

Story ordering activity

Read what Prudence says about this activity

This activity helps learners strengthen speaking, listening, and comprehension skills by using their different language backgrounds as a learning resource. Learners work together to translate key words, compare meanings across languages, and retell parts of the story in familiar languages before sharing in English. This builds confidence, supports beginners, and promotes inclusion in a multilingual classroom.

Stage 1: Warm Up - Pre-reading stage	<p>Elicit a couple of favourite stories from the learners and ask:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Do you have a favourite part of that story?• What happened before that?• What happened after that?• How do we know a story has ended? <p><i>(Learners may respond in English or home language)</i></p> <p>Write some useful language chunks on the board</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none">1. First part/beginning of story2. Then comes the part when...3. It should go before4. It should go after5. At the end/Finally6. I agree with you. <p>Modelling Stage</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Read the first story aloud.• Draw 5-7 simple boxes on the board• Show the students that you are cutting up the story with scissors• Shuffle the pieces of paper and put them together, then ask a student to [JS1] pick one and read it out (or you read it)• Elicit from the students where the piece goes in the order of the story and then stick it in place (even if the students pick the wrong box at first, go with it and let them move the one which was wrong later)• Lead the learners in ordering the events until the story is complete on the board. You can then ask a strong student to read it aloud to check they have done it correctly.
Stage 2	<p>Learners Read and arrange story 2 in groups. <i>(You can either read the story to the students first or—for an extra challenge—let them do it without you reading the story first)</i></p>

	<p>Put the students into groups of mixed ability.</p> <p>Give learners the cut-up versions of story two.</p> <p><i>(There is advice on how to adapt this activity for a large class at the end.)</i></p> <p>In groups, learners read the mixed-up events and arrange the parts of the story in correct order on the table.</p>
Stage 3: Post Reading (Share, Extend Vocabulary)	<p>Groups share their final order</p> <p>You can confirm the correct sequencing. If the groups disagree, ask the correct group to explain how they arrived at their decision.</p>
Stage 4: Vocabulary exposition	<p>Using story two pull out five key words.</p> <p>E.g.: Curiosity, Tempted, Character, Grumbled, Worried.</p> <p>Ask learners to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Give a synonym or show understanding in simple ways (pointing, drawing, acting or a home language equivalent)
Stage 5: Reflection	<p>Ask the learners</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Which words helped you the most in deciding the order? • What did you do when your group disagreed? Did that help?

Notes:

The two stories below can be used for this activity or any available story from a textbook or other sources.

Multilingual adaptation strategies

- Pre teach Vocabulary: Explain key words in English and allow learners to share translations in local languages to aid understanding.
- Use visuals: Display pictures related to the stories (classroom, exam, wallet) for easier comprehension
- Encourage bilingual discussion: Let learners discuss story meaning in local language before presenting answers in English.
- Strategic grouping: Mix stronger and weaker English speakers to promote peer support.

If you have a very large class, save yourself some copying and cutting:

- Take one copy of the story and cut it into e.g. seven pieces.
- Name each group after a colour (numbering the groups would create confusion).
- Give each group one cutting from the story and several blank slips of paper.
- Each group member should copy out their section of the story onto a piece of paper.
- Each student should write their group's name on the top of the slip of paper.
- Then, the students share the slips of paper so that each group has seven different colours.

Story 1: The last Exam

It was the last day of the school term, and the Grade Eight learners of Mulambwa Secondary School sat nervously in the examination hall. Everyone wanted to do well so they could move to the next grade. Among them was Monde, a quiet and hardworking girl who always prepared for her tests.

When the invigilator handed out the papers, Monde took a deep breath and began to write. The room was silent except for the sound of pens scratching against paper. A few minutes later, she noticed her friend Lungowe glancing at another student's work.

Monde's heart began to beat faster. She liked Lungowe and didn't want her to get into trouble, but she knew that what she was doing was wrong. She tried to focus on her own work, but her mind kept wandering back to what she had seen.

When the exam ended, Lungowe smiled and whispered, "That was easy!" Monde didn't say anything. She was worried but decided not to tell anyone. That afternoon, everyone went home talking about who might win the scholarship for best performance.

A few days later, the headteacher called the class for an announcement. He said that one student's answers were identical to another's and that the matter had been reported to the examination office. Everyone went quiet.

When the results came out, Monde had performed very well. The teacher announced that her honesty and hard work had earned her the scholarship. Lungowe, on the other hand, was disqualified for cheating.

From that day, Lungowe apologized to Monde and promised never to cheat again. The whole class learned that honesty brings success that lasts, while dishonesty only brings shame.

Story 2: The Lost Wallet

It was a bright Monday morning when Mubita arrived early at school. As he walked past the school gate, something shiny caught his eye. He bent down and picked up a black leather wallet lying in the sand.

Out of curiosity, he opened it and saw some money, a few cards, and a national registration card with the name Mwitumwa Makungwe. Mubita looked around, but there was no one nearby. His stomach grumbled, he had come to school without eating breakfast, and the thought of buying a snack tempted him.

For a moment, Mubita's mind was divided. "No one saw me pick it up," he thought. "I could just take a little money and put the wallet somewhere." But then he remembered what his teacher always said in Religious Education class: 'Doing the right thing shows true character.'

He sighed, closed the wallet, and decided to take it to the school office. When he explained what had happened, the secretary thanked him and told him to leave the wallet there.

Later that afternoon, a man came to the school looking worried. He said he had lost his wallet near the gate that morning. When the secretary handed it to him, the man's face lit up with joy. "Who brought this?" he asked eagerly.

When Mubita's name was mentioned, the man asked to meet him. He came to Mubita's class and thanked him in front of everyone, saying, "You are an honest young man." The whole class clapped, and Mubita felt proud that he had chosen what was right over what was easy.

That day, Mubita learned that honesty is not just about telling the truth but about doing the right thing, even when no one is watching.

Author: Prudence Ngenda