

Kathy MacMillan and Christine Kirker



# STORYTIME MAGIC

400 Fingerplays, Flannelboards, and Other Activities

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Flannelboard and craft patterns can be found on the book's website, at [www.ala.org/editions/extras/macmillan09775](http://www.ala.org/editions/extras/macmillan09775). Look for website material wherever you see this symbol:



# Introduction

Welcome to *Storytime Magic*, your treasure trove of fingerplays, flannelboards, action rhymes, and more. Unlike many resource books for programming, which give you a preset menu for each theme, this book presents storytime à la carte. As any veteran of storytime planning knows, finding the books is the easy part—but what do you do in between? If you're tired of the old standbys, or if you're just looking for something new related to a specific theme, *Storytime Magic* is for you. We have compiled hundreds of fresh new ideas to add life to any storytime. Most of the ideas here are original, but we have also included some lesser-known traditional rhymes and songs. In this book, you'll find

- fingerplays
- action rhymes
- songs, all set to familiar melodies
- rhymes to sign, with accompanying illustrations of the American Sign Language (ASL) signs
- flannelboards, with patterns
- stick-puppet stories and rhymes, with patterns
- crafts, with patterns
- other games and fun activities

# Storytime Tips for Every Age Group

Every storytime programmer has a unique style and approach, but the tried-and-true techniques in this chapter will make your planning easier, help you identify the needs of your audience, and make your programs more fun.

### GENERAL PROGRAMMING TIPS

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Choosing a theme will generally make your storytime preparation easier. However, the younger the group, the less necessary a theme becomes. Theme should always be secondary to age appropriateness. All programs should use a variety of formats: books, flannelboards, storyboards, puppets, storytelling, or videos. This helps to engage the listeners. Plan on using a variety of materials: songs, fingerplays, bounces and tickles (for babies), riddles (for older children), and the like. Use your imagination. The possibilities are endless.

Playing music as the group enters is a wonderful way to set the mood. You may have a particular welcome song that you like, or you might play music appropriate to your topic. Remember to introduce yourself to the group at the beginning of the program. Set a warm and inviting tone by welcoming participants by name. Check out the “Hello and Good-bye” section in chapter 16 for songs and rhymes to open and close your programs. When planning the order of your program, try to start out strong. An activity song such as “If You’re Happy and You Know It” is usually the best way to get the group together and focused. You want to let the group know right away that they are in for a special experience. Make storytime a *different* place from the rest of the library.

Strive to make your programs as participative as possible. This has different meanings for different age groups. See the individual age-group guidelines for examples. Try to pick songs with motions built in (for example, “Head, Shoulders, Knees, and Toes”). If you are planning to make up motions to go with the song, plan in advance what those motions will be.

Don’t forget to practice! Know the songs and stories well enough that you don’t have to keep your eyes glued to the page. Make eye contact with the participants. When presenting stories, be sure to move the book so that everyone can see the pictures. Tilt the top of the book down toward the listeners to minimize glare. You can even write words to songs and fingerplays on a display board. This will make it easier for you to see them and will allow parents to join in (if applicable).

To maximize library connections, set up a display of library materials that may be checked out by the participants. Keep the materials age appropriate and try to include a variety of formats (books, music, videos, etc.). Try to keep the materials theme related, but

remember that an unrelated display is better than no display at all. Make sure to announce that the items in the display may be checked out. (You would think this would be obvious, but to most patrons it isn't.)

Do the hardest material at the beginning of the program. This usually means the longest story. Save the most active parts of the program for last because they will divert the group's attention. Occasionally you will have trouble if members of the group get antsy or cause disruptions. How you handle this will depend on the age of the group. The key is to remain calm and try to maintain the group's focus. See the sections below for ideas that work with specific age groups.

And most important of all, have fun! If you are not excited about the program, there is no way you can expect the kids to be!

## ALL AGES/FAMILY STORYTIMES

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When planning an all-ages storytime, choose a theme that will appeal to a wide age range. Generally, the more generic your theme, the easier your planning will be. For example, Silly Stories, Let's Have Fun, or any animal theme can be readily adapted to a diverse audience. You don't really require a theme, but it will help you to plan more easily. Remember, when all else fails, Librarian's Favorites is always a good theme!

Employ a variety of props and story styles: books, puppets, lap theater, storycards, flannelboards, magnetboards, storytelling . . . Make use of your prop collection! Plan to use several songs and fingerplays. If you can tie them in to your theme, great. If not, there are lots of wiggling-type songs and fingerplays that are very useful. (You can use "Shake Your Sillies Out" for just about anything!)

Pick materials aimed at different age levels. You may find some books, props, and so forth that would be suitable for any age. (Simple fairy tales generally fit this category.) Many materials, however, will be specifically aimed at one end of the spectrum. If you choose these materials, make sure you have alternatives that would appeal to other ages. When planning your program, think in *or's*. Always have options in case you have more of one age group. For example, if you are planning to read a Goldilocks story, have an older version (James Marshall's *Goldilocks and the Three Bears*) and a younger version (Byron Barton's *The Three Bears*) prepared. Be flexible. Give yourself enough materials so that you can change your program if necessary.

With a wide age range, it is especially important to start out strong. Usually an action song such as "If You're Happy and You Know It" is the best way to begin. Grab audience attention right from the beginning. Then do your longest story presentation while you really have their attention. Alternate stories, songs, and fingerplays. If you alternate movement activities with the sitting-down times, you will keep the children's attention. A sample program might be song, hardest story, fingerplay, song, story, fingerplay, activity, song, craft.

During a program for a wide variety of ages, there may be some distractions. If the children get antsy, try to do something (a song, a fingerplay, audience participation cued by a word or action in a story) that will grab listeners' attention. Don't expect to get through more than three stories (four if you're lucky). The key to working with children is interaction. Anytime you can incorporate an interactive element, you will keep the children's attention.

You will occasionally find that parents want to sit in the back and talk rather than be involved. If you announce at the beginning that grown-ups are expected to participate, you may dispel this problem. If you do get chatty grown-ups in the back, try to involve them in the story or song. For example, you might ask the children a question such as "Who knows some farm animals?" After the kids give their answers, say pleasantly, "Let's see if the



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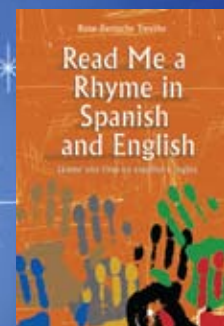
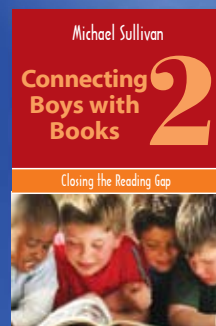
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