Tall Tales
& Deadly Drawings

EDUCATIONAL RESOURCE PACK
Primary Resources
The exhibition celebrates the art of storytelling in Irish culture and emphasises that stories can live independently from books, even today. This activity puts the child in the role of storyteller, providing them with the props to construct a story and the freedom to let their imagination take flight. It also conveys the importance of other storytelling techniques such as tone and timing.

Open up a discussion about storytelling. In the exhibition, the children learned about the seanchaí. What skills do they think a good seanchaí should have? Do the children know any good storytellers themselves – maybe a parent or grandparent? How do their stories begin? How do these storytellers keep their listeners’ attention? What other things do they bring to their stories (e.g. jokes, sound effects)? Explain that the class are now going to take it in turn to be the seanchaí.

In the discovery box you will find two sets of story cubes – each containing one orange box of nouns and one blue box of verbs. These can be used in groups to aid spontaneous storytelling.

Begin with the set of orange cubes. Using a cup, the storyteller shakes the cubes and rolls them on to a flat surface. The object of the game is to tell a story using the symbols that land facing upwards. The story can start with whatever symbol the storyteller wishes. Taking it in turns to roll the cubes and be the storyteller, the children can either tell a number of stories or one extended story.

Once the children are familiar with the game, you can add in the blue, verb cubes to help the story's plot develop. Alternatively, if the class is very large, the blue cubes could be played by themselves – this will allow you to divide the class into four groups.

Writing from story cubes:

The teacher rolls one set of cubes and projects an image of the upward facing symbols on to the whiteboard. Each child then writes their own story based on the cubes displayed. Following this activity, it would be valuable for the class to share some of these stories as this will highlight the endless possibilities that storytelling presents.
Do Your Own Deadly Drawing!

The exhibition features the work of a number of celebrated Irish illustrators and shows how pictures can enhance our enjoyment and understanding of a story. This illustration activity encourages children to read an extract from a story closely and then interpret it for others through the medium of art.

Resource sheets for this activity can be found on the microsite. There are three different stories for you and the class to choose from. You may also need blank sheets of paper.

The children should read their extracts carefully, picturing the story in their heads. It may be helpful for them to underline words or passages which they feel are particularly evocative. Having read the story, the children may find it useful to sketch their ideas on a blank sheet of paper before adding their illustration to the story.
Do Your Own Deadly Drawing!

This is part of a famous story by Oscar Wilde. Read the story carefully, picturing it in your head. When you have finished reading, draw an illustration to help other people understand or enjoy the story. You might draw a scene from the story or perhaps just one character or detail that caught your imagination.

The Happy Prince
by Oscar Wilde

High above the city, on a tall column, stood the statue of the Happy Prince. He was gilded all over with thin leaves of fine gold, for eyes he had two bright sapphires, and a large red ruby glowed on his sword-hilt.

He was very much admired indeed. “He is as beautiful as a weathercock,” remarked one of the Town Councillors who wished to gain a reputation for having artistic tastes; “only not quite so useful,” he added, fearing lest people should think him unpractical, which he really was not.

“Why can’t you be like the Happy Prince?” asked a sensible mother of her little boy who was crying for the moon. “The Happy Prince never dreams of crying for anything.”

“I am glad there is some one in the world who is quite happy,” muttered a disappointed man as he gazed at the wonderful statue.

“He looks just like an angel,” said the Charity Children as they came out of the cathedral in their bright scarlet cloaks and their clean white pinafores. “How do you know?” said the Mathematical Master, “you have never seen one.”

“Ah! but we have, in our dreams,” answered the children; and the Mathematical Master frowned and looked very severe, for he did not approve of children dreaming.
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The Remarkable Rocket
by Oscar Wilde

The King's son was going to be married, so there were general rejoicings. He had waited a whole year for his bride, and at last she had arrived. She was a Russian Princess, and had driven all the way from Finland in a sledge drawn by six reindeer. The sledge was shaped like a great golden swan, and between the swan's wings lay the little Princess herself. Her long ermine cloak reached right down to her feet, on her head was a tiny cap of silver tissue, and she was as pale as the Snow Palace in which she had always lived. So pale was she that as she drove through the streets all the people wondered. "She is like a white rose!" they cried, and they threw down flowers on her from the balconies.

At the gate of the Castle the Prince was waiting to receive her. He had dreamy violet eyes, and his hair was like fine gold. When he saw her he sank upon one knee, and kissed her hand.

"Your picture was beautiful," he murmured, "but you are more beautiful than your picture," and the little Princess blushed.

"She was like a white rose before," said a young page to his neighbour, "but she is like a red rose now;" and the whole Court was delighted.

For the next three days everybody went about saying, "White rose, Red rose, Red rose, White rose;" and the King gave orders that the Page's salary was to be doubled. As he received no salary at all this was not of much use to him, but it was considered a great honour, and was duly published in the Court Gazette.
The Selfish Giant
by Oscar Wilde

Every afternoon, as they were coming from school, the children used to go and play in the Giant's garden.

It was a large lovely garden, with soft green grass. Here and there over the grass stood beautiful flowers like stars, and there were twelve peach-trees that in the spring-time broke out into delicate blossoms of pink and pearl, and in the autumn bore rich fruit. The birds sat on the trees and sang so sweetly that the children used to stop their games in order to listen to them. “How happy we are here!” they cried to each other.

One day the Giant came back. He had been to visit his friend the Cornish ogre, and had stayed with him for seven years. After the seven years were over he had said all that he had to say, for his conversation was limited, and he determined to return to his own castle. When he arrived he saw the children playing in the garden.

“What are you doing here?” he cried in a very gruff voice, and the children ran away.

“My own garden is my own garden,” said the Giant; “any one can understand that, and I will allow nobody to play in it but myself.”

So he built a high wall all round it, and put up a notice-board.

TRESPASSERS WILL BE PROSECUTED

He was a very selfish Giant.
**Bookplates**

The exhibition celebrates the physical book and the act of reading. This activity introduces children to the history of the bookplate and encourages them to take pride in their own collection of books. In making their own unique bookplate, children also have the opportunity express themselves through art.

You will find sheets of parcel stickers in the discovery box. You will need to cut these into four so that each child has their own sticker. You will also need blank paper, pencils and felt tip pens.

**Beginning the activity:**

Begin the activity by asking the children about their books. How many do they think they have in their collection? If they lend one of their books to somebody, how do they make sure that they get it back?

**Introducing bookplates:**

Long ago, when books were very expensive, people couldn’t afford to let their books go missing. When they got a new book, they put a special sticker with their name on it inside the front cover. This sticker was called a bookplate. (The advantage of a bookplate over writing the name directly into the book was that the bookplate could be easily removed, or be covered by a new bookplate.) Bookplates were often decorative and could have a picture of the owner, where they lived and what they liked doing.

**Looking at bookplates online:**

An online image search for bookplates will turn up several thousand examples. Project a selection of these, asking the class to guess what sort of person they think is represented by each of the bookplates. What common pictures or words appear on the bookplates? Explain that Ex Libris is Latin for ‘from the library of’.

**Drawing bookplates:**

The class may want to sketch their ideas on to blank paper before they make bookplates. In deciding what to draw, the children may wish to depict themselves, their hobbies or their favourite books. There are no rules about how the bookplate must look; the only essential component is the owner’s name.

If there is time at the end of the activity, the children may wish to share their bookplates with each other, explaining the designs they have chosen.
Stories from snapshots

One of the most difficult things about writing can be getting started. As the exhibition shows, no writer writes in a vacuum; if you look for it, inspiration is all around you. Sometimes writers are inspired by events of the past – by their own experiences or by others’ – other times they look to stories they have heard or things they have seen.

This activity helps children kick start the creative process and bypass the blank page stage by providing them with the characters and setting for their story in the form of photographs from the National Library’s collections. A series of questions will help the children make these people and locations more three dimensional. How the children interpret the photographs is entirely up to them – comparing stories at the end of the activity will be valuable in highlighting the numerous storytelling possibilities presented by a scene as well as the uniqueness of each child’s story.

Photographs are included in the Discovery Box and an activity sheet can be downloaded from the exhibition microsite. Children can also search the Library’s catalogue – www.catalogue.nli.ie – to find alternative photographs for this exercise.
Stories from snapshots

This activity will help you to start your story. Look very carefully at the photograph below and then make up answers to the questions! Your answers will give you the characters, setting and plot for your story.

Characters
- What are the names of the children in the picture?
- What age are they?
- How do the children know each other?

Setting
- Describe the scene – where is it taking place?
- What is going on in the background?

Plot
- What are these children doing?
- How did they end up here? What were they doing before?
- What do you think is in the suitcase?
- What do you imagine the boy is saying to the girl?
- What happens next?