

Nurturing Your Child's Natural Storytelling Skills

Guest Blog by Mrs. P of MrsP.com

When you were a kid, did you ever lie on the grass, look up at the clouds and see all sorts of magical and wonderful images in them? I did. It was nice to know that if there was nothing on TV and I'd read all my books from the library, I could always go outside and be entertained by the sky – which, by the way, makes even the biggest Imax movie screen look positively tiny. If you have your own child now, looking up at the clouds together is a terrific way to nurture your little one's storytelling skills. Ask her what she sees up there. A flock of sheep? What are they doing? Where are they headed? Why?

Asking your child to tell you a story helps to develop an active mind. Kids are naturally creative; your job is to give them an environment that will let their imaginations flourish. When your child brings home a watercolor he painted at school, you can get him in the storytelling mode with an open-ended suggestion like “**tell me about your picture.**” It's tempting to try and guess what he created but much more fun (for both of you) to hear him weave a story to go with the picture.

But what if your child has no artwork today and it's too rainy to go out and look at clouds? No problem. Just give your kid a pile of pictures you've cut out of old magazines, ask her to **create a collage** - and then tell you a story about it. You'll be amazed at what your little Dickens (as in Charles Dickens) will come up with!

I love D.I.Y craft projects. **Making handmade books** out of your child's story is a great way to celebrate the enjoyment of writing. It's also a great way to nurture a life-long love for books. You can create simple books in many ways, and the materials can usually be found around the house:

- Cut out shapes from a brown-paper bag to use as pages for the book. Books don't always have to be square or rectangular - try a circle. It's also fun to use colored craft paper.
- Make an accordion book for a fun variation. (*see my photo sample*)
- Use a hole-punch along the spine to tie ribbon, yarn or thread through it to hold the pages together.
- Or use buttons along the spine edge to hold your book together.
- Let your child illustrate the cover.

The annual **writing contest** at my website, www.MrsP.com, is another good way to encourage your child to become a better storyteller. It offers exciting prizes and the chance to have your child's story read by me on my website for all the world to see. And here's a little tip if your child is under 7 or 8 years of age: you can help him create a story by “taking dictation.” When you write it down for him, he won't be so concerned about spelling something right and will often take the risk of using a much larger vocabulary.

Remember: children are natural storytellers and encouraging this skill will pay dividends for the rest of their lives. When you're a kid, having your 'head in the clouds' can sometimes be a very good thing.

About me:

TV star Kathy Kinney ("The Drew Carey Show"), portrays Mrs. P and is also one of the creators of the website. The website endeavors to expose young people to great books and stories through a celebrity storyteller, Mrs. P. MrsP.com has no advertising and is completely free, making it a fun and educational online destination for teachers, parents and children. The site also contains interactive games, coloring sheets to download, and activity guides to accompany chapter books like "Alice in Wonderland". Every story also offers read along options so children can see the words, which is helpful to early readers, and ESL students. Mrs. P is the recipient of The National Parenting Center 2009 Seal of Approval and the American Library Association distinction of "Great Website for Kids."

You can follow Mrs. P on twitter at <http://twitter.com/MrsPstorytime>