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LGA3103 Stories for Young Learners

Topic 2: Exploration of Types of Stories



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Topic 2: Exploration of Types of Stories

With some stories, classification by type is clear and simple. However in many cases different writers have varied ideas about what the categories are. Below are several articles on classifying stories.

From the *Australian Storytelling* website, here is a very traditional classification of stories:

Types of Story

- by Helen McKay and Berice Dudley

There are many different types of stories. The most important consideration when choosing a tale to tell is whether you like it enough to tell it with enthusiasm. Stories should communicate to you a need to be told. Some of the different categories of stories available to storytellers are: --

Fable - a short moral story not based on fact, using animals as characters, such as, Aesop's Fables - The Fox and the Grapes, Lion and the mouse and others.

Fairy tale - The best-known would be Grimm's fairytales about imaginary folk, such as elves, giants, witches, gnomes, and fairies. Closer to home is Mary and the Leprechaun, by Irish-Australian writer John Kelly.

Folk tale - a traditional story, in which ordinary people gain special insight, transforming them and enabling them to overcome extraordinary obstacles. See *The Magic Orange Tree & other Haitian Folktales* by Diane Wolkstein.

Legend - a story based on the life of a real person in which events are depicted larger than life, for example, *The Stories of Robin Hood*, or *King Arthur and the Knights of the Round Table*.

Myth - a story about gods and heroes, explaining the workings of nature and human nature. See *Psyche and Eros* or *Inanna* by Diane Wolkstein.

Parable - a fictitious story told to point to a moral, for example, *The Sower and the Seed* from the New Testament of the Bible.

Personal story - a life story from your own or your family's experience, such as, *Streets and Alleys* by Syd Lieberman.

Religious story - an historical and philosophical story based on a particular culture and religious persuasion, for example, *The Story of Lazarus* from the Bible.

Tall tale - an exaggerated story, often humorous. Fishing stories, Australian Bush stories, see *The Loaded Dog* by Henry Lawson.

Traditional tale - a story handed down orally from generation to generation, such as the Polynesian stories - Maui, and *The Coming of the Maori*.

(McKay & Dudley, 1996)

Genres of Children's Literature

From Carole Cox's 'Teaching Language Arts' (Cox, 2008, pp. 72-3)

Teachers should be familiar with various types or categories of children's literature, which are *genres*. The following list identifies genres of children's literature along with examples of picture books for younger children and chapter books for older children (presented in that order):

- **Poetry:** Works of carefully chosen, condensed, and artfully arranged language that looks selectively at the world in unique and unusual ways.
Read-Aloud Rhymes for the Very Young (Prelutsky, 1986)
A light in the Attic (Silverstein, 1981)
Where the Sidewalk Ends (Silverstein, 1986)
- **Picture Books:** Works in which illustrations and text combine equally to tell a story:
Tar Beach (Ringgold, 1992)
Grandfather's Journey (1994)
- **Traditional Literature:** Stories that have been told for many years, across many cultures, first orally and then written down:
Lon Po Po: A Red Riding Hood Story from China (Young, 1990)
The People Could Fly: American Black Folktales (Hamilton, 1993)
- **Fantasy:** Stories told in the real or an unreal world, with characters or events that probably don't really exist and events that may depend on magic or the supernatural:
The Stinky Cheese Man and Other Fairly Stupid Tales (Scieszka, 1993)
Harry Potter and the Sorcerer's Stone (Rowling, 1997)
- **Science Fiction:** Stories that explore the possibilities of science in our lives through invention or extension of the laws of nature:
Tuesday (Weisner, 1992)
The Giver (Lowry, 1990)
- **Contemporary Realistic Fiction:** Stories of real people, living here and now:
Smoky Night (Bunting, 1995)
Maniac Magee (Spinelli, 1991)
- **Historical Fiction:** Stories set in real time and place in history but with some or all fictional characters:
Encounter (Yolen 1992)
Eleanor Roosevelt: A Life of Discovery (Freedman, 1994)
- **Nonfiction:** Books of information about a variety of topics in the real world:
Harem (Myers, 1998)
The Way Things Work (Macaulay, 1988)

Classic Story Types

Here is another story classification list from ChangingMinds.Org (NOTE: This is not especially for children's stories.)

There are a number of classic types of story. Here are some of these.

- Action: Non-stop chasing, fighting, etc.
- Adventure: Heroes and incredible action in escapist fun.
- Biographic drama: A story of a real life.
- Body swap: Being someone else.
- Caper: Loveable rogues pull off big heist without hurting people.
- Chase: Pursuit, crashes, stunts and capture (perhaps).
- Chick Flick: Fun for women.
- Classroom drama: Emotional students and brilliant teachers.
- Comedy: Funny things happen to funny people.
- Courtroom drama: Lawyers save the day.
- Crime: Good guys catch bad guys.
- Disaster: Terrible things happen. People survive.
- Docu-drama: Documentary made interesting.
- Drama: Just everyday excitement.
- Escape: Good people captured by bad people. Escape themselves.
- Espionage: Spies, counterspies and political secrets.
- Fantasy: Wizards and heroes battle with monsters. Good guys win.
- Horror: Scary things trigger fear.
- Kitchen-sink drama: Mundane stuff at home.
- Mystery: Solving puzzles.
- Period drama: Rich people in costumes have petty problems.
- Pioneer: People go to strange places. Discover themselves.
- Psychological thriller: Scary and subtle excitement.
- Rescue: Saving people from harm.
- Romance: The path of true love is not smooth, but it is inevitable.
- Science fiction: One of the above, set in the future.
- Slapstick: Comedy with custard.
- Survival: Man vs. nature. Man wins. Just.
- Swashbuckler: Pirates and daring on the Spanish Main.
- Teen drama: Adolescence and high emotion.
- Thriller: Exciting things happen.
- Tragedy: Sad things happen. People die.
- War: Big battles. Good guys win in the end.
- Western: Cowboys, Indians and the wild west.
- Whodunnit: Detective detects who done it.

(Straker, 2008)

Story Genres for Young Learners

When children are very young (maybe 3-5 years old) small, simple things are exciting, and they can be easily frightened. They really don't need a complicated plot and drawn-out suspense.

By the time our young learners are at school, they are more easily bored, and they enjoy a story that extends them a little bit. All the same, it is not acceptable to include violence and horror and adult themes.

Consider each of the 'Classic Story Types' (from above) listed in the table (below) and score each one on their suitability for stories for Young Learners (i.e. stage 1 especially).

Scores:

1 = This type of story is *very* suitable for young learners.

2 = This type of story *could* be suitable if it was specially written or adapted for young learners.

3 = There is *no* way this story would be suitable for young learners.

Action:		Classroom drama:		Escape:		Pioneer:		Swashbuckler:	
Adventure:		Comedy:		Espionage:		Psychological thriller:		Teen drama:	
Biographic drama:		Courtroom drama:		Fantasy:		Rescue:		Thriller:	
Body swap:		Crime:		Horror:		Romance:		Tragedy:	
Caper:		Disaster:		Kitchen-sink drama:		Science fiction:		War:	
Chase:		Docu-drama:		Mystery:		Slapstick:		Western:	
Chick Flick:		Drama		Period drama:		Survival:		Whodunnit:	

Exploring Story Types

Some of the 'Classic story types' listed above are unlikely to be included in stories for children, especially for our young learners.

Carole Cox's classification includes Picture Books which are specifically for young learners. She is specifically writing about genres of Children's Literature books.

The first group of story types by Australian Storytelling is referring specifically to stories that are told orally.

Exercise – 1. Categorise

1. Look at the books in the appendix of this module.

* **Use:** Would you read it aloud, let the children read it, tell the story, ...?

Fill in the table below with reference to these stories. Add some that you find yourself.

Story	Genre / Type	Age / Level	Use *
The School Lunch Room			
The Gruffalo			
Little Red Riding Hood and the Wolf			
Beach Day			
Goosebumps Horrorland			
Things are Gonna Get Ugly			
The Dark of Knight			
Kalulu's Pumpkins			
Dangerous Work			
Mrs Mog's Cats			
Vroom			
Falling Boy			

Exercise – 2. Explore and Select

- Search the Internet / Library / Bookshop
- Find stories of any 3 genres for a particular level.
- Answer the questions below

1. Title of Book / Story	
Author	
Genre (why do you think so?)	
Level (why do you think so?)	
Where did you find it?	
Why did you choose it?	
How would you use it?	
2. Title of Book / Story	
Author	
Genre (why do you think so?)	
Level (why do you think so?)	
Where did you find it?	
Why did you choose it?	
How would you use it?	
3. Title of Book / Story	
Author	
Genre (why do you think so?)	
Level (why do you think so?)	
Where did you find it?	
Why did you choose it?	
How would you use it?	

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