



LIVERPOOL HOPE  
UNIVERSITY



**BLUE SKY**

**STORY TELLING  
ADVENTURES**



أزرق

**HELPING YOUNG  
PEOPLE FIND THE  
STARS**

HIKAYE

چيروک



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# OUR STORY OPENER



We hadn't meant for this booklet to turn out the way it has. You see, one bright sunny day we were sitting bewildered, in a dark rickety cage when suddenly we broke free. The dawn of a new light removed the wool from our eyes and the cobwebs from our minds. Our story adventure needed to be about who and what to take with us to have the best time.

At first we spent hours with children, families, schools and communities and they became the superheroes of our story. With lots of ideas swirling around our heads, we found ourselves on a jagged, ragged journey - at the point of no return. Filling cracks in the pavements of the giants who walked before us. We tiptoed through woods of magnificent bold trees, which could be scary, but mostly exciting, and full of amazing surprises.

It is true, it didn't come as a shock that everyone has a story to tell, nor that we can all be authors. No. What is astonishing is how many tales we have been told that stay in our heart and drive us to the next destination point in our work.

We hope you will be able to use the information. Enjoy creating moments of fun and pleasure in the home and community through the gifts of imagination, language, reading and writing.

Please stay in touch.

Lorna and Jamie (Developmental Psychology Research Group)  
Blue Sky Story Telling Adventures

# THE CHARACTERS



## Lorna Bourke, PhD

is interested in why children differ and considers having expectations that everyone should be the same lacks creativity and causes inequality. She looks at how our memories help to generate ideas and words to write stories to support families and schools. Lorna has been the Principal Investigator on a grant by the British Academy to support this work. E: [bourkel@hope.ac.uk](mailto:bourkel@hope.ac.uk)



## Jamie Lingwood, PhD

is interested in how adult-child interactions influence children's language development. He is currently doing some research on how to foster a love of reading with reception year children. Jamie is Principal Investigator on Love to Read Reception Years E: [lingwoj@hope.ac.uk](mailto:lingwoj@hope.ac.uk)



## Elizabeth Parr, EdD

has worked as one of the lead teachers implementing the Communication, Language and Literacy Development Programme. She joined the Primary English Team for Initial Teacher Education at Liverpool Hope and is involved in the curriculum development and delivery of the BA (QTS) and PGCE curriculum English. She is interested in perceptions towards community-oriented schooling. In addition, Liz is Principal Investigator on [www.writingvertime.org.uk](http://www.writingvertime.org.uk), working with local authorities to improve writing outcomes for children.

# THE CHARACTERS



## Linda Kerr, EdD Candidate

is interested in young boys' views on learning to read in the classroom and at home; their reading tastes and how they access stories and information. She is also interested in the views of parents, caregivers and practitioners who support boys with their reading: E: [kerrl@hope.ac.uk](mailto:kerrl@hope.ac.uk)



## Pinar Oztop, PhD

is interested in what influences children's creativity and collaboration. She is also exploring how children understand others' feelings and thoughts. E: [oztopp@hope.ac.uk](mailto:oztopp@hope.ac.uk)



## Marta Wesierska, PhD

is interested in children's language learning and reading, in particular in multilingual speakers. She is also interested in how children and teenagers learn grammar. E: [wesierm@hope.ac.uk](mailto:wesierm@hope.ac.uk)



## Wing Kai Fung, PhD

is interested in understanding more about the benefits of supporting children's play activities in school and in the home. He makes important links between this and young children's ability to make friends, and progress in their school work. E: [fungw@hope.ac.uk](mailto:fungw@hope.ac.uk)

# WHAT TO PACK

## The essentials



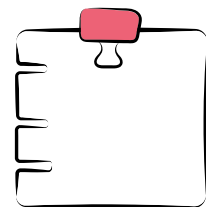
1. A reason to go on an adventure (purpose)
2. An idea (creativity)
3. Words (language)
4. Story structure (reading)
5. Something to write on (writing)
5. Pencil/IPen (tools)
6. A bundle of fun (inside us)



## The luxuries



1. Posh note paper
2. Special pen
3. Digital tablet
4. Notes page on mobile phone



# THINKING OF IDEAS



## Imagination

Actually, you don't need a lot of imagination. Most stories come from something real that has happened or is about to happen. It doesn't have to be anything dramatic either. It could be based on something you and your child have read about or seen on TV or at the cinema.



## Writing best about what we know

To begin story telling we need to brainstorm or shake our brains. Not too hard at first. Just enough to let some words and ideas sprinkle out. Take delight in this - are there any words that make you giggle or surprise you? They might make good starting points for a story.

## Creating a topic

You can use topic ideas to get started. We have some examples here:

- Your favourite superhero needs your help. What can you do to save the day?
- Aliens land and it is your lucky job to show them around. Where will you take them?
- You're prime minister for a day. What do you do?
- You get £100 but you have to spend it by the end of the day. What do you do with it?
- Write about a time you felt really happy. What happened? What made you feel happy?
- Write a letter to your future self in 20 years
- If you could meet any famous person today, who would you want to meet and why? What questions might you ask them.
- More ideas from [www.writingovertime.org.uk/resources](http://www.writingovertime.org.uk/resources)

# WHO TO TAKE



## Definitely parents or caregivers

Did you know sharing activities between adults and children are very important for developing language and literacy skills? And they can be simple - in fact it is recommended that they are, and above all they should be fun. The main thing is for parents to show that they are interested so it should be quality time that is spent together.



## Friends and siblings

They help us with pretending, role play, fun, and are honest with us. Friends can be human, animals and objects. If some children don't like pretending, that's ok, they can have real adventures as well. Collaborating on ideas, making jokes and solving puzzles are great ways to spend time together.



## Teachers and neighbours

The school and the community we live in can provide encouragement. People are willing to share riddles, rhymes, songs, jokes, poems, and anecdotes. They can also be characters in stories. We can think about information they might need and how we can present it to them. This can include, signs for around the neighbourhood, lists of things that people can do in school and out of it. We might want to give our teachers or neighbours some instructions on how to play the latest video game; and tell them what we like about it.



# WHERE CAN IT TAKE PLACE



## In the home

Every day life is the starting point for many stories. Relationships between family members, things that they do that are funny. Sharing good times and bad. Sometimes finding space to write alone as well as together can be hard, if that's the case, the local library might be able to help.



## In communities

Is there a favourite place to go in the local area? Family trips to libraries, galleries and museums open up real and magical worlds that we cannot always experience on our own. Religious spaces can offer space to think and wonder. Watching and taking part in sport can provide ideas about different characters, settings, relationships and feelings.



## In schools

The majority of children spend a lot of time in school. Building relationships there help us to understand different families and lives. Through connecting with one another we can learn about empathy - and if we can see things from other people's point of view then we can understand their experiences when we are reading and writing about them. For children who are homeschooled then it is possible to develop child-friendly networks as well.

# TELLING YOUR STORY



## Story starters

*Make the story interesting from the start:*



Maybe there is a loud/quiet/interesting noise....what is it? Let's explore...a barking dog? someone singing? the crack of a firework? the strange noise of a landing spacecraft?

Perhaps an interesting visitor arrives...from outer space...from a favourite story...a wizard...a TV character...a famous sporting hero... who is that knocking at the door?

What happens when your favourite toy starts talking/comes to life?

## Story structures

*Think of a story structure as a Mountain to climb:*

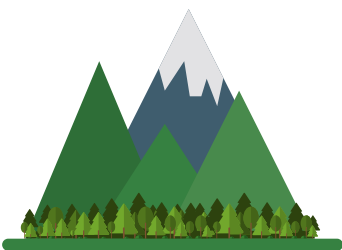
The foot of the mountain is the **OPENING** - an everyday event perhaps....

The **BUILD-UP** is when something interesting is about to happen...or there is a problem...

The **CLIMAX** (top of the mountain) is when the action happens - the drama - what is going on? Who is involved? What are they doing? How are they feeling?

The **RESOLUTION** (coming down the mountain) - is when the problem is solved.

The **ENDING** (back at the foot of the mountain) - is it happy? Sad? Unfinished? Further adventures....?



# READING TOGETHER

## Shared Reading

Time spent reading together is not just a great opportunity for parents and carers to bond with their children - it helps with brain development too, which is particularly important in the first two years of life.

Alongside helping very young children to start to talk, reading books aloud together introduces new words, structures and language patterns that help form the building blocks for literacy later in life.

**Find a quiet place and relax.** Turn off the TV or radio to help your child.

**You don't always need to read the words in books.** Looking at and talking about the pictures is a great way to encourage your child to enjoy books. If you speak a language other than English, talk about the pictures and story in your own language.

**Give your child time to respond to your chat about the book.** This could be with a babble, arm waving or finger pointing.

**Don't be afraid to use props.** Using puppets or a favourite cuddly toy will help bring the words alive and add actions to your words. Use a story sack to store them. They can be used many times to retell stories. Dress up, use something simple like a scarf to create many different looks.

**Link what you see or read about in books with real-life.** If there's a picture of a dog in a book, talk about a dog you know.

**Share favourite books again and again.** Repetition helps children to understand and remember the language they hear.

**Have fun!**



# WRITING TOGETHER



## Shared Writing

If reading helps the brain to develop language in the first few years of life, then writing helps the brain to think and feel. To keep our brains active we should try to find plenty of opportunities to write. We have to juggle all kinds of information inside our heads to make sure words, phrases and sentences land on a page. So let's make the time we spend doing it feel good. The best things you can do when helping a child write:

**Being with your child.** We keep saying this don't we! It can be a challenge to devote time to writing with lots of other things to do but the idea is that rather than looking over their shoulder that you see yourself as a fellow writer (imagine that) - this means writing alongside your child, at the same time exploring what they want to write about. Showing your interest and pleasure.

**Give children choice about what they write.** Talking and drawing can be part of *planning* - refer back to the page on ideas and encourage children to take them from reading, video games, play, film and television programmes.

**Resist temptation!** Hard as it can be because we want our children to learn, try not to keep correcting what they have written. You don't have to be a 'good' writer but it is important to write with them because as you are talking, sharing ideas you begin to *craft* writing. 'Temporary' spellings while *drafting* is normal. Remember all that juggling that happens in your head, thinking of ideas, words and story openings and structure - then we might not have enough room in our minds for thinking about the correct spelling at the same time.

**Writing happily and socially.** Read back what you have written to each other, giving your responses. "I love ... (your ending) because ... (it made me shiver); "I didn't quite understand (this bit. What do you mean?). This helps to get our writing 'reader ready' and is called '*revising*'. There is where shared reading is useful once again - read, talk and make changes together.

Find out more from  
[writing4pleasure.com](http://writing4pleasure.com)

# WHY MY STORY

## Stories are everywhere

Your and your child's story is as important as anyone else's.

It provides a frame or outline to understand who we are; where we have come from, what is happening to us now and what could happen in the future. They help us make sense of the world and ourselves. Sometimes we can feel disconnected from others, writing our story can remind us of not only who we are but who we belong to, who we share an identity with.

Stories are really good for letting us show feelings, and help us think and remember. They let people get to know us better and feel closer. The earlier we tell and retell our stories the richer and more colourful our lives become.

So first of all don't think too much about your ideas, just begin to write - see what comes out. And if you are a multilingual family then use any language you like. In fact, to tell the whole story, it is important to maintain a child's home language.

Support writing activities, encourage your child to read books, read together, watch TV and cartoons, sing songs, play rhyming games, talk about your child's day all in the home language. Speak your home language even if your child responds in English, even hearing the language helps them to learn it. There may be after school activities in the home language that you can sign up for. With older children, there is a wonderful opportunity to talk about the benefits of speaking multiple languages.

“

The untold stories are the ones that  
change us  
Meera Syal,  
comedian, writer, playwright, singer,  
journalist and actress

# PUBLISHING STORIES

## Put it in a frame

Once your child has done a bit of proof-reading, sorted out their spellings, and gotten their handwriting just right (it just has to be readable) they're ready to publish.

- Where's it going to go and who is going to see it? With your child's permission:
- Put it in a frame or give it as a gift.
- Put it on the bedroom wall.
- Put it in the bathroom for people to read on the loo or while they're in the bath.
- Write it in chalk on the pavement.
- Record it on your phone and send it to someone.
- Turn it into a piece of artwork.
- Mail it to a person who needs to read it.
- Place it anonymously in local establishments. such as: libraries, places of worship, local history centres, museums, art galleries, train stations, bus stops, bookshops, cornershops windows, lamp posts, gates, fences, takeaways, retirement homes, cafes, coffee- houses, sports-clubs, dentists' or doctors' surgeries, buses, or trains.



# OUR SUPPORTERS



## Bridge2

is a charity focused on serving the asylum seeker, refugee, and local community throughout the central Liverpool area. They support people who are escaping persecution and war zones; assisting them as they transition into a purpose-filled life in the UK. They offer a variety of services such as: English classes and cultural classes, skills workshops and art workshops, support groups, and practical support like clothes, toiletries, and food.



## The Reader

believes that literature's unique power has the potential to connect individuals, help us feel better and to rebuild lost social bonds. They are building a Reading Revolution, bringing people together and books to life in order to make warmer, healthier, stronger communities. <https://www.thereader.org.uk>



## Writing on the Wall

was born out of the Liverpool Dockers Strike in the late 90s, they know how writing can transform communities. Writing can be a form of therapy, an act of resistance, a collaboration between opposing viewpoints, a tool to inspire and mobilise change. Through writing, they believe our experiences become undeniable, they live on the page, stories ready to be shared. [writingonthewall.org.uk](http://writingonthewall.org.uk)



## Liverpool Hope Drama Department

supports students to learn about the origins of drama and develop skills in making new work. Please visit our website to find out more: [www.hope.ac.uk/undergraduate/undergraduatecourses/drama](http://www.hope.ac.uk/undergraduate/undergraduatecourses/drama)

# FINDING RESOURCES



1.

## **writing4pleasure.com**

Parents might find it useful to understand how teachers can inspire passion and enthusiasm for writing. Then use some of the activities in the book and today to support this.

2.

## **writingvertime.org.uk/resources**

This is a project about writing, children and Liverpool. It explores whether (and how) writing produced by schoolchildren in the Merseyside area may have changed across time (before and after the Digital Turn and the implementation of the National Curriculum). There are resources to help develop personal stories.

3.


## **literacytrust.org.uk**

Parents and the home learning environment have the greatest effect on how a child develops language and literacy skills. Their **Words for Life** site gives developmental milestones, tips, fun resources and advice to help parents support their children's literacy development.

4.

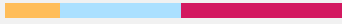
## **@ Love to read**

Shares projects and ideas for reading for pleasure for children and adults.





# NOTES PAGE



*blueskystories@hope.ac.uk*

**The Developmental Psychology Research Group at Liverpool Hope University has a number of ongoing child development projects working with all communities**

**If you would like to get in touch with us to hear more about our work or would like us to run a community workshop please contact us**



# THANK YOU



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