

Early Learners Story Telling - Sybil the Cygnet

Teacher's Notes

Workshop Programme

This 30 minute story telling session offers a unique combination of Literacy and Science, covering a range of the EYFS areas of Learning. Suitable for Early Learners aged 3-4 and Reception year children.

Learning Objectives

The story telling covers listening, speaking, drama, development and will assist in their understanding of the world around them.

The children will learn about different species and types of animals as well as the habitats of birds and other creatures that can be found living both in the grounds of Leeds Castle and throughout the English countryside.

The session starts with an introduction to the world of animals, followed by the story of Sybil the Cygnet in the form of a dramatic production, performed by the children.

Timetable

The timings below are approximate and can vary depending on how the session progresses. They may also vary by season.

Groups below 40 children will follow the itinerary for Group A. Groups exceeding 40 children will be split into Group A and Group B.

Guided Tours

We do not advise guided tours for this age group, but if you do want to include one, it will take place as part of the free time.

GROUP A		GROUP B	
10.00 am	Coach to drive to the ticket office where your Education Leader will meet you and assist with payment.	10.00 am	Coach to drive to the ticket office where your Education Leader will meet you and assist with payment.
10.15 am	Walk from the Triangle to the Education Centre. Use Toilets.	10.15 am	Walk from the Triangle to the Education Centre where the children can leave their bags. Introduction and welcome.
10.40 am	Introduction and welcome		
10.45 am	Storytelling session begins.	10.30 am	Depart Education Centre for free Time.
11:30	Lunch		
12.15 pm	Depart for free time.	12.15 pm	Return to Education Centre for lunch.
		13:00	Storytelling session begins.
		13:45	Depart.



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Background Information

The workshop leader will support the pupils in the telling of the story Sybil the Cygnet.

Well suited to its location, the cast of characters include swans, a frog, a water vole as well as others and of course Sybil herself.

All of the class will be involved in the story. It is suggested that you assign children to their characters before the day, as you will know your class and each child's aptitude for role play and doing so can save a lot of time on the day.

Simple costumes and props will be available for each child to dress up as the main characters in the story and act out the plot as the story proceeds.

There will be opportunities, both during and after the story, to discuss what has happened and to predict what could come next. There will also be the opportunities to discuss and learn about how different creatures need different things to live and how food and water is essential to all living things.

Sybil the Cygnet	
Elsie Swan	
Cyril Swan	
Cygnet 1	
Cygnet 2	
Cygnet 3	
Cygnet 4	
Cygnet 5	
Ferdinand Frog	
Olivia Owl	
Walter Water Vole	
The Fox	
Wildlife Warden	



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Follow-up Ideas

English, Storytelling & Drama

- With the children sitting in a circle, start to retell the story of Sybil the Cygnet. There are many variations to this idea. You could specify that each child adds the character, or just adds one sentence. You could go round the circle, or have a soft ball or object that could be thrown from child to child to continue.
- Ask the children to choose one of the characters and use mime to act the character to the rest of the class. Can they convey by movement and expression alone who they have chosen to be?
- Divide the children into pairs or small groups. Ask the group to choose one of the characters from the story and to tell the story from the perspective of that character. They will need to think about what it would be like to be that animal.

Finding Out

- Using available information sources such as books and the internet, encourage the children to find further facts about the life of swans?
- Can the children find any other stories featuring swans? (Clue: A good starting point would be the familiar tale of the ugly duckling)

Science

- Discuss what other types of animals lay eggs? Create a table of 3 columns with the headings, eggs, seeds and live bearers. Cut out pictures of various living things (and some non living) and ask the children to place them in the right column.
- Animal A - Z game: Think of an animal beginning with each letter of the alphabet, and follow that with a food it would eat. (This can be played on the coach on way back to school too).

Art & Design

- Ask the children to make puppets of the main characters in the story and then use them to act out the narrative. Puppets could be of any kind, such as paper bag puppets, stick puppets and even finger puppets.



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The Story

Once upon a time, Elsie and Cyril Swan were looking for a new home. They flew round and round until they saw a beautiful castle in the middle of a lake, with other swans and ducks living there. They settled in and started to build their nest. Once the nest was finished, Elsie sat down and laid 6 eggs.

After 37 days 5 eggs hatched. Elsie and Cyril were very proud and took their 5 lovely cygnets onto the lake to swim. Whilst they were away from the nest, the 6th egg also hatched, and there was Sybil! Realising she was all alone, Sybil set off to find her mum. After a short while Sybil the cygnet came across a very strange animal indeed. It had green skin, no feathers and long bent legs. Sybil cried "are you my mum?" "No I am not, I am Ferdinand Frog, but I will help you catch some insects. Come and sit next to me at the edge of this lily leaf and when you see an insect, stick out your tongue quickly and gobble it up." Sybil hopped and hopped, but her legs were too short and she couldn't reach the leaf. So she tried to stick out her tongue like the frog, but she couldn't do that either, so she said "thank you, but you are not my mum, I am going to look for her" and she set off again.

After a while she arrived at the edge of a small wood. She saw a creature with enormous round eyes, beautiful brown feathers and long sharp claws called talons. Sybil ran up to the creature and cried... "are you my mum?" "Twit twoo" came the reply. "No I am not your mum, I am an owl and my name is Olivia. Come with me and we can catch some mice together." The owl swooped and picked up a mouse. She tore at it with her beak. Sybil said "I can't do that, my beak is too flat. Thank you, but you are not my mum, I am going to look for her" and she set off again.

And on Sybil went to look for her mum. She found it easier to walk near the water, so she went back towards the river bank, where suddenly she saw a round, brown animal with a long tail and big teeth. Sybil thought at last she had found her mum and cried... "are you my mum?" "Shhh..." came the reply "I am hiding from the owl who might eat me. No I am not your mum, I am Walter the water vole and I am hurrying back to my safe home in the river bank. It can be dangerous out here, would you like to come with me?" Sybil tried very hard to squeeze into the hole, but she was too big! "Thank you, but you are not my mum, I am going to look for her" and she set off again.

Sybil turned around and nearly fell over with fright! There in front of her was a huge brown furry animal with a long bushy tail and big ears. Sybil was a little afraid of this giant and in a quavering, shaky voice she said "Are you my mum?" In a deep gruff voice the creature replied "No, I am not your mum. I am a fox, but I will help you look for her if you like."

Suddenly Sybil saw two enormous feet standing beside her. She looked up and saw that this was a person! It was the Wildlife Warden. "Shoo" said the warden to the fox and the fox ran off. The warden bent down and gently picked Sybil up. "Now where do you think you are going? Do you not know that you are a swan cygnet and your family all live on Leeds Castle's Great Water?". The warden took a few strides into the water and set her down. Sybil found that her webbed feet paddled quickly through the water and in no time at all she was beside a beautiful white bird with a long neck and orange beak. Excitedly Sybil said "are you my mum" and this time the answer came. "Yes, I am your mum, where have you been?" Sybil was very happy.

Cyril and Elsie Swan swam across the moat with Sybil and her brothers and sisters following behind, and they all lived happily ever after.

The illustrated booklet is available to purchase for £1 from the Leeds Castle shops or Education Department.

