

What's the Story?

Preschool–Grade 5

Good history is a story well told. Through storytelling, children are introduced to what's involved in writing the stories that make history. They begin to understand that different people may tell the same story in different ways.

What You Need

Family members and friends

A book of fairy tales or folk tales

What to Do

- * Gather your child and other family members in a circle and have a storytelling session. Choose a person that you all know well—a relative, friend or neighbor. Begin a group story about that person, explaining that nobody can interrupt the story. Say, for example, "Remember the time that Uncle Jack decided to help us by fixing that leaky faucet in our kitchen?" Then go clockwise around and have each person add to the story. Set a time limit, say three times around the circle so that you must end the story somewhere. Talk about the story. Are there any disagreements about what really happened and what was just opinion—or just added on for fun? If so, how can you settle any differences of opinion about what "really happened"?
- * Read aloud a fairy tale or folk tale. You might choose, for example, Little Red Riding Hood or The Story of Johnny Appleseed. Talk with your child about how the story begins and ends, who the characters are and what they feel and what happens in the story. Ask him how a "made-up" story is different from the story you told about the real person you know.
- * Pick a moment in history, for example the fall of the Berlin Wall, the storming of the Bastille in France, the assassination of President Abraham Lincoln or a current event in the news. Take your child to your local library and ask the children's librarian to help you choose books and other materials about the event that are age-appropriate for your child. Read the book aloud with a young child; for an older child, have him read it aloud to you or read it on his own and then talk with him about the book.

Let's Talk About It

Ask your child:

If you were a TV reporter when the event you read about happened,

What would you tell your audience about it?

What else would you include?

Where would you get your information? How would you check its accuracy?