



# Ways to Use the Stories

by Bob Pegg

Primarily, of course, the stories can be told out loud. You should have had some practice during your gathering visits to retirement homes, schools etc, exchanging tales you already knew for fresh material. If you are a teacher, you can use the stories to get the children in your class to think about the topography, history and folklore of the place where they live (see story maps below), and, through the process, to become storytellers themselves. If you are a librarian, you could do something similar as part of a weekly story session (introduce one local legend for each session, along with whatever else you would normally do). Encourage the children who come to the sessions to tell their own stories of place. Make a book.

Is there close at hand a storytelling gathering, or a writers' group that would welcome your tellings of local legends? If not, perhaps you should start one.

More ambitiously (but why not?), set up a **Storywalk** through some of the locations of the stories you have collected, telling them in the places where they

“happened”. A hill, a beach, some community woodland, part of a town which has strong traditions (shipbuilding, weaving, smelting, fabrication), can all be suitable for a storywalk. Link up with community groups, the local history society, health organisations etc. Do the walk yourself first, and tell the stories in situ so you will have an idea of how long the walk will last. For the walk itself, start with an **introduction** (what the walk is about, your own enthusiasm for the legends, thanks to sponsors etc). Judge your pace, so that you don’t leave folk behind. Some people may just be there for the walk, which is fine. Find out who’s interested in the stories and circulate among them. Make sure you’ve decided on some attractive and interesting stopping places – the Devil’s Bridge, the Piper’s Cave, the Grave of the Harper, the Mermaid’s Rock. Lastly, it’s best not to try telling stories on the move – and don’t tell too many long ones, unless there are comfortable resting places for your audience. Encourage the people who come on the walk to tell their own stories along the way.

**School projects** (many of these ideas will work just as well, or better, for broader community projects): if you’re a teacher or a librarian, or a storyteller who has been asked to do some school work, a project centred round local stories can offer lots of possibilities. One starting point is to make a **Story Map**. First, get the children used to the idea of mapping. Look at OS maps of the area and discuss symbols and place-names (it’s worth finding out about the latter – the Highlands, for example, has a healthy mix of Gaelic, Norse, Pictish, Scots/English and Unknown. Find out what they mean – they may have a link to a story). Then take several big sheets of blank paper, stick them together on the wall, and get the children draw their own landmarks of the place where they live – the river, the haunted graveyard, the giant’s grave etc, telling the stories of those places as they go (they’ve immediately started storytelling). Many of the stories will be about spooky things, but that’s fine. You may also get some half-remembered “My granny told me…” Suggest that they ask granny next time

they see her and, with luck, you will have started to link the project with other generations.

Back to the **map**. The children (grown-ups too, if this is a community project) can then make an image from their story (maybe you can afford to hire an artist to work with them), go out and take a photograph of the place where the story happened, draw a cartoon strip, write the story down, and any combination of these things, perhaps limited in size to a sheet of A4. The sheets can then be pinned in the space around the map and linked to their locations on the map using pins and coloured wool (the colours can be coded according to type of story).

Whether or not you start your story gathering with a map, once you have material it can be used in any number of ways: **straightforward telling (perhaps at a special evening, along with some of those grannies); illustrated story and comic books; a website; song-writing; a drama or a sequence of short plays with music and song; short animations.**

These ideas for finding and using stories of place are just a beginning. Once you get started, more will occur to you, and you'll be able to tailor them to suit your own needs and those of your community.

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