

### What is Story Valley?

Story Valley uses visual, audio, and digital materials to help reinterpret student stories by combining oral history and innovative, creative literacy techniques.

Students come together from different backgrounds and cultures and work together to practice their English, their national language and to learn about each other's culture.

We aim to inspire students to read, write and speak in different languages, and to use their creativity to translate their stories to new media and platforms. This way, students will be able to strengthen their key competences in literacy and language in an engaging and creative way.

In the approach of using oral history as a driving force, we use an interdisciplinary way of learning to contribute to several European key priorities:

- Raising awareness of the social and educational value of European Cultural Heritage
- Strengthening key competences in Vocational Education & Training
- Social inclusion: supporting the integration of people with migrant backgrounds

### Teacher resources and their objectives

This teacher pack provides resources and guidance for teachers and lecturers to deliver Story Valley in their own settings.

Drawing from the overall objectives described above, Story Valley has five discrete outcome objectives for students and three outcome objectives for teachers.

#### *Student outcomes*

Story Valley resources aim:

##### **1. To build students' literacy skills**

Literacy skills encompass reading, writing and speaking skills – as well as the specific discipline of storytelling. Some settings will be focussed on literacy in students' native language, while others will use Story Valley to build students' foreign language literacy.

##### **2. To increase students' knowledge of oral history**

Every locality and community has an oral history – a canon of stories told verbally and preserved from generation to generation. We hope that Story Valley will make students more knowledgeable about this culture – focussing particularly on stories from the local area, stories from different areas around the world, or stories about migration.

##### **3. To build students' creativity**

Creativity is here defined in two ways – as a general creative impulse and enthusiasm for making, and as a skillset within a creative discipline. We hope that Story Valley will engage and grow students' creative characteristics and provide an opportunity for to practice and build the underlying skills required.

#### 4. To foster integration and collaboration between local and migrant students

We hope that Story Valley will encourage students to engage with identity – and that this will lead to greater integration and collaboration between students of different backgrounds, and overall group cohesion. Projects may focus on students’ sense of their own identity, understanding of their peers’ identities within a college, and understanding of other cultural identities across the world.

#### 5. To increase students’ engagement with learning

We hope that students will become engaged with the Story Valley project, and that this will generate engagement with their broader curriculum and education as a whole.

### *Teacher outcomes*

In the process of delivery, Story Valley aims also:

#### 1. To increase teachers’ confidence and competence achieving the student outcomes (one to five above) in their general practice

We believe that Story Valley will increase teachers’ ability to teach students’ literacy skills, spread knowledge of oral history, build students’ creativity, foster integration between local and migrant and increase student engagement. In turn, we would like teachers to feel more confident approaching these pedagogical areas.

#### 2. To provide resources that teachers find useful

We want teachers to find that the resource logic of Story Valley makes sense, and that it integrates easily into their existing curriculum and course objectives.

#### 3. To connect teachers to a network of other educational professionals and creatives

A network is here defined first as a local, interdisciplinary network within Colleges, as well as a local network outside the college and an international network of other VETs worldwide. We hope that Story Valley will strengthen or build teachers’ professional relationships in these groups.

### *More detailed outcomes matrix*

The full intended outcomes – which break down each of the above into component parts – can be found as an appendix to this document.

## Who can use Story Valley?

### Developed by VETs – available to all

Story Valley was originally developed between 2020 and 2023 – as a collaboration between three Vocational education and training colleges (VETs) and a [variety of educational and civic organisations across Europe](#). The three VETs involved were:

- Edinburgh College (Scotland)
- Friesland College (The Netherlands)
- Srednja medijska in grafična šola, Ljubljana (Slovenia)

The project was therefore conceived with VETs and students aged 16+ in mind. However, we hope that the approach will prove useful to all kinds of educational and civic settings.

## All countries and cultures

Given Story Valley aims to bridge divides between cultures – including through teaching languages and championing non-linguistic communication – we hope that Story Valley will be used all over the world.

We believe the project will have particular resonance in educational settings where:

- **The student population includes people from both local and migrant backgrounds.**  
Given Story Valley uses storytelling to connect students from local and migrant backgrounds (outcome four above), the teacher pack will be particularly useful in settings with a diverse student population.
- **Students study creative disciplines or are asked to work creatively**  
Story Valley asks students to use stories as inspiration for creative outputs. In creative courses, the programme can therefore be deeply integrated with teachers' learning goals. In other subjects, the programme can also be used to facilitate a creative learning style.
- **There are multiple languages spoken.**  
Storytelling is an effective tool for cross-linguistic communication. The programme can also be used as an engaging way of teaching foreign languages.
- **Students feel isolated from other world cultures**  
The Story Valley community aims to connect different people and cultures together – by championing the diverse stories they have to tell.

## Planning your Story Valley project

### Modular approach

Story Valley was conceived to be delivered as part of a large number of courses, in a large number of VETs and educational settings internationally.

Different teachers, colleges and localities will have different priorities, approaches and goals with the projects. As a result, a linear one-size-fits all structure would not be effective.

Story Valley instead uses a **modular** structure. There are four key modules of the programme (listed below). Teachers can decide to complete all of these modules, or pick and choose those which are relevant to their contexts. Similarly, you can vary the amount of time dedicated to each module.

Each module focusses on a different way of interacting and using stories in education. Within each module, you also have a lot of flexibility to devise and run your own activities around a common theme.

We have included a variety of exemplar activities and case studies from participant colleges across the world to facilitate this process.

### Four Modules



**Find the Story**



**Tell the Story**



**Get Creative**



**Share your Work**

## Find the Story

The **Find the Story** module supports students to discover stories from the people and places around them: to use as raw material for Story Valley projects

There are many different ways to ‘find stories’ and teachers can choose how they approach this task. Some core options include:

- Providing a space for students to share their own personal stories and listen carefully to those of their peers.
- Facilitating students to ‘find stories’ in the local area. These could be old stories which form local heritage or modern stories from residents of the area.
- Exploring stories about migration or refugee culture.
- Researching and engaging with stories from different places, countries and cultures.

## Tell the Story

The **Tell the Story** module is all about bridging the gap between the source material students have ‘found’ and the creative expression of a story.

Again, this will be very shaped by context, your curriculum goals, and the areas in which students require support. This pack provides resources to support:

- Making sense of the story – exercises to pinpoint the core components and messages which could be adapted creatively.
- Analysing how a story can be structured, and then asking students to play with structuring the story for their project.
- Working on engaging storytelling technique, such as gesture, volume and intonation.

We would also encourage you to connect with local storytellers and storytelling practitioners – who will be able to provide more resources to support effective storytelling. You might even be able to organise an in-person workshop in your setting at this stage.

## Get Creative

The **Get Creative** module asks students to produce a creative outcome using stories.

For teachers of creative subjects this is the part of the programme where students use the creative skills of they are developing on their course. For example – students learning music composition might write a song based on the story they have ‘found’; students of visual art might create a picture or illustrated storybook and students of computing could build a website or interactive programme.

In other subjects, such as language – a creative project can be used as an engagement tool. Students might be asked to each choose a different creative way to express a story – with the teacher focus on their understanding of the narrative and ability to communicate.

## Share your work

Finally, the **share your work** module supports students to showcase their creations– using stories and creative projects as opportunities to connect with others.

Teachers can decide on the format and scale of this sharing. Some ideas include:

- Exhibitions or performances aimed at one class, or the whole college.
- Exhibitions or performances in the local area – aimed at a public audience.

- Stories, videos and case studies shared on the Story Valley website – targeting other teachers and students who participating in the programme.
- Stories, videos and case studies shared on social media – for the whole world!

## Resources available

### Example activities

For the **Find the Story** and **Tell the Story** modules, we have provided a range of example activities and lesson plans, presented as word documents.

These plans were developed by teaching staff the Story Valley partner colleges in Ljubljana, Leeuwarden and Edinburgh. They provide a diverse portfolio ideas on how to encourage students to find and tell stories in different contexts.

Each activity plan includes:

- A summary of the activity and its objectives.
- Guidance for how to prepare; including resources to bring, pre-work for students and pre-research for deliverers.
- Step by step guidance on facilitating the activity, including suggested timings.
- Opportunities to support and challenge different students where relevant.
- Suggestions of success criteria to measure against.
- Template worksheets and usable print resources if required.

### Case studies

You can download case studies of different Story Valley deliveries, to provide guidance and inspiration on how to run Story Valley in your setting; written by people who have already piloted the programme.

Each case study contains details of how the setting ran each programme module; as well as how they integrated Story Valley with their curriculum goals and learning outcomes, and assessed its impact.

The case studies will be useful throughout your Story Valley delivery – but may be particularly relevant when approaching the **Get Creative** and **Share Your Work** modules.

These sections are so context specific that ‘one-size-fits-all’ activities would not be useful. However, hearing how other deliverers undertook a creative project with their students and then disseminated the results should provide a stimulus to get started; and perhaps a model approach to adapt.

### Examples of student work

Students’ creative work is the lifeblood of Story Valley: and the best demonstration of its impact. The teacher pack contains a variety of examples of work, including:

- Visual art pieces – such as illustrated story books
- Songs and musical compositions
- Digital products – such as website designs
- Textual work – like poems

As a deliverer, you might use student work as inspiration and guidance for running the programme.

Students may also benefit from student work as exemplar material. What's more, at the end of your project, you can submit student work to be profiled on the Story Valley website. This may provide added motivation: most creatives enjoy an audience for their work!

To submit student work for the website, [email Erna](#) from Learning Hub Friesland.

## Evaluation and curriculum integration

Story Valley has so far proven most impactful when integrated with existing curriculum objectives and learning outcomes. Some suggestions of how to use the programme as part of your overall scheme of work are provided below.

**NB:** These suggestions are not intended to be prescriptive – you can integrate Story Valley with your activities in any way you find useful.

## Story Valley and the curriculum

### *Creative curricula*

If you teach a creative course, Story Valley can provide an engaging, structured project for your students.

Many programme deliverers report that they have used Story Valley as a tool for an assessment checkpoint in their existing scheme of work. Examples include:

- **In a song-writing course:** a composition students make at the end of the year to showcase what they have learnt.
- **In a programming course:** a website students build to demonstrate knowledge of a specific coding language.
- **In a clothing design course:** an annual theatrical show for which students design costumes.

In these circumstances, the **get creative** and **share your work** modules can be used for students to complete and share their piece of assessed work.

The preceding **find the story** and **tell the story** modules use stories as raw material and impetus for the creative project.

### *Foreign language curricula*

Teachers of foreign languages can use Story Valley as an extended, real-world exercise for language use.

The **find the story** module can be delivered either in students' native language or the language they are learning. The former option works to engage students – permitting more free self-expression; while the latter provides an opportunity for speaking practice.

The **tell the story** module – with its focus on story structure, genre and delivery is naturally germane to language learning. By learning to tell a story more effectively in another language, students concomitantly become better speakers and writers of that language.

In language courses, the **get creative** and **share your work** modules work to engage students with the language task. Many students enjoy creative work, and having their creative skills work showcased; providing deep impetus for working in a foreign language.

### *Literacy curricula*

Just as Story Valley can be used to develop foreign language literacy, it can improve students' native language skills too.

By exchanging stories in the **find the story** module students practise speaking and listening. In the **tell the story** module students build their ability to structure writing and spoken presentations effectively. The **get creative** sections provide ample opportunity for reading and research as well as writing practice; while **share your work** is a great chance to get students verbally presenting their work.

Story Valley can thus function to teach literacy curricula ‘by stealth’.

## Extra-curricular projects

Many deliverers have also run Story Valley as a stand-alone project, unrelated to any course or framework of activity.

Projects delivered in this way are totally open to students’ input and creativity: they can explore stories and create work in any way they find stimulating and productive.

## Specific evaluation in your setting

### *Examples of curriculum integration and evaluation*

The Story Valley case studies mentioned above include a section on evaluation and curriculum integration.

In these sections, each Story Valley deliverer reflects on how they integrated the programme with organisational and/or curricular goals and outcomes; which might prove useful in setting up or pitching a project in your own setting.

The deliverer also describes their formal and informal evaluation practices; providing ideas on how to explore and communicate the programme’s impact in your community.

### *Designing your own evaluation*

Given the diversity of contexts in which Story Valley can be delivered, you may find that our centralised evaluation materials (see below) do not fully capture the impact you wished to achieve through the programme.

To evaluate the programme in house, it’s a good idea to list the impacts you wish to achieve before rolling out the programme. You might then consider:

- Writing student and deliverer surveys measuring your outcome objectives
- Designing case study pro-formas for deliverers and participants to fill in.
- Running qualitative focus groups with participants and deliverers.
- Asking participants and deliverers for informal feedback during and after delivery.

## Centralised evaluation from the Story Valley team

Ongoing evaluation supports the Story Valley team to improve our resources; as well as reporting to funders. Your support with centralised evaluation is therefore greatly appreciated.

### *Centralised surveys*

The Story Valley team has produced students and deliverer surveys to measure the impact against our core outcomes. As mentioned, the full matrix of outcomes is included as appendix one to this document.

Surveys are short – asking participants to self-assess whether Story Valley has led to positive changes in each of the outcome areas (providing a quantitative result), and to briefly reflect on this change (adding more qualitative detail).

All surveys are completely anonymous.

We will send surveys for participants and deliverers to complete at the end of the programme. Any surveys you provide will be useful.

### Producing a case study

The Story Valley teacher pack includes case studies – as inspiration and guidance for settings delivering the programme for the first time.

By completing case studies, deliverers can build the strength of our resource, and profile their work among our growing network of Story Valley practitioners.

We have created a case study pro-forma for deliverers to complete at the end of their programme. We would be very grateful if you could support us by sending completed case studies to [Erna Van der Werff](mailto:Erna.Van.der.Werff).

## Further support

If you would like to ask any questions about delivering Story Valley in your setting, you can email one of the lead original designers of the teacher pack.

- **Erna van der Werff** from Learning Hub Friesland in the Netherlands ([erna@learninghubfriesland.nl](mailto:erna@learninghubfriesland.nl))
- **Kyle Turakhia** from the National Literacy Trust, which works across the United Kingdom ([kyle.turakhia@literacytrust.org.uk](mailto:kyle.turakhia@literacytrust.org.uk))
- **Andy Duncan** from Edinburgh College, Scotland ([Andy.Duncan@edinburghcollege.ac.uk](mailto:Andy.Duncan@edinburghcollege.ac.uk))
- **Maja Osterman** from Srednja medijska in grafična šola, in Ljubljana, Slovenia ([maja.osterman@smgs.si](mailto:maja.osterman@smgs.si))
- **Rianne van der Schaaf** or **Hendrik-Jan Hoekstra** from Friesland College in the Netherlands ([R.vanderSchaaf@fcroc.nl](mailto:R.vanderSchaaf@fcroc.nl); [h.j.hoekstra@fcroc.nl](mailto:h.j.hoekstra@fcroc.nl))

## Appendix

### (1) Outcomes matrix

During the creation of Story Valley, we used the following matrix to break down its core objectives.

Not all outcomes should be targeted in every setting; and this list does not show everything that could be impactful about the programme. However, the itemised list may prove useful in pinpointing what you plan to achieve with Story Valley.

Beneficiary	Outcome area	Outcome breakdown
Students	Literacy	Native literacy
		Foreign language literacy
		Storytelling skills
	Knowledge of oral history	Local stories
		Stories about migration
		Stories from around the world
	Creativity	General creative impulse
Skills within creative discipline		



	Integration and collaboration between locals and migrants	Increased sense of own cultural identity
		Increased understanding of other cultural identities within setting
		Increased understanding of other cultural identities beyond setting
	Engagement	With Story Valley
		With their course
<b>Teachers</b>	Ability to achieve student outcomes	Confidence to teach these areas
		Knowledge of these areas
	Sense that Story Valley resources are helpful	Resource logic
		Ease of integration with existing curriculum
		Accessing resources on the website platform
Sense of connection to Story Valley network	College network (interdisciplinary collaboration)	