience
- Share **literacy GOLD**
- Give them **STORIES** that enrich their **own storytelling**, in told stories and play

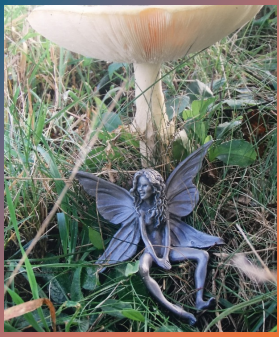
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“We humans are born knowing how to place our thoughts and images into stories...How fortunate that an early childhood classroom is populated by such a variety of characters, enough different types to satisfy all of our dreams. Our superheroes and baby bears, our mommies, dinosaurs and runaway kittens are just waiting to be invited to step on the stage.”

~ Vivian Gussin Paley, Foreword to *Princesses, Dragons and Helicopter Stories: Storytelling and Storyjacting in the Early Years*

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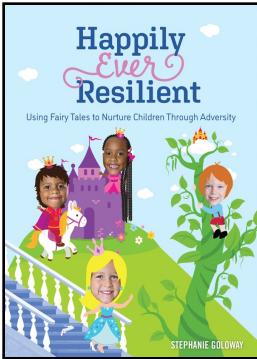
SO...what is ONE way you plan to use Storytelling's Magic Wand in YOUR setting today?

Share in chat AND jot it down so you won't forget!!!

Thank you for playing with me!



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Want to learn more?

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Resources, podcasts and more!

Free newsletter with lots of ideas! Sign up on website!

 Happily Ever Resilient Page

 @Dr. Glitterway

 Free online chapter of Beauty and the Beast!

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Making a Story My Own in 5!



NAME OF STORY AND AUTHOR:

WHERE I FOUND IT:

#1: ENJOYMENT

#2: CHARACTERS

#3 PHRASES TO MEMORIZE

#4: ENVIRONMENT

#5 CONFIDENCE

WHAT WENT
BEST/WORST?



***Storytelling's Magic Wand:
Developmental Fairydust for Literacy, Make-Believe, and Representational Thinking***
Early Childhood Investigations: Stephanie Goloway, EdD; July 30, 2026
www.ImaginationOnTheMove.com
imaginationonthemove@gmail.com

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You're invited! Sign up for a free monthly (-ish!) newsletter with lots of ideas and resources about storytelling, fairy tales, play, representational thinking and the magic of resilience!

<https://www.imaginationonthemove.com>