

READING

The power of storytelling

LEVEL

Intermediate (B2)

NUMBER

EN_B2_3024R

LANGUAGE

English

Learning outcomes

- I can talk about different kinds of storytelling.
- I can use a variety of verbs and phrases to describe change.



Warm-up



**What do you think
of when you hear
the word *story*?**

**Discuss as a class or in
breakout rooms!**



Pre-reading

Below are the titles of short texts on the theme *Storytelling through the ages*.
Gather some ideas as a class: what do you think the texts will be about?

Leaving traces on
the land

Singing stories

The print
revolution

Stories on the big
screen





Storytelling through the ages

Match the text (A-D) with the correct heading (1-4).

1
Leaving traces on the land

2
Singing stories

3
The print revolution

4
Stories on the big screen

A With the invention of paper in China, and later technologies that automated the book-printing process*, storytelling evolved and flourished on the page. Stories spread quickly across the globe and could now be shared by communities living thousands of miles apart.

B Before the written word, there was word of mouth. Oral tradition ensured songs, chants, poems and myths were passed down from generation to generation. And we clearly still love listening to stories today, considering the huge popularity of podcasts and audiobooks.

C Our ancestors were visual storytellers who carved their stories into the landscape around them. Some of the rock art discovered at Tassili n'Ajjer in the Sahara desert, depicting animals and humans in hunting scenes, may date from as far back as 12,000 years ago.

D From early experiments in photography to the first 'moving pictures' that amazed audiences in the early 20th century, the medium of film is relatively new. However, in just a short time, it has drastically changed the way we tell and respond to stories.



*Woodblock printing in China and Korea; the Gutenberg Press

Which statement best matches the picture?

Compare answers with your classmates. **Discuss the reasons** for your answers as a class.

1



- a) Our ancestors were visual storytellers.
- b) The first 'moving pictures' amazed audiences.

2



- a) Before the written word, there was word of mouth.
- b) Podcasts and audiobooks are hugely popular today.

3



- a) In the oral tradition, chants, poems and myths are passed down from generation to generation.
- b) Stories could be shared by communities living thousands of miles apart.

4



- a) The medium of film has drastically changed the way we tell stories.
- b) Storytelling evolved and flourished on the page.



Discuss



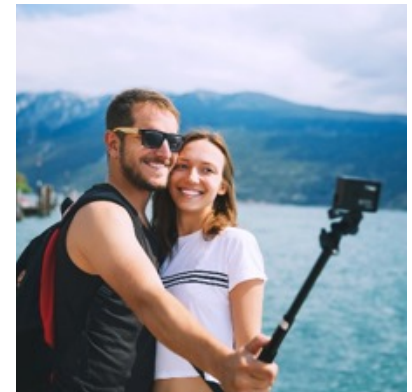
A picture paints a thousand words

Have you heard this saying before?

What do you think it means?

Do you agree with this saying?

Which do you think is **more powerful** – a story told with words or with images?





What's the difference?

Complete the definitions with the phrases below.



Word of mouth

Oral tradition

_____ refers to **parts of a culture** that are passed down orally from generation to generation.

_____ is when information spreads via **person-to-person communication**, rather than appearing in written or official form.



Multiple choice

1 We are a small family business, and most of our clients hear about us through _____ recommendations.

a. word of mouth

b. oral tradition

2 Because of their strong _____ of myth and folklore, we can learn a lot about the way the islanders lived, in addition to their values and beliefs.

a. word of mouth

b. oral tradition

3 Stories passed down in the _____ often change over time, with each teller of the tale adapting the story for their audience.

a. word of mouth

b. oral tradition



Verbs and phrases to talk about change

Match verbs and phrases (1-6) from the text on p.5 to a definition (a-f). **Check** your answers.

- | | | | |
|---|------------------------------|---|--|
| 1 | to evolve | a | to grow and develop well; to be successful |
| 2 | to flourish | b | (of information) to be communicated from one person to another in a short time |
| 3 | to spread quickly | c | to happen recently (how recently depends on the context) |
| 4 | to be relatively new | d | to become very different to the way it was before |
| 5 | in just a short time | e | to develop gradually over a long period of time |
| 6 | to change drastically | f | quickly (emphasis on how quickly something happens) |



Complete the sentences

Make sure to use the correct form of the verbs (a-f).

1

Stories _____ in interesting ways once people started writing them down.

a

to flourish

2

The podcast industry is _____, with exciting new content being created all the time.

b

to spread quickly

3

News of the author's latest prize _____ in the online community.

c

to change drastically

4

_____, the radio changed how people spent their leisure time at home.

d

to be relatively new

5

How we tell stories may have _____, but our love for storytelling hasn't.

e

in just a short time

6

Streaming platforms are _____ way to enjoy films and TV series.

f

to evolve

Describing change

Read the text. **Use** phrases in the boxes to describe some changes that occurred with the rise of the radio as a form of entertainment.

During the 'Golden Age' of radio in the 1920s and 1930s, families would gather at home to listen to their favourite shows – from adventure stories to mysteries and comedy acts. The soap opera was born, with its long-running plots and characters that listeners could get to know and love.



in just a short time...

to flourish

to change drastically

(to be) relatively new

to spread quickly

to evolve



The 'Golden Age' of radio was relatively short. Why do you think that was?



Storytelling through the ages

You can use **breakout rooms** for this activity. **Share** your group's ideas in the class afterwards.

- Describe the objects in the pictures below. Can you guess what they are?



- How do the objects in the pictures relate to storytelling, do you think?

1



2



3



4



5



In this picture, I think we're looking at...

I suppose people used to...



Discuss



How we tell stories may have drastically changed, but our love for storytelling hasn't. Stories still have the power to change the world!

Do you believe that the way we tell stories has **drastically changed**?

What are some **relatively new** developments in storytelling that you can think of?

What are some stories you have heard, read or seen that **changed your life** in some way?





Storytelling today

Look at the prompts. **Discuss** the questions.

What kind of stories do you encounter in your day-to-day life?



Reality TV



Social media posts



Vlogging



Messaging



End of the lesson

Idiom

A likely story...

Meaning: Use this phrase when someone says something that doesn't seem true

Example: So, you just 'happened' to be in the office the day they were giving out free stuff...
A likely story!



Additional practice



Traditional forms of storytelling

Look at the items below. What are some characteristics or traits of each?



What do the above have
in common?
What might be some
differences?



Match the term with a description

Note that these are not strict definitions and that items may have elements in common.

1	Myth	a	animals are the main characters; contains a moral or lesson
2	Legend	b	a story passed down through generations in a local community
3	Fable	c	explain the creation of the universe, the afterlife, natural phenomena
4	Folktale	d	a scary story which has supernatural elements; often but not always with ghosts
5	Epic poem	e	unverifiable story, spread by word of mouth or online, about an unusual or unexplained event
6	Fairytale	f	a story that relates to a place; may be based on, or contain some historical facts
7	Ghost story	g	contains magic; often told to children
8	Urban legend	h	a long, narrative poem about the adventures of a hero character, often involving the gods or other supernatural elements





Urban legends: fact or fiction?

Read the dialogue. **Answer** the questions.



Zoe

Apparently that cinema is haunted. It used to be a theatre, but then there was a fire or something, and the old proprietor spent the rest of her days wandering around the derelict building...

Oh come on! I heard the theatre went bankrupt and that's why it closed down. And the building was empty for years because they couldn't find anyone to buy it during the recession.



Ariana



Zoe

Well, my friend said that her friend saw this weird woman in the mirror in the toilet, but when she turned around, there was no one there...
Creepy, right?

Yeah, right! That doesn't prove anything. I mean, who is this friend of a friend anyway? It's definitely just an urban legend.



Ariana

What place are these two friends discussing?

What do they know about this place?

Which person's story do you find more believable?

Have you ever heard a story like this before?



Answer key

P.5: 1. C 2. B 3. A 4. D

P.6: 1. b 2. b 3. a 4. a

P.8: 1. oral tradition 2. word of mouth

P.9: 1. a 2. b 3. b

P.10: 1. e 2. a 3. b 4. c 5. f 6. d

P.11: Complete the sentences 1. evolved 2. flourishing 3. spread quickly 4. In just a short time... 5. drastically changed 6 a relatively new

P.13: Suggested answers 1. cave paintings; early example of human-made art; a hunter and an animal 2. old manuscript, diary, paper, quill and ink 3. typewriter; typewriter keys 4. vintage/old radios 5. vintage/old camera



Summary

Vocabulary related to storytelling

- *word of mouth, oral tradition, storyteller, podcast*
- *to pass down from generation to generation*

Verbs and phrases to talk about change

- *to evolve, to flourish, to spread quickly, to be relatively new, to change drastically*
- *in just a short time*



Vocabulary

word of mouth

oral tradition

storyteller

podcast

to pass down from generation to generation

to evolve

to flourish

to spread quickly

to be relatively new

to change drastically

in just a short time

