

Choose today's adventure.

Free K-2 resources from C. J. McGuire Books. Every activity works without buying a book. Choose one route and print only the pages you need.

Story Studio • bundle pages 2-21

Acting: 4-7. Film planning: 8-11. Make a book: 12-16. Reflection: 17. Kind improv: 18-21. Adult introduction: 2-3.

The Picture Detective • bundle pages 22-25

Adult guide: 22-23. Activity cards: 24. Child response: 25. 15-20 minutes.

The Sock on the Chair • bundle pages 26-29

Adult guide: 26-27. Activity cards: 28. Child response: 29. 10-15 minutes.

The Pumpkin's Peculiar Problem • bundle pages 30-33

Adult guide: 30-31. Activity cards: 32. Child response: 33. 15-25 minutes.

The Story Conversation • bundle pages 34-37

Adult guide: 34-35. Activity cards: 36. Child response: 37. 10-20 minutes.

The Missing Story Star • bundle pages 38-41

Adult guide: 38-39. Activity cards: 40. Child response: 41. 20 minutes.

Something Ridiculous Happens Next • bundle pages 42-45

Adult guide: 42-43. Activity cards: 44. Child response: 45. 15-25 minutes.

US Letter: actual size. A4: Fit. Draw, tell, dictate, sign or use familiar communication supports. Student pages are black-and-white friendly. Each individual resource also has its own free PDF on the website.

Free 30-minute introductory workshop

Live on Zoom: the whole book + voices + a turn directing C. J.

Adults: cjmcguirebooks.com/visit

Subject to availability. School/library groups; a teacher or librarian hosts.
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Read it. Play it. Make it your own.

A free Story Studio for K-2 with adult support. Acting, scripts, filmmaking, book-making and kind improv. Choose a small adventure; there is no need to finish every page.

Choose a route

Act a scene: pages 3-6, about 20 minutes.

Plan a tiny film: pages 7-10, about 25 minutes.

Make a little book: pages 11-15, two 20-minute sessions.

Play kind improv: pages 17-20, about 15 minutes.

Page 16 works as an optional reflection for every route.

Set up in 3 minutes

Gather plain paper, pencils and your chosen pages. Read the adult notes and the scene first. No costumes, stage, camera or purchased book are needed. All scripts here are original practice scenes, separate from the book stories.

0-3 minutes: offer choices

Name today's small goal and give a choice of speaking, drawing, narrating, pointing or listening. Model how to pass or change roles.

3-7 minutes: show one example

Act one line, draw one shot or tell one beginning. Ask what the choice helps the audience understand.

7-15 minutes: make it together

Use pairs, an adult partner or a small group. Read lines aloud for children to echo or express in their own words. Rehearsal can be quiet and seated.

15-20 minutes: share and notice

Invite sharing without requiring it. Ask about the character's want, a useful story detail or a kind group choice. Give specific observations, not ratings.

Everyone has a way in.

The goal is shared storytelling and practice, not a polished performance.

Make participation flexible

Offer a visual sequence and preview the activity. Describe images aloud. Read directions and lines to the group. Welcome drawing, dictation, signing and familiar AAC or other communication supports; give time for responses. Never require eye contact, standing, touch, a loud voice or a solo performance.

Keep reading support appropriate

For children not reading independently, an adult reads and the child echoes, chooses a gesture or narrates in their own words. For ready readers, reread the short script with phrasing. These activities practice meaning and expression; they do not replace explicit decoding instruction.

Build kindness into rehearsal

The joke belongs to a sock, a sandwich or an impossible problem. Do not imitate classmates, accents, bodies, disabilities, families or identities. Teach “Pass for now,” “Can we try another idea?” and “Let’s pause.” Honor them immediately.

Notice learning, without scoring confidence

Can a child explain what their character wants? Put events in an understandable order? Choose a word, gesture or picture that conveys meaning? Offer or accept a role without pressure? Use a private conversation when a child does not want to share publicly.

Print and use

Pages 1-2 are adult reference. Copy only the route you choose. US Letter: actual size; A4: Fit. Student pages use black lines and white backgrounds. Classroom, library, home and closed-class-platform copies are free; retain credit and link to the website for public sharing.

About this resource

Developed for C. J. McGuire Books with AI assistance; educator review is welcome. The activities have not been independently evaluated or formally mapped to standards. Send general feedback to hello@cjmcmguirebooks.com; do not send children’s names, photos or identifiable work.

One line. Three ways.



Say it, sign it, point to a feeling or direct a partner. A grown-up can read the line first.

Your line

"There is a sock in my soup."

PUZZLED

You are trying to understand how it got there.

DELIGHTED

You are a pretend sock collector. Best lunch ever.

VERY SERIOUS

You are a detective announcing an important clue.

Build a character



Choose a made-up character. Give them something they want. They do not need to sound like anyone you know.

Draw your character, or have an adult describe your idea.

My character wants... But...

One word, gesture or expression I will try...

Try a sleepy robot who wants quiet, a teacup who wants a bigger hat, or your own idea.

The Sock Inspector



An original tiny scene. Two speakers; the narrator can be an adult. Swap roles only if you want to.

NARRATOR

A cook peers into a container. Something is wrong.

COOK

There is a sock in my soup.

INSPECTOR

A serious case. Let me see.

COOK

Please do not taste the evidence.

INSPECTOR

Handles. No soup. This is a laundry basket.

COOK

That explains the trousers.

NARRATOR

The inspector bows. The basket says nothing.

Try it again

What does the inspector believe at first? What changes? Show the change with a pause, a picture or an expression. The basket can remain extremely quiet.

The pause has a job



A pause can give someone time to wonder. It can also give them time to understand.

Try this original line

“I opened the cupboard and found a dancing potato.”

Put a / where you want a pause. Ask an adult to write the line here.

Draw what you want your listener to imagine.

My pause helps because...

Tell it in three pictures



Your camera can be imaginary. Draw, describe or direct a partner. Each frame gives the audience a different piece of the story.

WIDE: show the place. Where are we?

MEDIUM: show the character doing something.

CLOSE-UP: show the tiny detail that matters.

Write a tiny script



Choose a problem: a hat that will not stay on, a book that sneezes, or your own idea.
Dictating counts as writing.

My scene is about...

Character 1 says...

Character 2 says...

Something changes when...

The last line is...

A film without a camera



Make a paper movie: one person reveals the pictures while someone tells the story. A group can share jobs, or one person can choose several.

Choose useful jobs

Story artist: draws or chooses pictures.

Narrator: tells, signs or directs how the story is told.

Director: helps choose what comes next.

Performer: acts or points to the action.

Sound designer: chooses a comfortable sound or a written sound word.

Our beginning, middle and ending are...

My job choice is... A different job I could try is...

Grown-up note: recording is optional. Follow your setting's usual permission arrangements before filming anyone. Paper movies work on their own.

Give your story a sound



Sound can tell a story quietly. Silence is a choice too. Agree on a comfortable volume before you begin.

The moment we want people to notice...

A sound, sound word or silence that fits...

Why it helps the audience understand...

A little book with a big idea



Choose an ordinary thing with an unusual wish. A shoe wants to fly. A spoon wants a day off. Or invent your own.

My character wants...

Something gets in the way...

They try... Then...

Next: make four pages. Cover, beginning, middle, ending. Draw or dictate; an adult can write your exact words. Keep pages loose or ask an adult to attach them.

My book begins here

Your pictures and words tell the story. Draw, dictate or write.



The picture I want my reader to see...

My book's title is...

Meet my character



Your pictures and words tell the story. Draw, dictate or write.

The picture I want my reader to see...

A large, empty rectangular box with rounded corners, intended for a drawing. It occupies the upper half of the page below the title.

First...

Three horizontal lines within a rounded rectangular box, intended for writing. The box is located below the 'First...' prompt.

Something happens



Your pictures and words tell the story. Draw, dictate or write.

The picture I want my reader to see...

Then...

One last surprise



Your pictures and words tell the story. Draw, dictate or write.

The picture I want my reader to see...

At last...

What did we make together?



You can reflect quietly with a partner or a grown-up. Sharing with the whole room is a choice.

A story choice I made...

Something a partner helped with...

Next time, I would like to try...

Every role helped tell the story. A quiet idea counts. A changed mind counts. Making room for someone counts.

Make room for one more.

A 15-minute community-building game. Practice inviting, offering choices and speaking up kindly. Adult-led; no special equipment.

Set up in 2 minutes

Draw a moon bus and a new passenger. Offer driver, map reader, door-sound designer and quiet directing or observing. Jobs can be shared. Agree: we laugh at the situation, ask before changing another person's work, and may pass or change jobs. Nobody has to move seats.

0-3 min: model the invitation

Hold up your drawn passenger: "This character wants to help. How could our crew make room?" Never assign a child to be excluded or to act as a bully.

3-6 min: borrow a phrase

Model "Would you like to read the map with me?" and "You can watch first." Ask which gives a real choice. Children choose a card, point, sign, dictate or offer their own words.

6-10 min: play one tiny scene

Pairs direct the adult's passenger or play welcoming crew members. After an invitation, the adult says: "I'd like to help, but I don't want to make a sound." Try a quiet shared job. Twenty seconds of scene is plenty.

10-13 min: be an upstander

Narrate a fictional snag: "Our pretend map has only one name on it. Another character helped too." Try "Let's make room for both names" or "Let's ask a grown-up for help." Do not reenact name-calling or a real incident.

13-15 min: notice one helpful choice

Ask what gave the passenger a way to join. Children tell, draw or point to a phrase; passing is fine. Keep one useful crew choice, such as sharing a job. Do not name or rate classmates.

Words that make room



Choose a phrase, point to it, say it, sign it or ask someone to read it with you.

INVITE

Want to join us?

SHARE

We can do this job together.

OFFER A CHOICE

You can watch first.

ASK

Let's ask before we change your idea.

SET A BOUNDARY

Please stop. I don't like that.

GET SUPPORT

Let's ask a grown-up for help.

When play needs a reset

Kindness needs an adult response, not just a poster.

If someone laughs at another person

Stop calmly: “We can laugh at our silly story. We do not make someone the joke.” Check in privately with the affected child, offer another way to join or a break, and reset the activity. Do not require an apology performance or immediate forgiveness.

If someone’s idea is rejected

Try: “We have two ideas. Could they happen in different scenes?” Offer turn-taking or a smaller choice. Children can decline a role or touch; accepting a fictional idea never means giving up a real boundary.

If a child wants to pass

Say “You can watch, draw, help me turn a page, or join later.” Do not make earning a turn depend on speaking. Avoid a compulsory circle where everyone must perform.

If the situation is real or keeps happening

Stop the game and follow your school or setting’s support procedures. Listen to the child and involve the appropriate adult. Do not ask children to resolve repeated bullying through improv, confrontation or public disclosure.

A quick learning check

Can the group offer a real choice of role? Can a child identify one kind invitation or a way to get adult help? Accept private responses and practice again later. This brief game rehearses helpful actions; it is not a complete bullying-prevention program.

Make it easier or richer

Start with only the adult’s puppet and two phrase choices. For more challenge, ask what the group could change so the invitation is practical: another job, a turn, space to draw, or extra time.

Our crew makes room



Draw a way to include a pretend new traveler. Nobody in your class has to play the person left out.

Our moon bus has room for...

A kind thing we could say...

A choice we could offer...

The Picture Detective

K-2 with adult support | 15-20 minutes | Prep: 2 minutes

What children practice

Children identify one visible detail, offer an explanation that fits it, and consider another possibility.

Gather and set up

One picture-book illustration with something to wonder about, a sheet of paper to cover part of it, and optional pencils. Use a book you already have; no particular title is required. Choose a picture where an action or feeling can be inferred from at least two visible details. Preview it first. Teach any essential unfamiliar word before asking children to reason. Keep the story text available for the final check.

0-3 min • Notice

Show the whole illustration. Give everyone quiet looking time, then ask: 'What can you point to that is actually in the picture?' Name two details without explaining them yet.

3-6 min • Model

Say: 'I notice _____. I know _____. So I think _____ might be happening.' Explain that an inference is an idea built from clues and what we know, and that it can change.

6-11 min • Make a case

Partners choose a detail and offer an explanation. Ask 'What in this picture makes you think that?' Accept different ideas that fit the available evidence.

11-15 min • Zoom out

Cover all but one detail, then reveal the full picture again. Does the extra information change anyone's idea? Read the accompanying text and compare it with the ideas.

15-20 min • Show your thinking

Children use the detective page or tell you one clue and one possible explanation. Finish with a new picture detail: can they use the same routine without your full model?

Keep the thinking going

‘Your first idea does not have to win. Show me the clue that helped you think.’

What a response might sound like

If a picture shows an open umbrella and drops on a coat, ‘It may be raining’ fits those details. ‘It is Tuesday’ is not supported by that picture. A wet coat could have another explanation; check the surrounding text before settling it.

Make the first step smaller

Kindergarten or children needing a smaller step: offer two spoken possibilities, model the important vocabulary, and let a child point while an adult records their explanation. Use familiar experiences instead of assuming everyone shares the same background knowledge.

Add a challenge when ready

Grades 1-2 when ready: ask for two clues, a second possible explanation and one piece of information that would help decide. Separate an inference about now from a prediction about what happens next.

A quick check for understanding

Listen for a connection between a visible detail and an idea. A child who gives only a guess gets ‘Which part helped you?’ A child who names only a detail gets ‘What might that mean?’

No printer? No problem.

Use one projected picture, an adult’s book or a shared drawing. Children point, tell, sign or use their familiar communication supports; the worksheet is optional.

Print only what you need

Pages 1-2: adult reference. Page 3: one set of cards per group, or read aloud without cutting. Page 4: optional child response. US Letter: actual size. A4: Fit. Student pages use black lines and white backgrounds.

Developed for C. J. McGuire Books with AI assistance. Suggested activities for educator review, not an independently evaluated curriculum. Feedback: hello@cjm McGuire Books.

The detective's three moves



A grown-up can read these. Point, tell, sign or use your usual communication supports.

NOTICE

I can point to...

CONNECT

I know... so it might mean...

CHECK

Another idea is... What else would help us decide?

My picture has a secret



Draw, tell, dictate or write. An adult can put your words on the page.

Draw a detail you can really see.

It might mean... because...

It could also mean...

The Sock on the Chair

K-2 with adult support | 10-15 minutes | Prep: 2 minutes

What children practice

Children distinguish something directly observed from an idea about what it might mean, and give a reason for one inference.

Gather and set up

One clean sock, a chair and a sheet of paper. Use an adult-drawn version or describe the same scene if objects are unavailable. No child needs to touch the sock. Put one sock on the chair seat, with one sheet of paper underneath it. Show everyone the arrangement or draw it clearly. Do not add other objects. Read the cards aloud so decoding is not a barrier.

0-2 min • Meet the mystery

Introduce the sock as 'our extremely quiet visitor.' Ask children what they can see. Model: 'The sock is on the chair' is an observation.

2-5 min • Try an idea

Say: 'Someone may have put it there to dry.' Explain that this is an inference, an idea about the scene. We did not see someone do that.

5-10 min • Sort together

Read the six cards. Children point to 'We can observe it' or 'We are explaining it,' or sort with a partner. Discuss the reason rather than racing.

10-13 min • Invent, then check

Invite a wonderfully silly explanation. Ask whether the scene gives us a reason to believe it. Enjoy the invention while keeping pretend stories distinct from supported conclusions.

13-15 min • One of each

Each child draws or tells one observation and one possible explanation. Ask what else they would need to know to check it.

Keep the thinking going

'The sock can be a movie star in our pretend story. What clues would we need before saying that is really what happened?'

What a response might sound like

Cards 1, 3 and 5 are observations of the setup: a sock on a chair, paper underneath it, and one sock. Cards 2, 4 and 6 are inferences about why it is there or what may happen. 'Someone forgot it' is possible, but the objects alone do not establish that.

Make the first step smaller

Keep only two cards at first. Pair a spoken label with a point or object. Offer 'I see...' and 'I think...' sentence starters. A child can direct an adult to move a card.

Add a challenge when ready

Ask which inference is plausible and what information would help check it. Then change one visible detail and have children update only the observation that changed.

A quick check for understanding

Can the child show which part can be directly observed and which part explains it? Naming the categories matters less than explaining the difference in their own way.

No printer? No problem.

Place two pieces of paper on the table as sorting spaces. Read the cards from this page and let children point, gesture or tell you their choice.

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We can observe it / We are explaining it



A grown-up can read these. Point, tell, sign or use your usual communication supports.

1

A sock is on the chair.

2

Someone forgot the sock.

3

Paper is under the sock.

4

The sock is there to dry.

5

There is one sock.

6

Someone will put the sock on soon.

The sock's extremely serious case file



Draw, tell, dictate or write. An adult can put your words on the page.

Draw what is actually there.

I think... because...

To check my idea, I could ask...

The Pumpkin's Peculiar Problem

K-2 with adult support | 15-25 minutes | Prep: 3 minutes

What children practice

Children retell a simple problem and solution, use a described detail to explain a choice, and invent a sensible or playfully impossible solution.

Gather and set up

The three activity cards, plain paper and pencils or crayons. No costumes, food, special decorations or real pumpkin are needed. Choose one activity for a short session, or all three for a longer one. Read the pumpkin story aloud: 'Pip the pumpkin wanted warm toes. Pip bought socks. Pip looked down. No toes! A friend made the socks into a scarf. Warm at last.' For a fall-only version, replace Pip with a round pebble named Pip throughout.

0-3 min • Hear the problem

Read the five-sentence story with a pause before 'No toes!' Invite a puzzled face or a quiet gesture, with listening-only participation welcome.

3-8 min • Activity 1: Help Pip

Children invent another use for the socks. Let them draw, dictate or demonstrate with their hands. Ask 'How does your idea help Pip?'

8-13 min • Activity 2: Clue costume

Give three spoken clues: 'It sits on a head. It keeps a head warm. It can have a pom-pom.' Children suggest a hat and explain a clue. They invent a new three-clue object for a partner.

13-20 min • Activity 3: Tiny theater

Partners retell Pip's problem, attempted solution and ending with three pictures or three still poses. Children can narrate while a partner points to pictures.

20-25 min • Share a solution

Invite two different solutions. Ask what stayed the same in the story and what the storytellers changed. A five-minute extension is optional.

Keep the thinking going

‘Pip has purchased socks. Pip has forgotten to purchase feet. What now?’

What a response might sound like

The story problem is wanting warmth without toes; the original solution is a scarf made from socks. A sock hat or blanket also addresses warmth. A rocket ride is a fun new story; ask how the child wants it to solve Pip’s problem rather than marking imagination wrong.

Make the first step smaller

Use the pebble version for a season-neutral activity. Offer a scarf and hat as spoken choices. An adult can describe pictures and record children’s ideas. Movement, costumes and monster voices are never required.

Add a challenge when ready

Children explain how their ending follows from the problem. Add a new complication, such as wind, then revise one scene rather than starting the entire story again.

A quick check for understanding

Ask for the problem and the solution in any communication mode. Can the child put the three events in order? For the clue game, listen for a relevant detail in their explanation.

No printer? No problem.

Read the story and cards from this page. Retell with fingers, three spoken sentences, shared board drawings or three quiet poses.

Print only what you need

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Three little adventures



A grown-up can read these. Point, tell, sign or use your usual communication supports.

HELP PIP

A pumpkin wants warm toes. There are no toes. Invent a way to help!

CLUE COSTUME

It sits on a head. It keeps a head warm. It can have a pom-pom. What could it be? Give a reason.

TINY THEATER

Show the problem, the try and the ending. Draw it, tell it or make three still poses.

Pip needs a brilliant idea



Draw, tell, dictate or write. An adult can put your words on the page.

Draw Pip and your invention.

Pip wants...

My idea helps because...

The Story Conversation

K-2 with adult support | 10-20 minutes | Prep: 2 minutes

What children practice

Children discuss a character or event, connect an idea to a story detail, and respond to another person's idea.

Gather and set up

One picture book you know, two or three chosen prompt cards, and optional paper. The session time includes discussion; allow separate time for a full reading if the book needs it. Read the book first. Choose one prompt for a natural pause and two for after the story. Pick prompts that fit the actual text. Do not stop on every page or require every child to answer publicly.

0-2 min • Give a listening job

Say 'Listen for something the character wants.' Explain an unfamiliar word needed to follow the story.

During reading • Pause once

At a useful turning point, invite a prediction or a character question. Give thinking time and a partner turn. Then return to the story.

After reading • Look back

Return to a page that helps answer a question. Ask 'Which part helped you?' Distinguish remembering a detail from explaining what it might mean.

Next 3-5 min • Compare ideas

Ask 'Who has a different idea that also fits?' Invite children to respond to a partner rather than only to the adult.

Last 2 min • Keep one thought

Children draw, dictate or tell an idea worth remembering. Ask one child to connect a thought to a specific page or moment.

Keep the thinking going

‘We can enjoy different pages. When we explain what happened, let’s find the part that helped us think.’

What a response might sound like

‘Which page made you laugh?’ asks for a personal response; there is no single right page. ‘What did the character try first?’ asks for a detail from the story. ‘Why might they do that?’ calls for an explanation supported by the text or pictures.

Make the first step smaller

Offer two pictured choices or revisit one short moment. Let a child choose a card for an adult to read. Accept pointing, drawing, dictation, signing and familiar communication supports. Give partner thinking time before inviting whole-group responses.

Add a challenge when ready

Ask whether the words and illustration tell the same thing. Invite a child to revise a first prediction after the ending, or explain why two readers might understand a character differently.

A quick check for understanding

Notice whether children can connect a thought to a detail and attend to a partner’s contribution. Quiet participation can be checked privately through a point, drawing or brief conversation.

No printer? No problem.

Keep this page open and choose just two questions. An adult can write one shared response on a board or simply listen.

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Pick two. Let the story breathe.



A grown-up can read these. Point, tell, sign or use your usual communication supports.

LOOK

What small detail did you notice?

REMEMBER

What did the character try first?

WANT

What does the character want? What helps you tell?

FEEL

How might the character feel? Which clue helps?

PREDICT

What might happen next? Why?

COMPARE

Could that clue mean something else?

LISTEN

What did your partner notice that you missed?

CONNECT

Did the words and picture tell you the same thing?

LAUGH

Which moment made you smile? Why?

ENTER

Which page would you step into?

CHANGE

What would change if one character chose differently?

LOOK BACK

Did the ending change one of your ideas?

A thought worth keeping



Draw, tell, dictate or write. An adult can put your words on the page.

Draw the moment you want to talk about.

I think... The story detail that helps is...

My partner noticed...

The Missing Story Star

K-2 with adult support | 20 minutes | Prep: 3 minutes

What children practice

Children use two clues to choose a plausible location and explain how new information changed or strengthened their idea.

Gather and set up

One scrap of paper marked STAR, one picture book, one empty folder and one pencil box. All three possible hiding places should be able to open. Optional clue cards and pencils. Before the session, put the paper STAR between two pages of the book. Place the book, empty folder and pencil box where everyone can see them. Tell children this is a pretend puzzle you set up. Keep the three clue cards in order and the solution separate.

0-3 min • Open the case

Explain: 'Our paper story star is in one of these three places. It left us clues.' Name and show the book, empty folder and pencil box. Let everyone make a private first guess.

3-7 min • Clue one

Read: 'I am inside something you can open.' All three places still fit. Ask 'Do we know enough yet?' Keep more than one possibility alive.

7-12 min • Clue two

Read: 'There are pages on both sides of me.' Partners reconsider. Ask which location now fits better and which words helped them.

12-16 min • Clue three and reveal

Read: 'I am keeping your place for the next story.' Invite a final explanation, then open the book to reveal the paper. Give the star's message: 'I am a bookmark. Important work. Excellent naps.'

16-20 min • Explain the change

Children record a first idea and a later idea, or tell them to a partner. Ask which clue changed or confirmed their thinking. Finish by inventing a new job for the star.

Keep the thinking going

‘Detectives don’t have to guess fastest. Their job is to explain what the clues tell them.’

What a response might sound like

The book is the intended solution. Clue one alone does not distinguish the three places. Clue two points to the book because the folder is empty and the pencil box contains no pages. Clue three supports its new job as a bookmark. If your setup differs, accept alternatives that fit and fix the setup for next time.

Make the first step smaller

Keep all objects visible and describe their important features aloud. Read each clue twice. Children can point to a location, direct a partner, sign, draw or use familiar communication supports. No searching around the room is required.

Add a challenge when ready

Invite children to design a fair new clue for a different hiding place. Test whether it eliminates every wrong option; revise clues that accidentally fit more than one place.

A quick check for understanding

Ask ‘Why the book?’ A response that refers to pages or keeping a reading place shows a clue-to-explanation connection. Finding the star without a reason is a prompt for another conversation, not a failure.

No printer? No problem.

Write STAR on scrap paper and read clues from this page. Without props, draw and label the three places on a board and tell the same puzzle aloud.

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Read one clue at a time



A grown-up can read these. Point, tell, sign or use your usual communication supports.

CLUE 1

I am inside something you can open.

CLUE 2

There are pages on both sides of me.

CLUE 3

I am keeping your place for the next story.

My idea took a turn



Draw, tell, dictate or write. An adult can put your words on the page.

Draw your first idea and your later idea.

At first I thought... Now I think...

The clue that helped was...

Something Ridiculous Happens Next

K-2 with adult support | 15-25 minutes | Prep: 1 minute

What children practice

Children create a short story with a character, a want or problem, and an ending connected to what came before.

Gather and set up

One chosen prompt, pencils or crayons and the story sheet or plain paper. An adult or peer can write down a child's dictated words. Offer two or three prompts rather than all twelve at once. Cards 1-6 are fall-only; cards 7-12 add gentle Halloween make-believe. Children may choose a familiar object instead of a seasonal character.

0-3 min • Pick a problem

Read two prompts aloud. Children choose one, combine ideas or invent a different character. Ask 'What does your character want?'

3-7 min • Tell it first

Partners tell a possible beginning and one thing that gets in the way. Model an attempt that does not quite work before the ending.

7-17 min • Make it

Children draw, dictate, write or arrange pictures. Use 'First... Then... At last...' if helpful. Focus on the story connection before spelling or neatness.

17-22 min • Try an audience

A partner points to or listens to the story. Ask 'What was the problem? How did it end?' The storyteller can add a missing detail.

22-25 min • Give it a title

Choose a title that makes someone curious. Invite a quiet gallery or an optional read-aloud. Save unfinished stories for another day.

Keep the thinking going

'Your character can do something impossible. Help your reader understand what they wanted and what happened.'

What a response might sound like

Prompt: a leaf refuses to fall. One possible story: 'Leaf wanted one more look at the sky. It held on while the other leaves drifted away. A breeze offered a flying tour. Leaf let go.' This is one example, not an ending to copy or a required answer.

Make the first step smaller

Kindergarten: a drawing plus a dictated beginning and ending is enough. First grade when ready: one sentence per event with oral rehearsal. Accept invented spelling and provide a small word bank only when it helps the child's chosen idea.

Add a challenge when ready

Second grade when ready: add dialogue, a second attempt or a surprising but connected ending. Ask which picture deserves a close-up and what extra detail it would show.

A quick check for understanding

Can the child identify what their character wants and explain how the ending connects? Ask a partner to retell it; use any confusion as a reason to add one useful detail.

No printer? No problem.

Fold one sheet into three spaces, use a shared board or record the story through adult scribing. Speaking, signing and arranging existing pictures count as composing.

Print only what you need

Pages 1-2: adult reference. Page 3: one set of cards per group, or read aloud without cutting. Page 4: optional child response. US Letter: actual size. A4: Fit. Student pages use black lines and white backgrounds.

Developed for C. J. McGuire Books with AI assistance. Suggested activities for educator review, not an independently evaluated curriculum. Feedback: hello@cjm McGuire Books.

Pick a problem. Surprise us.



A grown-up can read these. Point, tell, sign or use your usual communication supports.

1 • FALL

A leaf refuses to fall. What is it waiting for?

2 • FALL

A squirrel opens a lost-and-found for acorns.

3 • FALL

A rain boot wants a dry-day adventure.

4 • FALL

A scarecrow asks for a lunch break.

5 • FALL

The wind delivers a letter to the wrong tree.

6 • FALL

A puddle would like to see the sky up close.

7 • HALLOWEEN

A pumpkin wants pockets. What will it carry?

8 • HALLOWEEN

A friendly ghost is very bad at hide-and-seek.

9 • HALLOWEEN

A costume hat chooses a different job.

10 • HALLOWEEN

A tiny monster's loudest roar sounds like a hiccup.

11 • HALLOWEEN

A pretend witch's broom wants to sweep, not fly.

12 • HALLOWEEN

A skeleton starts a band but keeps losing a drumstick.

My wonderfully peculiar story



Draw, tell, dictate or write. An adult can put your words on the page.

Draw your character in the most important moment.

My character wants... But...

At last...