

Once Upon a Time...

Story Resources

For writers, teachers, storytellers and
story geeks everywhere.

Background

Stories start with different phrases across cultures, languages and lands. These phrases evoke a series of ideas and imaginative thoughts that can be harnessed into stories.

These resources / activities are great for writers, storytellers and schools to encourage imaginative storymaking and playing with words.

These are also inclusive and bring forward a discussion on how cultures interact with each other and how those cultures bring storytelling to life.

What you Need

You need a copy of Story Starters – the resource that lists story starters from different languages and lands, crowd-sourced on the Internet.

<http://www.chitrasoundar.com/story-starters/>

STORY STICKS/PLATES

- Each story starter is written on an ice-cream stick or paper plates with the origin written at the back
- Each participant (individually) or in groups pick one stick / plate
- They start their story using the phrase they've picked and include one element from the culture this story starter is from.



The unfolding story box from Rajasthan

DIY Story Starter

- Write down all story starter lines from the resource in separate sheets of paper. *Origin information is not relevant for this activity.*
- Mix them up in a hat or a bowl or a box.
- Now ask a participant (or a group) to pick one.
- Each team / participant gets a few minutes and then they create a story starter that has a similar feel but different words. See next page for example!

My published example from You're Safe With Me



Illustrated by Poonam Mistry, Published by Lantana Publishing

Find a Story

- For each story starter phrase in the resource, find a story from the culture of origin.
- Discuss the story and the story starting line.
- Discuss if there are similarities between this story and any other story you know.
- Learn to tell that story to an audience.

PEANUTS

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7-12



It was a dark and
stormy night.



SCHULZ

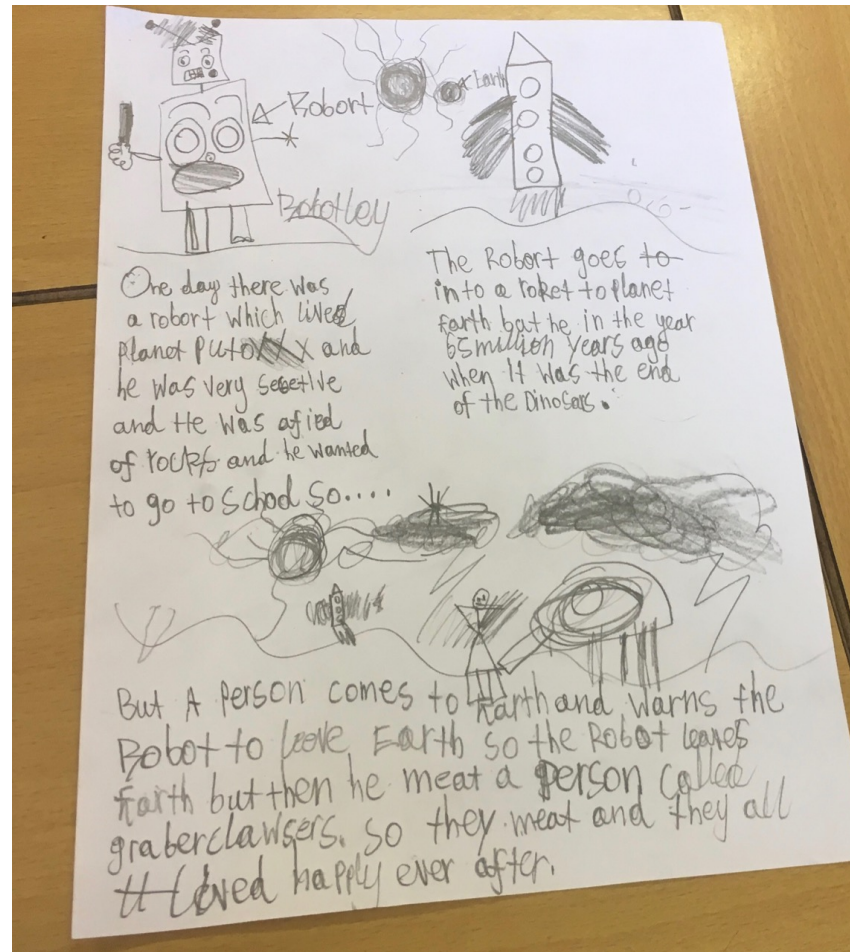
12 July 1965

The world-famous author takes his typewriter out for the very first time and types out the immortal line "It was a dark and stormy night". First written by Edward Bulwer-Lytton in his 1830 novel *Paul Clifford*, it was mocked as the worst opening line ever. Unsurprisingly, Snoopy regularly received rejection letters from publishers. Schulz parodied the form of the rejection letter just as he had the purple prose of the novel, drawing from the memories of his own returned submissions as a struggling cartoonist.

Write your own story

- Write down all story starter lines from the resource in separate sheets of paper. *Origin information is not relevant for this activity.*
- Mix them up in a hat or a bowl or a box.
- Now ask a participant (or a group) to pick one.
- Now start a story from that line...

A real example...



Go Further

- Before words and languages were created, people still told stories in pictures.
- Write down all story starter lines from the resource in separate sheets of paper. *Origin information is not relevant for this activity.*
- Mix them up in a hat or a bowl or a box.
- Now ask a participant (or a group) to pick one.
- Draw the story starter...as if you were a cave person.

Picture This

- Can you imagine a story being carved on stone?
Or on the sands of a beach?
- What would it look like?
- What stories would you tell?
- What about stories told at night in front of the fire or in the forest?
- Draw a story for others to guess.
- Make it fun by starting the story with a line from the story starters.



Deeper Dive

- Why do some cultures start their story this way?
- What in their cultures make them think about time or place or kings or tigers?
- This will be a longer project that will involve some research, some discussion and a presentation.
- Each participant or team takes away a random story starter and research its background.
- Present to the class / group on findings. Show us pictures, props, tell us a story.

Model the Story

- Bring your favourite dolls, toys and models
- Make your own with Lego and cardboard and anything else you can find
- Create the story you made up using the story starter in models. Show us your story.



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Chitra runs creative writing and story making workshop for children of all ages and teachers too.

She teaches a course on picture book writing this summer at City University, London.

Get in touch via her website if you would like to invite Chitra as a trainer or a speaker.

