



## Storytelling

### A National Education Nature Park guide

Whether your learners are at the very start of their learning journey in an Early Years setting, or about to move into professional and academic roles beyond formal education, storytelling can provide a mechanism to develop the skills that tell their Nature Park journey, communicate their vision for the local and global Nature Park and share their experiences.

Storytelling can allow learners to explore their school site from different perspectives (both human and nature), promoting inter- and intra-generational equity (developing the site for each other and for those who will use it in the future). This guide provides useful support for choosing nature-related stories, using nature-related stories to support the Nature Park process, positive nature connection and guides learners to create and tell their own Nature Park stories.



### Curriculum links

While the activities can support learning outcomes in the English National Curriculum, they can also be used to facilitate communication and reflection around the Nature Park process.

#### English (Key Stage 1 & 2)

##### Spoken language

- Consider and evaluate different points of view, attending to and building on contributions of others
- Give well-structured descriptions, explanations and narratives for different purposes, including expressing feelings

##### Reading comprehension

- Learn about cause and effect in both narrative and non-fiction (for example, what has prompted a character's behaviour in a story; why certain dates are commemorated annually)
- Participate in discussion about both books that are read to them and those they can read for themselves, taking turns and listening to what others say

##### Writing composition

- Develop positive attitudes towards and stamina for writing by: writing narratives about personal experiences and those of others (real and fictional), writing about real events and writing for different purposes

#### English (Key Stage 3 & 4)

- Consider how writing reflects the audiences and purposes for which it was intended, adapting language and style



## Why storytelling in nature?

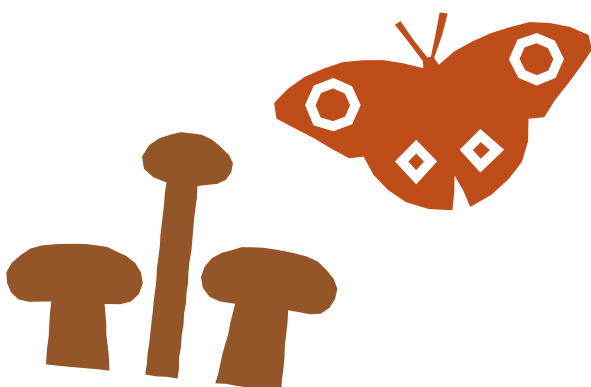
Reading books about nature is not a substitute for observing and exploring nature first hand, but along with oral storytelling, they can be used as a mechanism for nature connection. In relation to the **pathways to nature connection**, storytelling can help celebrate and share nature's events and stories, activating the 'meaning' pathway through exploring our personal and cultural stories and sharing what nature means to different people. As the impact of human activity on the environment becomes increasingly apparent, books about nature can supporting learners to foster a positive relationship with the natural world and learn about strategies to protect it.

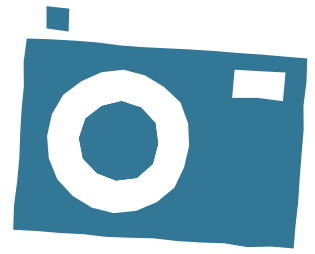
- It helps learners understand their outdoor experiences
- Stories are more easily embedded to the memory than facts and figures, helping learners to recall understanding about nature
- Through seeing the nature from different perspectives, such as from the view of animals, stories can promote empathy and responsibility for nature
- Reading stories outdoors can support wellbeing
- Reading stories about nature can build interest in and curiosity about nature, and can promote motivation to take action to help protect it
- Reading stories related to local nature can help learners to develop a sense of place, especially when it relates to their own experiences

## How to select books for nature engagement (both indoor and outdoor)

To support you selecting nature-related stories, **this handy catalogue of books** provides a starting point and ideas of themes that can be tackled through books. However, this is only a small selection of what is available, and local texts and anything that you can get your hands on in the library (or from parents and carers) can be effective too. Here are some top tips to think about when selecting your books for nature engagement:

- Think about the balance between illustrations and text
- Shorter stories provide more time for discussion
- Ensure that stories from animal perspectives are about nature and climate change, rather than other themes
- Use the 'Nature library catalogue' of curated books as a starting point, exploring how different nature-themes can be tackled through reading stories





## Storytelling in nature, about nature, and for nature

Storytelling is a traditional approach to sharing information to different audiences. Many cultures use stories to teach people ethical and respectful relationships between people and the environment. Traditional oral storytelling is often identified as an approach that can inspire the imagination, and connection, and move people emotionally.

### Some steps to starting the storytelling process

1. Ask learners to begin by recording and collecting 'evidence' and images for their story, e.g. an acorn, a woodlouse under a log, or an empty nook in a tree. The **Hidden Nature Challenge** is a great first step to collect observations around your site.
2. Challenge learners to make observations that will help them describe the setting (this could be their school site) of their story, using their senses.
3. Ask questions to cultivate curiosity:
  - What is it?
  - What is doing?
  - Is it alone or in groups?
  - How does it make you feel?

### Top tips to support storytelling in nature, about nature and for nature

- Tell learners stories from your own experience outside, and invite learners to do the same
- Ask learners what their favourite story about nature is and discuss the answers as a class – did it include a moral, did they think and act differently as a result of the story, did they appreciate nature in a different way?

### Using the outdoors as a stimulus for story writing

- Encourage learners to use natural evidence as a prompt for a story (e.g. scratch marks on a tree, animal footprints and tracks in mud and snow, chewed leaves)
- Model observations in the outdoor space (I wonder...where do you think that came from?)
- Use a natural artefact or outdoor setting as the starting point for a story, inviting the learners to add to the plot
- Invite learners to think about and plan a story based on a living thing in the natural environment that faces a challenge, e.g. a bird they've spotted in a nearby tree, or a squirrel running across the playground

We would love to share some of your Nature Park stories.  
Please email them to: [hello@educationnaturepark.org.uk](mailto:hello@educationnaturepark.org.uk)





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