



### **Activity: Story in a Bag**

**Materials needed:** Plastic or paper bags filled with random, unrelated items. Some unusual items always make the activity more interesting. Plan on one filled bag per group, and place 4-6 students in each group. Each bag should contain 6-8 items. (4 or 5 students should have 6 items; 6 students should have 8 items.)



**Description:** Each group of students gets a different bag filled with objects. Each group develops an oral story that incorporates all of the items in the bag. The story should be told in past tenses, simple and progressive. This task takes lots of discussion and cooperation, as well as lots of creativity!

Here's an example of a bag that contains a mix of common, yet unrelated items:

1. A book of matches from a New York restaurant
2. A screwdriver
3. A pair of gloves
4. A toy car
5. Plastic vampire teeth
6. A Band-Aid
7. A key
8. An interesting rock

It always helps juice the students' creativity if you put in an item that alludes to travel such as a map for some far-off place, a postcard, a souvenir, even an exotic spice. You can find menus for restaurants around the world, tour itineraries, and tourist maps to distant cities and museums online. Students love the exotic international aspect that they find in their bag.

First, place the students in groups. (Do not give out the bags yet!)

Then, introduce the activity like this:

“You are going to create a story in the oral tradition. This is the kind of story that humans passed from one generation to the next before most people could read or write. Your story will have one or more characters who want to do or achieve something. They may have a problem to solve or a goal to reach. However, like in all good stories, they will face some obstacle. Eventually, however, they will overcome this obstacle and reach their goal (or maybe not!). Everyone in the group will contribute to the story, and everyone in the group will have to relate part of the story to the class.”



**Activity: Story in a Bag**

“When you create this story, use the past tense and the past progressive as your primary verb tenses. Try to use adverb clauses of time as well (*Before, After, When, As, etc.*) to show how things happen chronologically.”

“Usually, in the oral tradition, stories are told over and over again, so that every detail is easily memorized. However, since we don’t have time for that today, I’m going to let you take brief, key-word notes on each part of your story so you can remember what happens when you tell the class your story.”

(By now, students are clamoring “We can make up a story about anything we want?” and turning their backs on you to start. This is the time to hand out the bags of objects.)

“If I could just have your attention for one more minute! Please take a bag and empty it on your desk. These bags will help you create your story because there is a catch -- your story must include each of the objects you see before you. They can be important parts of the story, or less significant, but each must be mentioned.”

Give the students a good 40 minutes to develop a story and practice telling it around their group. Then ask each group to come to the front with their objects, place the objects on a surface, and tell their story. Tell them to hold up each object for the class to see when they reach its part in the story.