

# S T O R Y P A T H<sup>®</sup>

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# Families *in Their* Neighborhoods

**by Margit E. McGuire, Ph.D.**

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–Margit E. McGuire

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# ABOUT STORYPATH

## THE STORYPATH STRATEGY

Storypath offers both a structure for organizing the social studies curriculum and an instructional strategy for teaching. The structure is a familiar one: the story. The strategy is grounded in a belief that children learn best when they are active participants in their own learning, and places students' own efforts to understand at the center of the educational enterprise. Together, the structure and the teaching strategy ensure that students feel strongly motivated and have meaningful and memorable learning experiences.

Originally developed in Scotland during the 1960s, Storypath draws support from decades of experience with teachers and students. The approach has its roots in these beliefs about children and learning:

- The world is complex and presents many layers of information. Children know a good deal about how the world works and have a reservoir of knowledge that is often untapped in the classroom.
- When children build on that knowledge through activities such as questioning and researching, new understandings are acquired. Because children construct their own knowledge and understanding of their world, their learning is more meaningful and memorable.
- Problem solving is a natural and powerful human endeavor. When children are engaged in problem-solving, they take ownership for their learning.
- The story form integrates content and skills from many disciplines and provides a context for children to gain a deeper, more complex understanding of major concepts.

## AN INQUIRY APPROACH

Questioning, by both teacher and students, is a key component of Storypath. Through the story structure and the discourse it creates, the teacher guides students in their search for meaning and understanding as they acquire new knowledge and skills. Your questions, and the discussions they engender, cause students to:

- ask their own questions and think critically about what they know;
- use their prior knowledge to make sense of new information;
- connect personally to important social studies concepts.

The story structure and inquiry guided by unit goals provide the framework for students to integrate skills and complex content through problems they encounter. As they do so, their understanding of important concepts is extended and key connections are made.

## THE STORY STRUCTURE

For thousands of years, stories have helped us create order and make connections between events. Storypath's narrative structure helps students understand concepts that they often find difficult to comprehend in the traditional social studies curriculum.

Each Storypath unit centers on a unique and engaging story that provides a concrete context for understanding the social science content. This story may be based on actual historical events, as developed in *Struggle for Independence*. Or the story might instead be based on typical community or business structures, as developed in *Families in Their Neighborhoods* or in *Understanding the Marketplace*. From all of these structures, students develop a meaningful context for developing understanding of the topic.

### Typical structure of a Storypath unit

#### CREATING THE SETTING

Students create the setting by completing a frieze or mural of the place.

#### CREATING THE CHARACTERS

Students create characters for the story whose roles they will play during subsequent episodes.

#### BUILDING CONTEXT

Students are involved in activities such as reading and writing to stimulate them to think more deeply about the people and the place they have created.

#### CRITICAL INCIDENTS

Characters confront problems typical of those faced by people of that time and place.

#### CONCLUDING EVENT

Students plan and participate in an activity that brings closure to the story.

# PLANNING THE UNIT

## FAMILIES IN THEIR NEIGHBORHOODS

### MAKE KEY DECISIONS

**Make Classroom Space for the Storypath.** You will want to have adequate wall space for students to make the frieze of the neighborhood as well as space to display the characters and the various projects students complete during the unit. Sometimes teachers are tempted to put the frieze and the characters in the hallway outside of the classroom. It is important, however, to display these items inside the classroom where students can easily refer to them throughout the Storypath.

**Organize Students.** In Episode 1, have students work in pairs to create a home for the neighborhood. These partners will work together throughout much of the unit. You could organize the students into small groups, but it is easier for two students, rather than three or four, to negotiate the various decisions that will need to be made throughout the unit.

**Arrange for Role-Plays.** In Episode 4, you or another adult will play the role of the mail carrier with a letter to deliver. In Episode 6, you will need a guest speaker to represent the local transportation department. If someone from the transportation department can actually come to your class, that would be ideal.

**Use the Student Portfolio to Gather Evidence of Student Learning.** The Student Portfolio provides evidence of student understanding of families and neighborhood communities. In the Portfolio students apply reading and writing skills to demonstrate learning. While much of the students' work is displayed to enrich the learning environment, you will want to add it to the Portfolios when the Storypath concludes as a record of their performance.

**Create a Learning Community.** An open and supportive atmosphere is essential for students to engage in the discourse that is basic to the learning process of the Storypath approach. Students should understand the value of reflective discussions and the importance of collaborative work to deepen their understanding of complex ideas. Consequently, students should be expected to listen carefully and respond thoughtfully and respectfully to one another's ideas.

## CUSTOMIZE THE UNIT

**Adapt the Unit.** There will likely be times in this unit when you will want to modify the curriculum to suit the needs of your own class and follow the logical progression of the story. Alternative activities or special arrangements are suggested at various points to assist in adapting the unit to meet your unique needs.

Frequently, students will provide unanticipated twists to the Storypath, or important learning opportunities will arise. The Storypath allows for the accommodation of those special circumstances.

**Use Current Events.** Students role-play the characters and discuss families and neighborhoods from their own perspectives. This is a good opportunity to help students connect their experiences to current events. Neighborhood problems are frequently in the news, and making these connections can serve as powerful learning experiences because students understand first-hand the transferability of their classroom experiences to the real world.

Don't be surprised if students make current event connections on their own. Teachers report that once students become immersed in the Storypath, they begin to pay more attention to news reports about community problems.

**Learning Through Community Service.** As students become more aware of the issues in the neighborhood, an opportunity may arise for them to participate in a community service project, such as a litter campaign or a tree planting. These real-life experiences provide students with a valuable opportunity to extend their learning from the Storypath.

## INVOLVE OTHERS

**Involve Families.** Family members and other adults can serve as excellent resources for you and your students. Some family members may be active in community or neighborhood groups—invite them to your classroom.

In Episode 7, students celebrate their success in improving their neighborhood. This is an ideal time to invite families to visit. Students can write invitations to their celebration and families can participate in the event.

# CREATING THE CHARACTERS FAMILIES

# 2

# EPISODE

## INTRODUCING THE CHARACTERS

page 20

Children discuss members of families.

**Materials** Content Slide Set 3

**Grouping** Whole class

**Schedule** Approximately 15 minutes

## CREATING THE FAMILIES

page 20

Children create family members and their biographies.

**Materials** Teaching Master 2, *Shapes for the Character Figures*, TH p. 46

Teaching Master 3, *Character Biography*, TH p. 47

Portfolio 4, *Word Bank: Families*, p. 7

Portfolio 5, *Family Members*, p. 8

For the figures:

- various colors of construction and tissue paper
- yarn and fabric scraps, paper doilies, ribbon, lace, buttons, cotton balls, wallpaper scraps, markers and crayons, colored chalk, glue, scissors
- optional item: wool fiber for hair
- large sheet of paper or poster board for mounting each family and biographies
- large envelopes made from construction paper, stapled on the side

For the word bank:

- index cards, thick black marker

**Grouping** Whole class and pairs of children

**Schedule** 1–2 hours. Time can be divided over several days.

## CONCLUDING EPISODE 2

page 22

Children introduce their families to the class.

**Materials** Portfolio 6, *Writing: Families Are Alike and Different*, p. 9

**Grouping** Whole class

**Schedule** 1–2 hours spread over a few days

### EPISODE OBJECTIVES

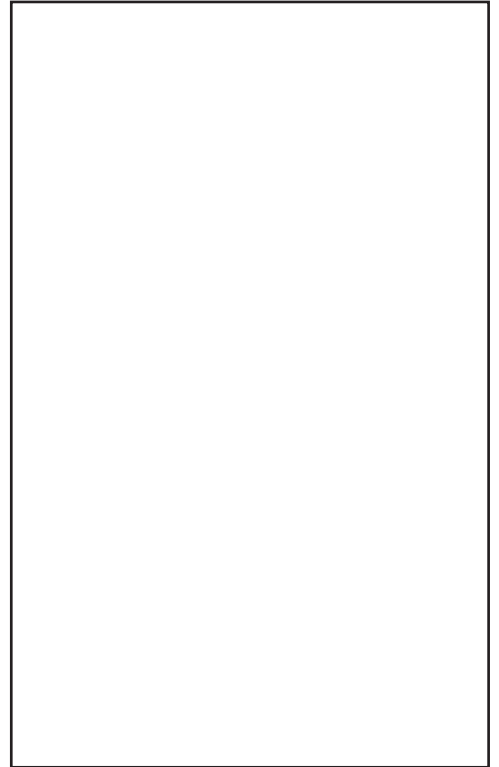
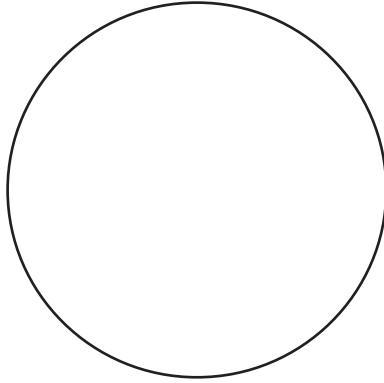


- **Culture/Social Interaction** *Identify family roles and responsibilities; state how families are alike and different; describe family and neighborhood activities.*
- **Social Skills** *Plan and make decisions while creating families with a partner.*
- **Critical Thinking** *Organize ideas from class discussion in new ways to create families.*
- **Literacy** *Write a character biography; introduce characters to the class.*
- **Literacy** *Analyze and describe how families are alike and different based on oral presentations.*



Name \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_

## SHAPES FOR THE CHARACTER FIGURES



Name \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_

## **CHARACTER BIOGRAPHY**

**Student Names:**

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**1. Name of Character:**

\_\_\_\_\_  
(first name) (last name)

**2. Family Role:** \_\_\_\_\_

**3. Age:** \_\_\_\_\_

**4. Place of Birth:** \_\_\_\_\_

**5. Job:** \_\_\_\_\_

**6. Fun Things Character Likes to Do:** \_\_\_\_\_

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**7. Favorite Foods:** \_\_\_\_\_

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## Mobile Home Park

A person who moves or travels a lot can live in a mobile home. A neighborhood of mobile homes is called a mobile home park. ▼







SET 2

SLIDE 5

## Farm

Farmers need a lot of land to grow their crops, so in a farm neighborhood houses are often far apart.







1. How are these neighborhoods alike? How are they different?  
*(comparing and contrasting)*
2. Which neighborhood looks like the one you live in? *(connecting)*



## WORD BANK: FAMILIES

In the column on the left, make a list of different family members. In the other column, write words that describe the family members.

Family members	Describing words
mother	caring



DATE \_\_\_\_\_

## FAMILY MEMBERS

Student Names:

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Write the names of your family members below.

(first name)	(last name)	(family role)	(age)
(first name)	(last name)	(family role)	(age)
(first name)	(last name)	(family role)	(age)
(first name)	(last name)	(family role)	(age)
(first name)	(last name)	(family role)	(age)

**Assessment:** Names and family roles are complete; ages are realistic for the roles.