# Objective

Like all activities in the Tell the Story module, this activity supports students to bridge the gap between source material and the creative expression of a story.

This activity specifically explores **story structure**.

# Activity summary

**Number of sessions:** 2

This activity was delivered at SMGS, a college in Ljubljana. In our context we delivered Story Valley as part of a combination of classes and teachers - in a foreign language unit the students built language skills, while in photography they focused on the strengths of photography as a visual tool with which to tell a story, and the value of photography as an instructional tool in their classroom.

This activity uses story cubes (sets of 9 dice with pictograms instead of numbers) to give students ideas for writing stories. Dividing story cubes into sets of three helps students to develop storytelling skills in a group context, then apply those skills on a personal level.

# Pre-activity preparation

## Resources

- Pen
- Notebook
- Story cubes
  - Story cubes can be bought online, or in some toy shops. You can also prepare your own story cube using the template in the appendix.

## Deliverer preparation

You will need to find sets of story cubes for students to use. Instead of using multiple sets, you can use one set of cubes and ask students to take a photo after throwing the cubes to remember their results. Alternatively, you can also prepare a worksheet with pictograms / key words and print it for the students to use.

# Running the activity

## Step 1 – teaching story structure

**Time:** 30 minutes

Before writing stories it is necessary for the students to understand basic story structure. We decided to explain this using the 7-part structure as devised by Gustav Freytag in the 19th century. According to Freytag's pyramid, the story structure should include these steps:

1. **Exposition**, where the story setting and character background is explained

2. **Inciting incident**, which is an event that causes a chain reaction of events

3. **Rising action**, where the story builds. This is usually where the situation becomes complicated, more complex.

4. **Climax**, the point of greatest tension for the characters

5. **Falling action**, where the story changes to actions as a result of the climax, which has also changed the main character

6. **Resolution**, where the conflict is resolved

7. **Denouement** or ending, which can be either happy (in comedies) or sad (in tragedies)

This, along with the story cubes used in step 2, should help students understand how stories are written, which in turn will help them improve their writing skills.

| Support |
| --- |
| The student will probably understand the story structure easier if it was supported with examples of well-known films or books they are already familiar with. |

## Step 2 – rolling the dice and writing

**Time:** One hour

Divide the students into groups of 4 or 5 and give each group a set of story cubes. The students throw the story cube two-three times, noting down the topics their story has to cover - following the story structure discussed previously.

Each group should work together to write a story, paying specific attention to story structure. The stories can be as long as students wish, but they should highlight the chosen theme –  in our case -- *What does it mean to be Slovene?* The end of the lesson should be reserved for reading and discussing the stories.

At the end of step 2, the writing of stories, each group must have a finished story with a confirmed correct use of story structure.

| Support | Extension |
| --- | --- |
| After the groups present their stories, make sure each story contains the basic elements of story structure. Other groups/students can be invited after each presentation to comment whether the story matches the story structure requirements. If an element is missing, it can be provided in a class discussion and the presenting group must add it to their story. | An additional activity at this stage can be to ask the students to divide their stories into separate paragraphs, each containing one stage of the seven-act structure.<br><br>Students can create their own story cubes or pictograms that represent topics such as migration, citizenship, language etc. These can then be used as a starting point for the activity. |

## Success criteria

Things to look for to ensure this activity has been run successfully include:

- After step 2, each group presents a story at the end of step 2 and all the stories contain the basic elements of story structure.

- Students seem engaged and motivated to write stories.

- Students have used the story cubes to decide the content of their stories

- Student stories fit with the theme you have chosen.

# Appendix – create your own story cubes

To create a story cube, fill in the template overleaf with recognisable images.

- These images can be fantastical (e.g. a spaceship, zombies, elves…) or realistic (e.g. landmarks from around the local area). It all depends on the theme of the story you wish students to write about.

- You can fill in the cubes using computer images, or do hand drawings and make photocopies.

- Students will use the cube like a dice and roll it several times (usually two to three) The stories they write will then have to incorporate interpretations of the three images they have rolled.

    For example, if I rolled a 'spaceship', followed by a 'monkey', followed by a 'raincloud' – I might write a story about:

    o Aliens who abducted a monkey – that cursed their aircraft and caused it to crash in a terrible storm.

    o A long period of rain in the jungle, that caused all of the monkeys to leave – and people in a nearby town mistook them for creatures from space.

    o …or any other interpretation of the images.

story valley

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