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opening extract from

Storyworld:

The Storytelling Book

written by

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Caitlin Matthews

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To the worldwide company of storytellers,
who keep us bright – J.M. & C.M.

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StoryWorld™

— THE —

STORYTELLING BOOK

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INTRODUCTION

THE MAGIC OF STORIES

"Trust dreams.
Trust your heart, and trust your story."
From 'Instructions' by Neil Gaiman

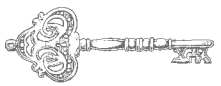
ONCE UPON A TIME... when people still lived in caves and would sit around the fire every night, storytellers used their magic to keep the vast and silent darkness at bay. Their tales hopped off the tongue and into the ear, taking root in the imaginations of their listeners. There, each story grew wide and tall, put flesh on its bones, and then walked about in the world.

Today we get most of our stories from books, films or television, but the spell of the storyteller hasn't gone away. There is the tale we don't even realise we are telling – when we describe what our day was like, what happened on our holiday, or just what someone said to us and how we replied. But more importantly, there is another sort of storytelling that takes place all the time, all over the world. This kind of story is the one we make up for ourselves, where we invent the scenes, the characters and the plot. Whether we're telling a campfire story, a bedtime tale or just getting lost in a daydream, it's a chance for our imaginations to take flight.

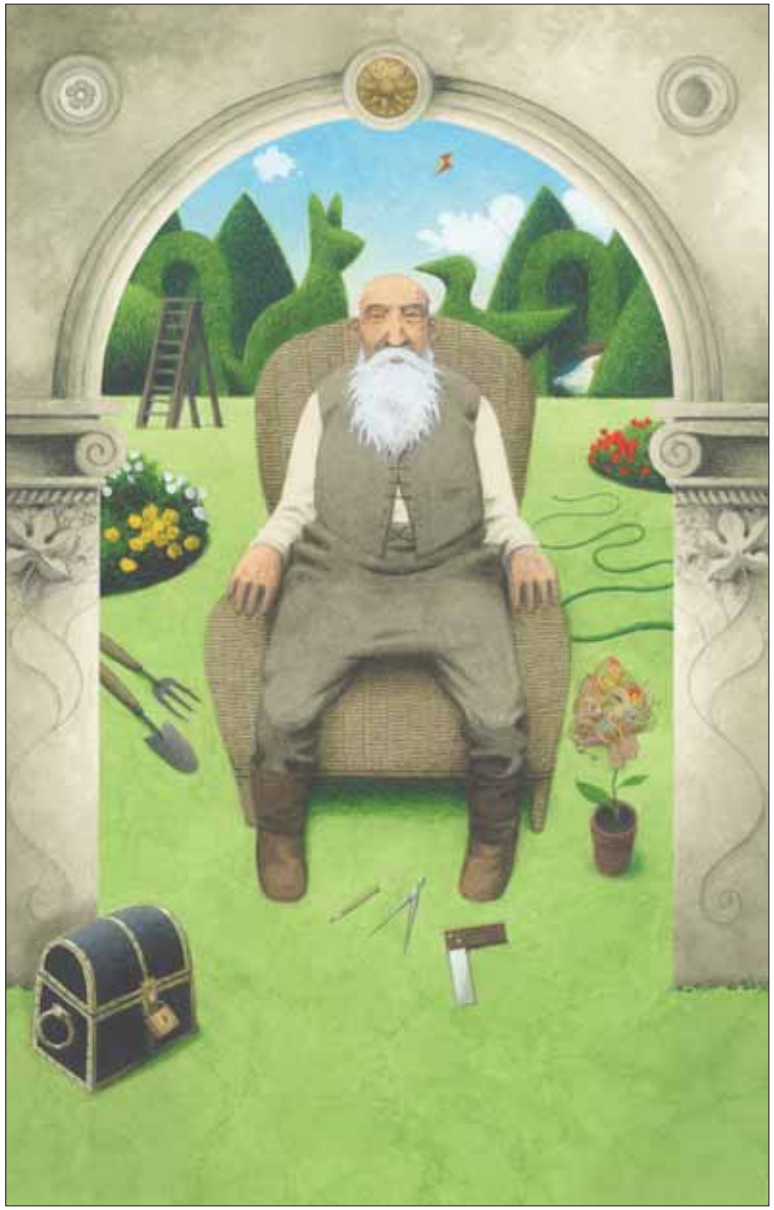
Anyone who has ever pushed a toy car, lined up toy soldiers or sat their dolls around a table to have a tea party, understands the magic of storytelling. When toy soldiers march across the bedroom floor or the garden turns into a magical landscape where plastic figures and stuffed animals become real, all kinds of stories spring up. As sound effects are added and characters find their voice, their creator is being a natural storyteller – the latest in a long line that stretches all the way back to those first people who sat around the fire.

Storytelling is a vital tool to stimulate the imagination, as well as being a cornerstone in the development of literacy and communication skills like listening, speaking, reading and writing. It also builds vocabulary and the understanding of key concepts such as comprehension and sequencing (deciding the correct order of things) – vital knowledge for storytellers of all ages.

Anyone can enter the world of stories. If you're not sure that you know the way, be reassured that you have the keys here in your hands. Let StoryWorld help you to unlock the doors of your imagination so that you can step inside.







— ONE —

HOW STORYWORLD WORKS

"If you don't know the trees you may be lost in the forest, but if you don't know the stories you may be lost in life."
Siberian Elder

STORYWORLD is a toolkit for telling stories. This chapter explains how you can use it to fire your imagination and start your storytelling. Chapter Two gives keywords and background for each card, to help you make them come alive in your stories. In Chapter Three, we explain the art of telling stories and suggest some games to inspire a storyteller or a group of storytellers. Then in Chapter Four, you can read stories we created using the StoryWorld Cards.

THE STORYWORLD CARDS

The StoryWorld cards accompanying this book come from four worlds: THE WORLD OF EVERYDAY, THE LAND OF FAERY, THE WORLD OF MAGIC and THE REALM OF THE COURT. You will find cards about people, creatures, places and special objects found in each of these worlds. Pick up your pack and look at characters like THE YOUNGEST SON, magical creatures such as THE FAERY or THE TALKING BIRD, animals like THE DOG, special objects such as THE MAGIC MIRROR and places in the lands of story, such as THE WELL OF MEMORY.

In the background of each picture, you will also notice other things going on that you can add to your story. Who is that watching in the woods, behind the WILD BEAST? What does THE QUEEN keep near her? Each card is full of strange and wonderful things; they can be sad or happy, silly or serious; they can be scary or bring comfort. All of them are full of characters you may only ever meet in the world of stories, stories that have been told by ordinary people for so long that no one remembers who first recounted them or why. You might find that sometimes they remind you of real people too.

One of the greatest secrets of storytelling is that everything you hear in a story is real – even though it might never have happened. That's the magic of stories – characters and events wake up and take on a life of their own while the story is being told and when it's finished, they fade away again. But remember, in the world of stories they are still there, waiting for someone to find them and tell their story. Maybe this time that person will be you.



PICTURE YOUR STORY

You can combine the cards that make up your story in any way you like, using any part of them – the main picture, a background image or the questions on the back of the card. When you look at a book, before you have learned to read the words, you find out about the story by looking at the pictures – even the author might not have spotted the things you see. Pictures tell their own stories and if you listen really hard you can hear them speaking. Every StoryWorld Card has a picture that tells not just one story but hundreds – and every person who looks at them will see a different tale.

With these cards you can be your own storyteller or the story can become part of a game played with friends. You can write it down or tell it to other people, or each take turns to tell a part of the story. Whatever you do, you will be creating a new story instead of reading one written by someone else.

FREE YOUR IMAGINATION

Stories pave the way for the great adventure of life. Your StoryWorld Cards will help you to set out on some of those adventures. The stories that come to life in your imagination will always be more exciting and satisfying than the ones dreamt up by other people.

Like the costumes in a dressing-up box, StoryWorld is full of tales that you can step into whenever you please. Clowns can meet fairies, dragons can become friends with pigs, princesses can play with ragged little boys. Closed and silent, the StoryWorld box is just waiting for you to open it and take out the cards. Some cards will jump right into your hands and want to have their stories told.

A few of the ways in which the cards can be used are shown in this book, but there are many more which we have not covered and probably even more we haven't even thought of! Our ideas are just a starting place – using your imagination and invention, you will find a limitless number of new ways to create your stories.

There is no right or wrong way to use the StoryWorld Cards. Free yourself from that idea and you will discover the millions of untold tales that lie within the cards, and within all of us. There are more StoryWorld Cards to collect, available in separate packs with themes such as quests, sea adventures, faeries and animals, that will broaden your story-making world.

But don't stop there. If you have an interesting character, place or event living in your imagination – a pony, a pick-up truck or a giant robot – why not make some StoryWorld Cards of your own? Lay one of the cards on a piece of cardboard, trace around it, then cut out your new card – you can paint or draw your idea on one side, then on the other side give the card a title and introduction, make up your own questions, and then add it to your set.

TAKE YOUR FIRST STEPS

Take out your StoryWorld Cards and spread them before you, right now, before you read any more of this book! You don't have to read what's on the back of the cards – just explore the pictures. Pick two or three of the cards that caught your eye and you'll find that they are already telling you something. What questions did they make you think of? How would you connect these cards together in a story? If you ask enough questions, you'll find that everyone and everything has its own story.

Remember, there are no rules – you can make any kind of story you like with these cards. It can be exciting and frightening, funny or sad. You might not know anything about the people or places on these cards, but you will feel the tickle of a story beginning somewhere inside you. Perhaps it's just one line, but as soon as you hear that line in your head, you will begin to sense the next piece of story arriving. There is no 'right' story, only the story that you make. This is story magic.

A NOTE FOR THOSE WORKING WITH YOUNG STORYTELLERS

StoryWorld is first and foremost intended to be fun and exciting, but this also makes it very useful as an educational tool. Whether a child is pre-literate, learning to read or already a confident reader, he or she can benefit from playing with different aspects of the cards – their pictures, titles, questions and eventually the keywords, descriptions and hidden links.

If you are using the StoryWorld Cards with a child or a group of children, and are playing the games with them, you will discover new ways to share together in the wonderful richness of storytelling. Whether you tell stories with these cards or a group of children tell their own stories, you will be exploring things together like language, composition and communication skills, stimulating your imaginations and honing creative and oral skills.

