



EduTrend Contents

G4C · STORYTELLING AND NARRATION GAMES · MIDDLE SCHOOL

Story Spine Relay

Build a story in turns using a spine of set sentence openers, then retell it with better detail

Ages 11–13

Level: Intermediate

40 minutes

Groups of 4 · up to 30

Activity 03

Inside: activity at a glance · step-by-step session plan · facilitator notes · 3 student worksheets · assessment checklist

ACTIVITY 03 · AT A GLANCE

Story Spine Relay

Groups use a story spine: once upon a time, every day, but one day, because of that, because of that, until finally, ever since then. Students take turns adding the next part aloud while one records key words. Groups then retell the full story, improving one element each: a vivid setting, a clearer problem or a stronger ending. They compare first and second tellings.

Learning outcomes

By the end of the session students can:

- structure a story;
- link events with cause and effect;
- improve detail in a retelling;
- give feedback on narrative choices.

KEY WORDS

story spine · structure · cause ·
climax · resolution · detail

CURRICULUM LINKS

English: narrative structure,
spoken language.

1**WARM UP**

Voices and bodies
ready

2**EXPLAIN**

One game, clear
rules

3**PLAY**

Invented roles

4**LISTEN**

Everyone heard

5**TALK**

What worked?

6**CLOSE**

Calm and positive

Materials (whole class)

- Story spine cards
- Character and setting cards
- Recording sheets
- Worksheets 1, 2 and 3

Before the session

- Print spine cards.
- Prepare prompt cards.
- Plan groups of four.
- Model one spine.

SAFETY

Keep stories invented; avoid real people as
characters.

ACTIVITY 03 · SESSION PLAN

Step by step

The retelling is where most improvement happens; protect time for it.

Time	What happens	Say or ask
0–5 min Warm up	Retell a familiar tale in five sentences.	<i>“Where is the turning point?”</i>
5–10 min Explain	Model the spine.	<i>“What does ‘because of that’ add?”</i>
10–32 min Play	Relay, then retell with improvements.	<i>“What did you improve?”</i>
32–40 min Close	Compare tellings.	<i>“Which change mattered most?”</i>

CHALLENGE CARD (print or copy onto the board)

Add a spine step that links clearly to the previous one, then improve one element in the retelling.

ACTIVITY 03 · FACILITATOR NOTES

The storytelling game know-how in brief

A clear structure helps speakers organise ideas before writing.

Retelling gives a chance to revise, much like redrafting writing.

Common ideas to listen for

- “Structure makes stories boring.” It frees you to add detail.
- “The first version is final.” Retelling improves stories.
- “Cause and effect is only for science.” Stories need it too.

Adapting the activity

Support

Give each student a spine card with one sentence starter.

Stretch

Retell from a different character’s point of view.

WORKSHEET 1

Story spine

Name: _____

Class: _____ Date: _____

Record your group’s story.

Spine

Step	Our story
Once upon a time	
Every day	
But one day	
Because of that	
Until finally	
Ever since then	

WORKSHEET 2

Improvement plan

Plan your retelling.

Improvements

Element	First telling	Improved
Setting		
Problem		
Ending		

WORKSHEET 3

Reflection

Reflect.

Our retelling was better because...

FOR THE TEACHER

Assessment checklist

Use during the session. One sheet covers up to eight students; copy as needed.

Student	Uses structure	Links events	Improves detail

Suggested codes: W = working towards · E = expected · G = greater depth

ABOUT THIS ACTIVITY

Story Spine Relay is a sample activity from the EduTrend Contents G4C Storytelling and Narration Games programme (middle school, level: intermediate). Every activity in the programme follows the same format: a practical challenge, a clear session plan, facilitator notes and ready-to-print worksheets, so that teachers, club leaders and parents can run it without extra preparation.

Full 15-, 20- and 32-week programmes are available from EduStore at edutrend.org.

© 2026 EduTrend Contents. This activity may be printed and copied for use with students in your own school, club or home. It may not be resold or published elsewhere. Photos: Josh Applegate / Unsplash.