GRASSHOPPER

🎭 Story Explorers: Theatre, Poetry & World Magic

1 hour · K – 2nd · After School · Teacher: Jessica Zhou

Instructions: This lesson plan is your starting point — feel free to edit, rearrange, or customize it to fit your teaching style and your students' needs! These notes are yours. They will not be published anywhere.

Topics Covered

Creative storytelling · Performance skills · Poetry composition · Imaginative world-building · Self-expression · Collaborative creation

Lesson Plan

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1. Welcome Circle & Journal Time (10 min)

- Gather students in a circle and sing the 'Story Explorers Song' (simple tune with actions about imagination)
- Pass out personal journals with stickers and let students decorate their name page or draw/write today's feelings
- Share prompt: 'What did you notice today that was interesting?' — students turn-and-talk to a partner
- Teacher models journaling by drawing a quick sketch of something they noticed, narrating aloud

2. Movement Warm-Up Theatre Game (12 min)

- Play 'Magic Walk': students walk around the space, teacher calls out different settings (walking on the moon, through peanut butter, on hot sand) and students move accordingly
- Play 'Emotion Statues': teacher calls out emotions, students freeze in a statue showing that feeling with their whole body
- Lead 'Yes, And' circle game: first student makes a simple gesture, next student copies it and adds one more, continue around the circle
- End with three big stretches reaching for the sky while making up a silly sound

3. Main Activity: Story/Poetry/World-building Focus (25 min)

- Introduce weekly theme with a visual or object related to the topic (changes each week based on series outline)
- Lead guided imagination exercise: students close eyes while teacher describes a sensory journey related to the theme
- Collaborative creation: work together as a group to build a poem, short scene, or world element (teacher scribes on large paper)
- Small groups (2–4 students) create mini-performances or poem readings based on what was created, with teacher rotating to support each group
- Each group shares their creation with the whole class (30–60 seconds each)

4. Journal Reflection & Creation (8 min)

- Students return to journals to draw or write about today's creation (for pre-writers: draw pictures, teacher writes dictated words)
- Play soft background music while students work independently
- Teacher circulates offering prompts like 'What character did you create?' or 'What did your world look like?'
- Students who finish early can add details, color, or start planning ideas for next week

5. Closing Circle & Performance Preview (5 min)

- Gather back in circle, each student shares one word or short phrase about today's session
- Teacher gives a teaser for next week's theme with an intriguing question or prop
- Group does a closing ritual: stack hands in center, raise them up together while saying 'Story Explorers!' loudly
- Students collect their journals and any take-home materials

Materials Checklist

- ☐ Individual student journals (composition notebooks or handmade stapled books)
- ☐ Crayons, markers, colored pencils
- ☐ Large chart paper and easel
- ☐ Thick markers for teacher scribing
- ☐ Small props basket (scarves, hats, simple costume pieces)
- ☐ Bluetooth speaker for music
- ☐ Weekly themed visuals or objects
- ☐ Stickers for journal decoration

Age Adaptations

Younger Kids: For Kindergarteners: Focus heavily on drawing rather than writing in journals. Use more repetitive poems with physical actions. Keep performances to 20–30 seconds. Pair with older buddies for activities. Use more teacher-led whole-group creation rather than small groups. Simplify vocabulary and give concrete examples for every abstract concept.

Older Kids: For 2nd graders: Encourage invented spelling and sentence writing in journals. Introduce simple rhyme schemes and poetry structures (acrostic, haiku basics). Allow more independent small group work with less teacher support. Add character development questions (what does your character want? what are they afraid of?). Let students take turns being 'directors' of small group performances.

Movement Break

Story Freeze Dance: Play music and students dance as their favorite character from today's story. When music stops, they freeze in a pose showing what that character is doing. Teacher taps students to 'come alive' for 3 seconds and act out their character's action.

Bonus Activities

- Props creation station: students make simple props or costume pieces from craft materials for their performances
- Partner poetry reading: pairs practice reading a collaborative poem with different voices or emotions
- World-building art: students draw maps of the imaginary worlds they've created
- Character interview: students pair up and interview each other as their created characters

Series Outline (30 Weeks)

Week	Theme	Key Activities
1	**Welcome to Story World**	Introduction to journals and creative space, Name games with character voices, Create class poem about 'What is a Story?'
2	**My Neighborhood Adventure**	Share observations from their own street/home, Create mini-scenes about everyday moments made magical, Write list poem: 'On My Street I See...'
3	**Weather Worlds**	Become different types of weather through movement, Build a world where weather has feelings, Perform weather poems with sound

Week	Theme	Key Activities
		effects
4	**Animal Kingdom Theatre**	Observation sharing: animals they've seen or know, Create animal characters with unique voices, Perform collaborative animal adventure poem
5	**Inside My Home**	Notice and share special objects from home, Create scenes where objects come to life, Write 'If My Toy Could Talk' poems
6	**Color Worlds**	Explore a world that's entirely one color, Create scenes showing emotions through color, Compose color poems using all five senses
7	**Family Stories**	Share something special about their family, Act out family traditions or meals, Create 'People I Love' acrostic poems
8	**Tiny Worlds**	Imagine being the size of an ant, Build a world from a bug's perspective, Perform mini-beast adventure poems
9	**Food Fantasy Land**	Share favorite foods and describe them, Create world made entirely of food, Write and perform 'Delicious' sensory poems
10	**Night Sky Stories**	Share what they see/imagine in the night sky, Create star and moon characters, Perform constellation origin story poems
11	**School Day Magic**	Notice interesting moments during their school day, Transform classroom objects into characters, Write 'When the Teacher's Not Looking' poems
12	**Underwater Worlds**	Movement exploration of swimming and floating, Build an ocean world with imaginary creatures, Create collaborative wave and water poems
13	**Sound and Music Stories**	Collect sounds from their daily life, Create scenes using only sounds and movement, Compose onomatopoeia poems performed in rhythm
14	**Garden World**	Share observations about plants and growing things, Act out the life cycle of a seed, Write 'If I Were a Flower' poems
15	**Friendship Adventures**	Share what makes a good friend, Create scenes showing friends helping each other, Perform partnership poems about playing

Week	Theme	Key Activities
		together
16	**Time Travel Tales**	Imagine yesterday, today, and tomorrow, Create scenes showing something from the past vs. present, Write 'When I Grow Up' future poems
17	**Transportation Nation**	Share how they get to different places, Become vehicles and build a traffic world, Perform movement poems about traveling
18	**Seasonal Celebrations**	Notice changes in the current season, Create world that celebrates seasonal activities, Write sensory poems about seasonal experiences
19	**Monster Mash-Up**	Design friendly monsters from imagination, Build a monster world with rules and games, Perform silly monster poems with voices
20	**Dreamscapes**	Share interesting dreams or daydreams (teacher shares first), Create scenes where anything can happen, Write 'In My Dreams' magical poems
21	**Community Helpers Theatre**	Observe and appreciate helpers in their lives, Act out scenarios with different community roles, Create thank-you poems for helpers
22	**Book World Come Alive**	Share favorite books or stories, Create scenes based on familiar fairy tales with twists, Write poems from a book character's perspective
23	**Playground Chronicles**	Notice and share playground observations, Create scenes about recess adventures, Perform action poems about playing and moving
24	**Emotion Islands**	Explore different feelings they've experienced, Build worlds for different emotions (Happy Island, Sad Valley), Create emotion poems with matching movements
25	**Invention Convention**	Imagine helpful or silly inventions, Act out using magical made-up tools, Write 'I Invented' creative poems
26	**Sports and Games World**	Share favorite games and how to play them, Create new games with made-up rules, Perform action poems about playing
27	**Shadow and Light**	Notice shadows and light in their environment, Use movement to

Week	Theme	Key Activities
		create shadow shapes and stories, Write contrast poems about day and night
28	**Superpower Academy**	Imagine what superpower would help them in daily life, Create superhero origin stories through scenes, Perform 'If I Had a Power' poems
29	**Gratitude Gardens**	Share things they're thankful for from their life, Create world built from things they appreciate, Write and perform 'Thank You' list poems
30	**Story Explorers Celebration**	Review favorite moments from all 30 weeks using journals, Perform greatest hits compilation of poems and scenes, Create collaborative 'We Are Story Explorers' finale poem and performance for families

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