



Improving literacy by oral history, storytelling and creativity

## First results – an overview

# About Story Valley

The STORY VALLEY project uses oral history as a driver for preserving cultural heritage and enrich it with oral history and heritage of other cultures. We want local students, students with migrant backgrounds and students abroad to learn (each other's) oral history, language and literacy in an engaging and creative way.

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.

## Who is we?

With school partners, UNESCO City of Literature organisations, knowledge partners and specialist in literacy and the creative industry on board we transnationally join forces to come to innovative and universal support tools for VET schools to use across European regions and beyond.

**Story Valley is a 3 year project and is financed by Erasmus.**



## How?

In Edinburgh, Leeuwarden and Ljubljana, local partners (schools together with literacy and knowledge partners) run several pilot projects at the schools to test the approaches and gather best practises. All this information will feed into the development of the learning materials, one of the outputs of the project.

**Before we present some of the main results, let us first introduce the local Story Valley pilot/trial projects.**

# Pilot/trial projects

## Ljubljana

At SMGŠ, students were introduced to stories of migrants from Bosnia and Herzegovina, who came to Slovenia in 1992 due to the war, which prompted them to further research the topic on their own. Many were surprised to discover how many stories were already in their own environment. They wrote different articles, conducted interviews and one student even decided to tell the story of an immigrant in the form of a comic. At the end of the school year, all of their work was compiled into a special edition of the school newspaper.



The Story Valley projects at **Edinburgh College** have all started with students bringing in an object that means something to them. Talking about their objects then brings out stories which the students explore, and eventually use to inspire a piece of creative work. So far we have had original songs written in Scots, dramatic character creations, and a fully realised musical! Students have noted that their confidence has improved, they have got to know their classmates better, and have enjoyed the more personal approach to their craft.

For **Leeuwarden's** local Story Valley project (called "connecting stories, connecting people"), the local partners brought Dutch and new migrant students together to experience the Fries Museum in Leeuwarden. The students got to work with storytelling, learned about local cultural heritage, their own heritage and practised their language and literacy skills during the process. Then they wrote their own story, which would form the basis of the artwork that they had to create; their personal "heritage" story told through art.

The program thus allowed students to strengthen their language skills in a natural, non-formal, and fun way of learning, by interviewing each other, writing scripts, speaking English and Dutch, adding subtitles to the movies they made, etc.

CS-CP is a collaboration between Story Valley and another Erasmus project Rebelah, whose common denominator is the creation of understanding and inclusion between the Dutch and the new Dutch





## Testing 1,2,3,..... Feedback!

In order to test whether the Story Valley approach works, feedback was collected from students and teachers who took part in the 3 local Story Valley pilots through 2 means: surveys and focus groups.

Surveys allowed us to collect primarily quantitative (but also some qualitative) data from the majority of people (61 students and 14 teachers) who took part in the structured trials/pilots, whilst focus groups allowed participants to provide deeper insights and reflect on their experiences taking part in Story Valley.

The students we worked with on Story Valley were from a diverse range of backgrounds; there were 16 different nationalities: Scottish, Spanish, British, Estonian, Polish, Portuguese, Italian, Slovene, Kosovan, Bosnian, Ehtopian, Eritrean, Syraian, Dutch, Somalian, Moroccan. Know over 20 languages between them; including Spanish, French, Russian, Estonian, Georgian, Ukrainian, Polish, Greek, Portuguese, Urdu, German, Italian, Bosnian/Serbian/Croatian/Montengrin, Arabic, Tigrinya, Papiamento, Somalian, Berber, Frisian and Tigre.





# How did they experience it? TEACHERS

We asked 14 participating teachers a LOT of questions about their experiences with Story Valley.

## Literacy

64.26%

Agreed that their confidence to embed literacy in their course has increased



## Stories and Histories

85.71%

Agreed that their students have learnt about stories from local areas as well as from different cultures.



92.86%

Agreed that their students were able to develop their storytelling skills



78.58%

Agreed that their confidence to embed sharing stories from different cultures into their course has increased.



## Creativity

100%

Agreed that Story Valley has stimulated their students' creativity.

92.86%

Agreed that they feel confident adopting teaching methods to stimulate their students' creativity.

71.43%

Agreed that that their students' relationships with each other have improved.

78.57%

Agreed that they feel more comfortable working with students from a broad range of backgrounds.

## Community and Identity

## Engagement

92.85%

Of teachers either agreed or strongly agreed that their students seemed to be engaged with Story Valley.



85.71%

Of teachers either agreed or strongly agreed that the Story Valley approach was/could be easily integrated into the existing curriculum.



92.85%

Agreed that the Story Valley approach has helped their students to feel more engaged with their course more generally.

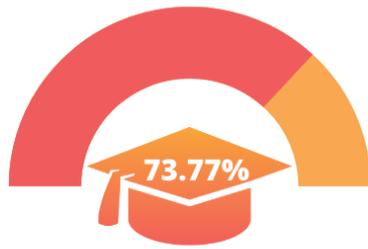


Remarkable is that all the students and all the teachers generally find the project a very positive experience in all the fields it touches: it brings them a sense of community, better understanding of other cultures, it improved their literacy as well as creative skills.



# How did they experience it? STUDENTS

We asked 61 participating students a LOT of questions about their experiences with Story Valley.



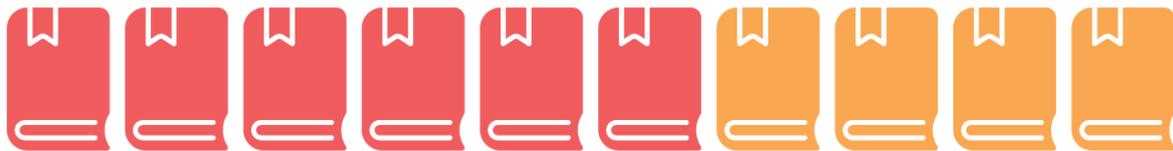
Agreed that they have learnt about stories from different cultures.



Agreed that they were able to develop their storytelling skills.



Agreed that Story Valley has stimulated their general creativity.



**67.21%**

Agreed that their understanding of their classmates' histories and backgrounds has increased



**75.41%**

Agreed that Story Valley has helped them to feel more engaged with their course more generally.



**73.77%**

Agreed that their relationships with their classmates have improved.

"I feel that it is much easier for me to deliver what I actually have in mind. Writing is much easier and comes naturally. I think I also read a bit faster in English now."

Student, Edinburgh College

"It definitely woke up a kind of vulnerability in me that I didn't know I had because I buried it deep down inside. It made me appreciate my culture and my background, which I tried to hide desperately for previous two years, by for example, trying to change my accent to sound less foreign. Story Valley made me think of me and of all my classmates as unique amazing people and I'm really grateful for it."

Student, Edinburgh College

## VISIT US AT:



Co-funded by the  
Erasmus+ Programme  
of the European Union

