

Story Theory

Storytelling in the CBSE Classroom

A Teacher's Training Module

Introduction

- How stories help students pay attention?
- Why stories are needed in the classroom?
- Unlearning through stories
- Mindful education through stories
- Developing the school story curriculum – a systematic approach

How stories help students pay attention?

Stories **connect** children with language, ideas and concepts easily. A tough concept can be made comprehensible and comprehensive through a **curriculum story**. Telling stories in an engaging and entertaining manner in the classroom helps the child **grasp** gross and subtle concepts faster. Students become engaged in the story and they thus start paying keen attention to what is happening in the tale. As a consequence of this the attention levels of the child improves and the child develops better focusing abilities. As the **mental capacity of the child increases** by paying close attention to the stream or plot of the story, the child learns to apply these newly learnt attention skills to other areas and subjects also. Soon, the child starts paying more **attention** to the subject matter of the school syllabus.

Why stories are needed in the classroom?

It makes sense to include stories in the classroom because for one [children love listening to stories](#) and for another they [understand school subjects](#) better if these are taught in the [story format](#). By including stories in the classroom and teaching teachers storytelling tools and techniques the [communication patterns](#) and skills of teachers also improves. Teachers by using the storytelling method can [enrich the child's learning experience manyfold](#). By using stories and storytelling techniques in the classroom — teachers can help different types of students — the gifted child as well as the [child with special education needs](#).

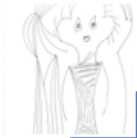
Unlearning through stories

Reimagining education

Relearning through stories

Building lateral thinking

Mindful education through stories



Awareness

- Learning consciously



Imagination

- Opening the mind to a sea of learning possibilities



Connecting the dots

- Linking school subjects with characters and situations

Developing the school story curriculum – a systematic approach

school story curriculum

story maps

the story way

learning

story

chart

voice and telling

plot to exam

mindful education

unlearning

story worlds

How to write stories for
the school curriculum

BRINGING IMAGINATION TO WORDS

Writing Practice

Learning from the great writers

"Write as much as you can! Write, write, write till
your fingers break!" - Anton Chekov

Story Samples

School Story Curriculum

Teaching philosophy through stories

Teaching English language through
nonsense stories

School Story Curriculum

1. The turtle who wanted to know

EVS Nursery Level 1

Concept: Name

Once upon a time, there was a little turtle. He didn't know who he was. And his mother had gone far, far away. She had gone to visit their relatives. In the meantime, this turtle who was very naughty and very curious and very intrigued about who he was. Decided to go and find out who he was.

He went upto the sea. He trotted slowly upto the sea and in the sea who does he see except the giant, giant shark.

And the giant shaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaark is just there.

The turtle asks the giant shark, "Do you know who I am?"

The shark laughs, "Ha ha Ha ha ha."

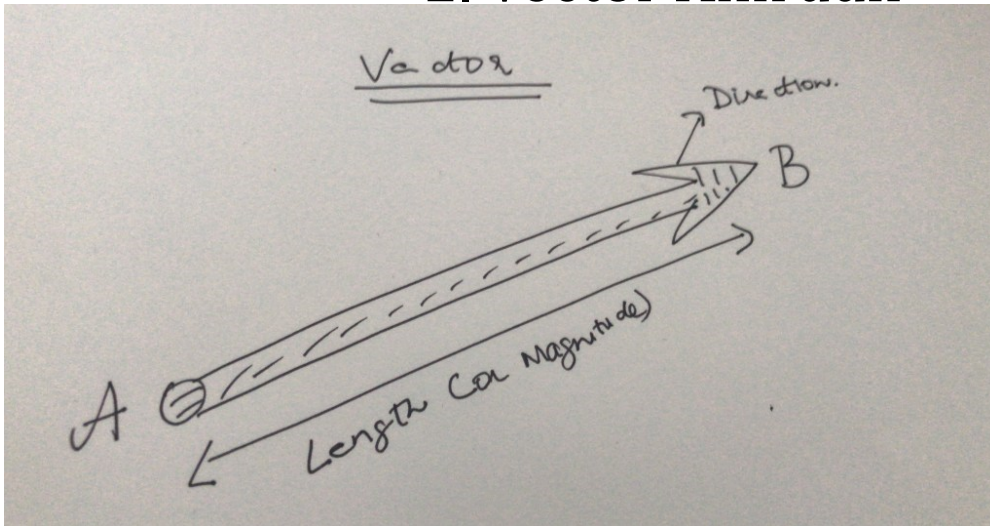
The shark says, "Of course I know who you are. You are my food. And the shark leaps at the turtle.

The turtle slowly retreats into its shell and it hides from the shark. Since the shark can't see the turtle anymore, it leaves the turtle alone and in time goes away. The turtle slowly comes out of its shell at night and goes back to its home very very slowly.

After a few days its mother returns. It asks its mother, "Mom I am very curious, do you know who I am? I don't know who I am." It cries even as it speaks.

Its mother says, "Of course I know who you are. I gave you a name when you were born – you are Grisly the turtle and that's who you are. And after that day Grisly never forgot who he was. He was Grisly the turtle.

2. Vector Anirudh



Subject: Mathematics

Concept: Vector

“What is your position on animal rights?” Avli asked Aniruddh, who was running a campaign to save street dogs for his brother. Aniruddh was currently manning a stall on street dogs in the local mela. But Avli, a random visitor to the stall and an ardent animal rights activist herself had this question of Aniruddh.

Aniruddh said to Avli, “I have no position on animal rights.”

Avli laughed, “You vector,” and went to the next stall which was selling gol gappas.

After the day ended, Aniruddh asked his cousin sister Shyama what vector meant.

Shyama told him, “Vector is a quantity in mathematics that has no position but does have direction and magnitude.”

“Ha Ha,” said Shyama to Aniruddh who told him that Avli had called him a vector.

“What do you mean by quantity with magnitude?” Aniruddh asked Shyama.

“Quantity with magnitude refers to line segments going in a direction with length as their magnitude,” said Shyama.

“So, the length of the line segment is its magnitude?” confirmed Aniruddh.

“Yes,” said Shyama.

“Thanks,” said Aniruddh.

Stories for teaching philosophy

1. The pink starfish

– An Anekantavada story

There was once a pink starfish. It was small and wise. It liked loitering around, daydreaming and doing nothing. The catfish told it, “Why do you waste your time like this? Why don’t you do any useful work?”

The starfish was startled by what the catfish said. She decided to ask the catfish what she thought useful work was.

The catfish said, “You can weed the seabed,” said the catfish.

“Weed the seabed?” asked the starfish

“Yes, you can weed the seabed,” said the catfish patiently.

“Why?” asked the starfish.

“What do you mean why,” said the catfish not so patient now.

“You feel that weeding the seabed is more useful than daydreaming. But can you be really sure? If nature had intended for the seabed to be weeded she would not have created weeds. Weeds too have their place in sea ecology.”

The starfish paused and the catfish realised she had nothing to say.

What this story tells us about Anekantavada?

In this story, the catfish chides the starfish for not engaging in useful activity like weeding the seabed. The starfish says that weeding the ocean is just one way of thinking in which one assumes that weeds are useless and evil and need to be removed. However, another reality is that weeds exist in nature and were created by nature and thus must surely serve some purpose in sea ecology.

Anekantavada being a Jain philosophy is deeply reflected in nature and ecology. Nature exists as a diverse phenomenon. Nature teaches us that reality is in multiples rather than in the singular.

2. The quick-witted frog – An Anekantavada story

There was a quick-witted frog who had the answer for everything. Ask her anything and pat came the answer. “But,” said the pigeon, “don’t you think the frog is inventing stories and giving us fake answers instead of the truth.

The frog immediately asked the pigeon, “but what is the truth. Can you answer?”

And yes, the pigeon did not have an answer for the frog.

What this story tells us about Anekantavada?

In this story the pigeon accuses the frog of not giving truthful answers. The frog, who is witty and always ready with an answer responds with a question for the pigeon. He asks the pigeon to explain what the truth is. This question leaves the pigeon flabbergasted and he does not have an answer for the frog. The frog’s question is a good one. What indeed is the truth? Is there a single version of the truth that we can all authenticate? The more we ask ourselves this the more we will find there is no such answer and no such truth.

3. Three fishes

– an Anekantavada story

Three fishes were swimming. Suddenly, they heard some musical sounds. They wondered about where the sound was coming from. They swam across the river looking for the sound. The sound was melodious and coming from a mandapa on the riverbank. The three fishes wanted to hear the sound more closely. They did something they never did. They pulled up their ears to hear the sound. They then discussed among themselves what the sound was. The first fish said she heard the sound of a drum. The second fish said she heard the sound of a nadaswaram. The third fish had heard the sound of a veena.

What this story tells us about Anekantavada?

Anekantavada is a Jain philosophy teaches us that truth is many-sided. There is no absolute truth.

A single sound is coming from the mandapa. Yet the three fishes do not hear a single sound. One fish hears a drum, another a nadaswaram and the third a veena. Similarly, there is no single truth that we all perceive.

**Nonsense stories to
teach children
English language**

1. The shape-shifting Rakshasi of Kanchipuram

1.

The shape-changing Rakshasi of Kanchipuram
Remained puzzled about who she was.
A bird is a bird... and a Rakshasi is what?

2.

Was she a gobbler of things?
An eater of foods and non foods?
The Times Guide to Rakshasas started
with the words – “Beware of these rabid eaters!!!!!!”
She didnt want to be an Interiorizer of Everything (IOE)
O that shapeshifting Rakshasi of Kanchipuram

3.

A fish (meen) was once mean to her
At this she got upset and left her home
-the Vegavathy river, much to her parents shiver
O that shapeshifting Rakshasi of Kanchipuram

4.

She jumped down the Tada Waterfalls
And all her friends said ‘what da?’
Finally, when she had to say Tata,
She asked again the question
“Who am I?”
O that shapeshifting Rakashasi of Kanchipuram

5.

A black and white bee from Madurai
Gave her a grain of arsee
And said see the world
in this kutie ricie
“Don’t be poetic,”
Said the shapeshifting Rakshasi of Kanchipuram

6.

“I am essentially, an essentialist, that is who I should be,”
Thought she, in various thought bubbles
“Yoschi yoschi, think, think why are you so pink?”
O that shapeshifting Rakshashi of Kanchipuram

7.

She wrote a computer program to answer her question,
Naan yaar?
The computer brashed, crashed and was trashed.
O that shapeshifting Rakashasi of Kanchipuram

8.

Once she posed per question to the giant Picsasha of
Mahabalipuram
Who lived by the giant bayan tree
And was ever free
He said 'you are good and could be my food'
She ran away, O that shapeshifting Rakashasi of Kanchipuram

9.

After her grand escape
She decided eating was better
Than asking questions to
The giant Picshasa of Mahabalipuram
O that shapeshifting Rakshasi of Kanchipuram

10.

Satisfied with her meal, she took on
the shape of a dragon
And hoped to be considered a paragon
of the querying mind
She breathed out questions, instead of fire
O that shapeshifting Rakshasi of Kanchipuram

11.

She lit the light of self enquiry,
And felt quite merry.
The rakshasi felt not the least cross,
for in knowledge there is no loss.
O that shapeshifting Rakashasi of Kanchipuram

12.

You are not just a Rakshasi, nor are you from Kanchipuram
You are the infinity of space, you are vast expanse of joy
You are everyone and everything," the answers told our surprised
friendly fiend.

13.

Fishing for answers
She found many wheres,

whats and whens
O that no longer shapeshifting
Rakashasi of Kanchipuram

14.
She thus rejoiced and spread self knowledge
To other enquirers.
O that no longer only the
shapeshifting Rakshasi of Kanchipuram

2. The mischievous monkey and the golden key

The little Mischievous Monkey,

One day, found a large golden key.

“What could this be?”

“Let me ask the Maker of Tea”

The Maker of Tea

Lived under the sea

She was ancient and very wise

And rather fond of white mice

“Here have some tea

And show me that key”

“This comes from the Malabar

Go meet the Keeper of Har”

Said the Maker of Tea

The Keeper of Har

Lived in a palace of tar

He was forever grumpy

And hated the Maker of Tea

“Why have you come here monkey?

Go back to your tree”

“And, on your way, return

The key to the Singing Fern”

Said the Keeper of Har

The Singing Fern

Lived with the arctic tern

Together they sang stories

Of the Ghastly Glories

“O the key, the key

Thanks a lot for this key”

“This is the lost golden key

To the treasure of the Big Bee,”

said the Singing Fern.

“What will my reward be?

This treasure I want to see”

asked the Mischievous Monkey.

“Join us if you are no stranger

To beasts and grave danger,”

warned the arctic tern.

“I am quite game

This could be my claim to fame”

said the mischievous monkey

“First we must cross the Desert

Of Death without getting hurt”

“When you see any creature

Pull out some of its fur”

said the Singing Fern.

Soon they heard a rumbling roar

That shook the earth at its core

The Terrible Tiger had arrived

Seeing whom the tern cried

But the brave little monkey

Pulled the tiger’s fur with the key

The tiger seemed to choke

And disappeared into thin smoke

Next, they met the Camel of Calamity

Who did not look in the least pretty

Along came the Boisterous Bear

With the Horribly Horrible Hare
Stealthy without a single murmur
The swift monkey stole their fur
Each of the beasts turned to dust
Their vicious plans going bust
The trio crossed the desert in peace
And made it to the Valley of Cheese
Where under a tiny mango tree
Lay the treasure of the Big Bee
The monkey dug-up the box
And placed it on the rocks
The Singing Fern took the key
And opened the treasure of the bee
Inside they found a rainbow ring
That could turn a pauper into a king
And the colorful conch-shell
That had wonderful stories to tell
They also found the bubbling broom
On which they could easily zoom
To see marvelous places
And meet strange races
“Brave monkey, take one of these
To remember the valley of cheese”
said the Singing Fern
“I have no use for thrones and rings
Or the stories this conch brings”
“I want fly to the moon
On this bubbling broom,”
said the monkey

And the monkey set-off on her next journey

Happy, that she had found the golden key.

3. The three witches and the speed mathematicians

Avary, witch No 1, donning a pointed long red hat was walking through a long red brick road. She had to suddenly stop. The road was blocked by twelve buffaloes. Nearby, there were speed mathematicians all around. They were having a seminar on the superiority of the Vedic method in Raheja Towers. Avary knew this through her divination powers. The entrance to Raheja towers was blocked by three buffaloes – two of whom were sleeping. Avary made herself invisible and entered Raheja towers. It was lunch time and the Speed mathematicians were sipping Rose Tea. “Triple the Trouble,” said Lacy the witch, who was secretly disguised as a speed mathematician. She had turned her broom into a purse embossed with a broom shaped logo. “Off with the heads” said Caily her witch sister who was in disguise too. Avary knew Lacy and Caily were upto no good.

She took out her wand and said abracadabadoom. Avary wanted to be upto no good too. She too disguised herself as a speed mathematician. “Coolio and the gang,” said Lacy on seeing Avary (disguised in a suit and tie and holding a sheaf of mathematical sheets spread wide. “What’s the formula?” asked Avary. “Doom and trouble,” said Lacy. “Hee Hee, hay hay,” said Caily. Lunch was over and the rosecake desert hardly eaten. The witches were rushed back to the auditorium.

“Live to add and add to live,” said a speed mathematician called Zan in Avary’s ear. “This world is filled with magic not numbers,” said Avary quiet seriously. And she turned Zan’s documents into a kitten. Soft, fluffy and yellow. The kitten went mew + hew. Zan screamed, “Witches, ghastly witches.” There was chaos and mayham all around. Everyone fled helter shelter. And budup bumped into each other. “Witches”, “Rubbish” said the organiser. We are mathematicians for God’s sake. We are as rational as rational can be. “Maths will save the world” someone shouted. Avary turned the fan into a dove. Someone who saw that cried, “Oh Macbeth I feel for you.”

“Order, Order” the organiser said. “Maths and especially speed mathematics is about nothing except order. Order exists everywhere even in disorder, “ he yelled into the mike. “Interesting” thought Lacy, “why don’t we try to learn from them? Instead of dooming them with magic?”

The troublesome three conferred and agreed to stop the magic. The seminar took off and the witches became engrossed in the magic of numbers. They even took notes. Caily said in the end, “Ho Ho, these speed mathematicians didn’t pull a fast one. The world of maths is actually fun.” And thus, the troublesome three took to speed mathematics ever after and attended every conference on the subject and that too without any abracadaboom.

Telling Stories

Use of sound

When teachers use storytelling as a **medium of communication** and as an educational tool they can deeply help students and **enrich** their learning process. To make the storytelling process effective teachers must learn how to use sound in their telling. Sound is the most powerful equipment of the storyteller. Sound can help students **connect** better with the **story content**. Sound can be used in several ways.

- as voice modulation - low and high voice tones
- as the coinage of fun sounds to draw the attention of the listener
- as rhymes and sound repetition
- as songs

To make the storytelling more **effective** sound can be used in any creative manner.

Benefits and points to
consider while building
the school story
curriculum

The way of the labyrinth

We all like puzzles. They bring with them a sense of intrigue, [mystery](#) and when we resolve a puzzle we feel childishly happy. Puzzles of course are designed for children more frequently than they are for adults. Stories are a form of puzzles too. The [linear logic of the classroom text, is done away](#) when you teach with stories. What makes sense in a simple mathematical formula makes more sense when [arranged and disarranged in the form of a story](#). [Stories disrupt logic](#). They can start and end anywhere. When the [grammar of mathematics](#) is embedded in a small story, written to be narrated in the classroom, the logic of the mathematical concepts can be explained in a number of interesting and evolving ways. We can teach logic by [disrupting logic](#). We can delineate the vocabulary and glossary of any mathematical concept by weaving a smart story around it. We have built and used many smart phones - the time has come to build and use [smart stories](#) that are embedded with ideas, philosophies, concepts, definitions, theorems and logic.

Powerful voices of the ancient tale

A way to understand the [lore of the land](#) is to compile it and sing and narrate it to children. Why we assume that oral traditions and ancient traditions are very relevant to our wellbeing is because they contain the [wisdom and understanding of our ancestors](#). As we all know, ancestor worship is common among all cultures and this is the way we still persist in it. If we can make sense of why our ancestors and other people's ancestors did what they did, thought what they did, acted as they did, worshipped as they did it is felt we can [improve our own lives](#), enriching the same with wisdom and [lived understanding](#). Ancient languages and lores tended to be more powerful and because of this we are given to understand that their voices were more powerful than our [feeble ones](#). Though their powerful voices, our ancestors, initiated the [evolution and preservation of the human tale](#) and its subparts. We enjoy recreating their voices and feeling [its power our own psyche](#).

A new system of storytelling

Media itself is a new phenomenon that had **changed the human consciousness**. Before social media, there was media, and before media there were books and literature. Literature genres of plays (drama) show us that there were predominantly **two sorts of audience accepted literature - the tragedy and the comedy** - both of which though entertaining do not help in imparting the **school subjects** to the students in an enriching manner. Comedy is by definition too dependent on **situational humour** to help the child with anything other than hone their English, language, personality and **value system**. Drama (or literature) that are tragic will agitate the emotions and will not especially be using in teaching STEM or social sciences, though **they undoubtedly improve the vocabulary of the child**. **A new system of storytelling is required** to build a story curriculum for schools. This system or genre be **academic focussed** where the idea is to get ideas across and thus help the child make sense of the world. We must **build the school curriculum stories to inspire and educate**.

Memory based learning vs an intuitive understanding leading to wisdom

2000-5000 years ago, the Indian system of education reigned supreme in India and created world famous scholars and scholarship. These educational setups were called gurukuls where the guru shishya relationship prevailed. The method of transmission often depended on analysing stories, myths and legends from the Itihasas Puranas and also the understanding thereof in light of Indian philosophy. India segments memory based learning from intuition based understanding. Vedic texts were learnt through the former while the vedantic texts were understood through the latter. We all need to memorise some things - formula, equations, number systems, names of historical figures, plant names and identifying signs, etc. But beyond this there is the intuitive understanding of what the knowledge is trying to tell us. To shape our consciousness - wisdom is necessary.

SFF to learn concepts in Maths and Science

Story theory is a way to maximize maths and science learning and can only be understood in terms of molecular zoology and molecular quantum biology. Welcome to the world of the integrative classroom. We can all make sense of the world we inhabit by focussing on science and maths education through stories. We are now at the forefront of a SFF revolution and we can include characters from SFF to make our stories an enriching experience for children. We can definitely make sense of maths as a language that grows on you and science as a vocabulary of rules of nature if we use some magic, some witchcraft in our telling.

The natural world as a reference to study science and maths

Attention theory is a theory which combines natural world in action thinking with an understanding of science and maths. Environment as it operates is essential for understanding the theories that make up the universe. $E=MC^2$ and other theories were evolved as a result of studying the environment. The natural world plays an important role in the hypertheotisation of reality and it makes us all go aghast and also feel wonder. A strange thing is that to understand why machines work you need to understand why nature works. Nature works in short clauses and long pauses. This is why we refer to nature when we wish to make sense of our own world.

A way to learn maths and science through intrigue and fun with stories

Understanding how stories can be a way to impart STEM education is essential. We can all contribute towards this by making sense of the stories we have in the world. African stories, aboriginal stories, adivasi stories, north east indian stories, and we can come with a plan to teach humanities and the social sciences. But for maths and science - we need to use stop and think if we need something more. And that something is building a customised school story curriculum for STEM subjects. These are stories written to teach the science and maths curriculum — written for this purpose and not for the sake of literature.

Story Theory as the building block of the nursery curriculum

Stories, songs, rhymes, poems are especially vital in building the curriculum for the nursery. The reason being this phase of school is the child's first engagement and encounter with language. As the child learns the English language, and learns it well, through the story based curriculum – he/she will never forget the language basics for life. The child will then use the language to acquire proficiency in every subject of the school curriculum such as science, social science, humanities, maths etc, as the child makes his/her way through the various school grades. Thus, the nursery years gives a strong foundation for the school years, and this foundation is made stronger by using a formal story based teaching method in the nursery days.

Main advantage of a school story curriculum

With the technology revolution children are getting more and more distracted with gadgets. They spend more time in front of video games in the computer and the ipad. These are new age video games like Minecraft created with the latest technology. Children watch youtube videos and hardly ever pick up a book. The school curriculum looks intimidating to them. To add salt to the wound, any information needed by the child to complete any school assignment can be cut, copied and pasted from the internet. The child does not need to think for himself or herself anymore or consult encyclopaedias and books. The answers are all available for copying on the net. Given this, it is important to bring children back on track to the education agenda by giving them stories. The story curriculum is a way to draw back the attention of the child from technology fads and devices and teach them a way to expand their intellectual capacity and capability.