

IN Residence

Storied Away



Hello! My name is **Frances Stickley** and I'm a published picture book writer and the 2020 Author in Residence for Inspire: Culture, Learning and Libraries. I spend almost all of my free time writing stories. It's something that I need to do to feel like me. And, like all authors and artists, I write my stories in a way that's all my own, but there are lots of tips that I've borrowed from other authors along the way, and I'd like to share some of them with you.

What is a Character?

Characters are the people who tell your story and move it forward. They might be talking dogs, aliens or robots. Usually, a character is at the very heart of a story – it's about what they want or need, and how they're going to get it.

I always start planning my stories with my main character. Often, they pop into my head when I'm working on something completely different and refuse to pipe down until I've written their story!

Silly Story Suitcases

I'd like to share an activity with you that can really help to develop character, especially if you're feeling stuck. Sometimes when we're stuck, the first thing we do is think too much! Thinking too much can get in the way of creativity. But here's a game that's so speedy and so silly that there just isn't time to overthink it.

Silly Story Suitcases

You will need:

A stopwatch or a timer.

A suitcase or a bag. (Or you could draw this, or imagine it, if you'd prefer.)



You're going to pretend that you are the character. Set your timer for one minute, then pack or draw all of the things you can think of to put into this suitcase. Anything. Don't think too much about it.

When the time is up, ask yourself why your character is taking those things away with them and where they are going.

Did you pack...



A bunch of bananas? You're off to the Amazon in search of a rare monkey.



A travel sewing kit? Supergirl has ripped her cape and only you can help.



Frozen fish fingers?* There's a shortage of fish in the Antarctic and five hundred hungry penguins need your help.

This game is so quick that you don't have time to worry about getting it right, which is a great way to overcome that feeling of being stuck.

**Remember to put these back before they thaw or you might not get any tea.*

Characters are everywhere: the toy box, the bookshelves, the photographs on your walls. Why not go on a character hunt around your house. How many can you find?



If you enjoyed learning about creating characters, you can find out more at www.inspireculture.org.uk/inresidence