

The Storyteller's Handbook

Discussion Guide and Activities for At-Home Learning

Age range: 6 and up Grade level: 1st and up

Created by Elise Hurst

AWARDS

Moonbeam Children's Book Award, Storytelling (2023)

Children's Book Council Teacher Favorites Award (2023)

OBJECTIVE

Inspire students to exercise their imaginations, explore their creativity, and discover the importance of their own unique stories.

SUMMARY

The Storyteller's Handbook is an invitation into a world of endless stories and adventures.

It is made up of 52 captivating illustrations, filled with intriguing characters, mythical creatures, curious animals, and strange lands—but there are no accompanying words to describe what's taking place, because *you* get to be the storyteller.

Hurst's fantastical book inspires readers to use their imaginations and let their creativity lead them to new possibilities. Each page offers an opportunity to explore meaning and ask questions. Readers will feel encouraged to create their own stories and to express their own personal viewpoints.

DISCUSSION GUIDE

We all have stories to tell. And stories can help us in so many ways—they provide a space to reflect on our own experiences, a way for us to share our lives with others, and a chance to dream up magical things that might not exist in the real world. We all have something creative inside too, whether we think of ourselves as “storytellers” or not. *The Storyteller's Handbook* encourages us to let our imaginations run wild and to explore the individuality of our creative minds. It invites us to investigate, to look at things from many perspectives, and to find our own voice as we put words to what we see.

Hurst's wild, fascinating illustrations allow us to respond with many forms of creative thinking. Each page is its own world, filled with numerous details to contemplate, search for, and interpret. There are pieces of stories that allow us to decide what is happening, or what just happened, or what will happen next. Strange and mysterious characters wear expressions that make us ask



what they are feeling or thinking. And elaborate scenes feature odd and wonderful things that don't quite make sense according to our normal perceptions of time and space, opening our minds to imaginative possibilities.

The Storyteller's Handbook ignites the creativity inside all of us. Whether we're inspired to write out a story, talk about the illustrations with one another, make a piece of art, or simply ponder the strange scenes on the pages—the stories we see in this book will be completely original, because they're our own.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

- Why aren't there any words to go with the pictures in this book?
- What are your favorite ways to be creative?
- Why do you think stories are important? What can they teach us?
- How can some stories be about real things and imaginary things at the same time?
- Why do you think it's important to use your imagination and creativity?
- What does it mean to have a limitless imagination?
- Why does it sometimes take courage to be creative?
- What do you think about the pictures inside this book?
- If you were to tell a story, what would it be about?

ACTIVITIES

Ignite Your Inner Storyteller

Ask students to choose an illustration from the book and create a one-page short story based on what they think is happening. Students can either write down their stories or instead take 5 minutes to share them verbally with a buddy. To help aid storytelling, you can ask students to consider the "5 Ws and 1 H" (who, what, when, where, why, and how) when thinking about the characters and details that they see.

This activity is meant to foster students' writing and communication skills, encourage imaginative thinking, and strengthen the ability to make inferences.



Go on a Scavenger Hunt (Inside a Book!)

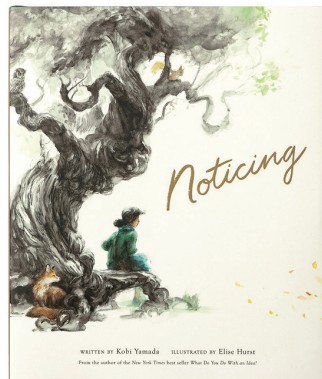
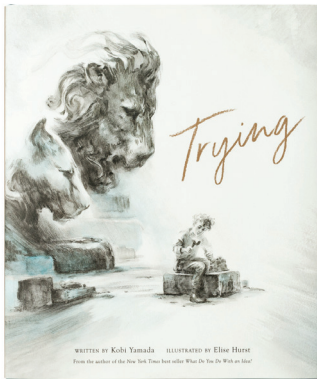
Choose an illustration from the book, then set a timer for 3–5 minutes and ask students to find as many details as they can—big or small. These can be characters and what they’re doing, hidden objects and animals, interesting colors, funny elements, or anything at all that students notice on the page! They can either write down their observations on a sheet of paper or pair up with a buddy to take turns naming the things that they find. This activity is meant to help students develop observational skills and to engage curious minds.

Draw Your Own Story

Provide students with a sheet of paper and colored pencils and ask them to choose any illustration they like. Have students think about what might be happening in the scene that they’re looking at, and then draw what they think happens next in the story. Drawings can incorporate details from the illustration prompt or introduce new characters and ideas. Encourage students to pursue whatever comes to mind, no matter how strange or impossible. Once complete, students can go around and share the stories behind their drawings with the class or at home with a parent or caretaker. This activity is meant to encourage creativity through art and help students recognize the value of their own unique perspectives.

Interested in more from Elise Hurst?

Check out *Trying* and *Noticing*, written by Kobi Yamada and illustrated by Elise Hurst:



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