

Therapeutic Storytelling



*101 Healing Stories
for Children*

Susan Perrow





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Dedication

For all children – everywhere ...

Therapeutic Storytelling

Endorsements of Susan Perrow's work

Susan Perrow's message is beautiful and powerful in its simplicity. Tell children stories and they will listen to the wisdom these stories have to offer. What more gentle and effective way to reach 'our' children can we as parents and professionals ask for? This is essential learning for parents and all those who find themselves responsible for the care and development of children.

Christina Crawford, Educational Psychologist, Ireland

The therapeutic workshop was great! I got a lot of joy out of watching the beaming and smiling faces of the 90 attendees as they were leaving. They felt so empowered! The beauty of your ideas on Therapeutic Storytelling is that they are so simple to implement and *so amazingly effective!* Personally you have opened another door for me as far as the *imagination* of the child is concerned. Therapeutic storytelling will be another addition to our curriculum.

Bijal Shah, Principal of 'My School – Montessori', Nairobi, Kenya

Susan's therapeutic storytelling workshop gave life to the theory put forth in her book. Her stories are so beautifully written, so creative and soul touching. On the second day of the workshop many participants shared their stories specially written for their specific situation, it is a wonder that surprised the writers themselves since they have never thought they could do it. Through the workshop, Susan was so enthusiastic in sharing the wonderful results creative healing storytelling can bring, and helped us believe in our own capacity for story composing! With the book as a handbook that we can always refer to, life with our children will be more interesting and enjoyable!

Scarlet Cheng, Teacher/Parent, Beijing, China

The two workshops last weekend were *fantastic!* Thank you so much for a wonderful, entertaining, interesting, thought provoking and inspiring weekend. I think it went so well just because of who you are and your lovely open, non-judgemental and centred way of being. And of course because of the stories you told – just so engaging! I so love what you are doing with these stories – they are a rich tool to touch children's souls – what a blessing! I would love to be as fluent as you are in creating them. I am inspired to practice though.

Monique Rutherford, Child Psychotherapist & Parent Counsellor, Noosa, Queensland

The Therapeutic Storytelling workshop was very inspiring. Wide-ranging and helpful. This course may really make a difference to a lot of children's lives! Susan is an excellent teacher ... clear, imaginative, uplifting.

Ursula Godber, Primary School Teacher, Ireland

Just a quick note to let you know how much I enjoyed your class on storytelling for children held here in Coffs Harbour. I was the only father there, which I felt was a waste, because as a father and a storyteller, I benefited greatly from your kind insights, advice and wisdom. Thanks for taking the time to help us be better parents.

Anthony Cougle, Parent, Moonee Beach, Australia

Though I often make up little stories and rhymes for my children, I have felt quite overwhelmed each time I wanted to come up with a story for a particular challenging behaviour or situation regarding my child. Your simple technique has taken the 'overwhelm' out of it and brought life and magic into writing a healing story. I look forward to my journey in therapeutic 'storying'. Thank you again for your 'healing' gift.

Shalini Christodoulou, Teacher/Parent, Singapore

I wanted to extend a deep thank you for sharing your gift and experiences – and acknowledge the inclusive way that you facilitated so that we could all find the storyteller within and all support each other. I feel like a juicy plum this morning – alive, inspired and positive – and also like I am on a very fertile, strong juicy plum tree sharing life's journey with so many other plums. I felt a oneness of universal consciousness in a way never before through your stories – the symbols and metaphors that we all connected with are so strong and timeless. Bless you and thank you.

Monique, Social Worker, Melbourne, Australia

Recently I was lucky enough to participate in one of Susan Perrow's therapeutic storytelling workshops held at our local school. Susan has a talent for both creating stories, and helping others to find their storytelling voice. She is a storyteller extraordinaire! Our day was enveloped in 'metaphor'. I was instantly captivated! Susan shared many of her own personal stories and successes and a little of her journey, which held us all spellbound.

Susan took us through a process and story structure that helped us to write therapeutic stories and become a storyteller. Many people in the group were new to this idea, and to watch them leave with an extra boost of confidence and a spring in their step, as they put on their invisible storyteller hats, was just delightful. I know my hat received a big shiny polish!

Amber Greene, Educator, Writer and Parent, NSW, Australia

Word Angel

A poem from Africa written by Dr Claire Inala (Kenyan doctor and playwright – 'Healing with Words and Hands') after attending a Therapeutic Storytelling workshop

my friend the story teller
with her magic special gift
a treasured bless-ed healer
armed with words to mend the rift

between the heart & head & soul
that divides us all inside
she coaxes out our sacred dreams
(before you know it, you've complied)

and language is no barrier
to her rich enchanting spell
if you listen careful, closely
old, ancient wisdoms she will tell

she gathers hope and ties it up
in ribbons of coloured yarn
the telling of the woven tales
lifts e'en the most forlorn

a gentler salve could not be found
to ease the pain of life
Give Praises! for our precious one
mother, daughter, friend & wife.

Foreword

Therapeutic Storytelling

The 21st century is a time of great challenge and uncertainty. What can we offer our children and young people to prepare them for such uncertain futures?

The current pace of change is hard to keep up with, and we can easily feel we are living in a 'time pressure-cooker'. Since the Industrial Revolution, our concept of time – once grounded in natural cycles – has become dominated by economics, exemplified by such phrases as 'time is money,' or 'buying time'.

In our post-modern age, speed addiction comes to expression in fast foods, lightning-speed internet, instant global text messaging, speed-reading, and the 'three-quick-steps-to-spiritual-enlightenment' culture. To cope with all this there are drugs to help us keep up, and other drugs to calm us down again. As a psychologist, educator and futurist, I am only too aware of the short-termism that pervades our culture. As they rush their children from one activity to the next to ensure they remain 'competitive', I ask myself how much quality time do parents actually spend with them? An alarming number of parents today believe they 'don't have time to tell their children stories'. Affluent parents seem to have subscribed to the advertising myth that they can buy their children's happiness with the latest computer and mobile phone, and that ready-made screen images can replace imagination and the child's creative response to the world.

Yet what little children really need, more than anything, is to sit on their parents' lap, or on the floor at their feet, and listen to them telling stories. Susan Perrow knows this, and her book challenges us to realize it.

Children born in the last 10–15 years in affluent countries have never known a world without communication technologies of all

kinds. Even in Africa, as Susan has found in her research there, television has replaced the grandmother in the role of family storyteller.

There is growing evidence that children who are overexposed to computers and other screen-mediated forms of communication become increasingly disconnected from the world around them. Paradoxically, all this 'connectivity' impedes real interaction with their human and natural surroundings. A growing number of kindergarten children have 'delayed' language, more than likely related to the reduction in face-to-face, and human-voice contact: an educational time bomb we can expect to see exploding over the coming decade.

Marshall McLuhan suggested decades ago that every advance in technology dulls a former human capacity. For example the increasing reliance of young people on email and mobile phone text messages for communication dramatically truncates the richness of living friendships. By contrast, a live storyteller sitting with children offers the rich nuances of voice, intonation, eye contact, gestures, facial expression, body language, emotional response and soul warmth.

Futurist and peace researcher Elise Boulding has suggested that the more vividly we can envision our preferred futures, the more likely we are to act to create that future. The more children's imaginations are stimulated through storytelling and the arts, the more they will develop the capacity to picture what they want for themselves and the world, and act creatively to achieve it.

Globally, regionally and locally there is a great need for new perspectives. Many people perceive current global tumults – environmental, psycho-social and political – as evidence of a breakdown of culture, and with it the loss of safety and comfort. Others, like myself, also perceive signs of a luminous breakthrough.

Susan Perrow's second book, *Therapeutic Storytelling*, is one of those signs of breakthrough that give us hope that we can actually transform some of the problems we have created for ourselves. Because of the fragmented and overly abstract style of education most of us have received, what we 'know' is often disconnected from our hearts, thwarting our courage and thus our ability to make creative changes. Susan shows us that stories can address this lack. Stories have the power to reconnect what we know in our heads with what we feel in our hearts; they can inspire, encourage and empower us to take the actions we know we must take to make this world a better place for future generations.

Stories can open and reconnect children with their hearts. This in itself is therapeutic. By addressing children's difficulties through their actual content, Susan's therapeutic stories go even further. This book will change the lives of children and at the same time inspire the adults who read it to create and tell more healing stories.

Jennifer M. Gidley PhD, Research Fellow, RMIT University,
Melbourne. President of the World Futures Studies Federation



Introduction

Stories Know the Way

Many years ago an American Indian storyteller called Floating Eagle Feather visited the east coast of Australia. I was one of the privileged listeners at his storytelling session. He welcomed the audience by saying, *Some people think the world is made of atoms ... but I think the world is made of stories.*

I am still pondering this statement ... it was one of several catalysts that changed my life's path into that of a storyteller's quest. This quest, this path, this passion for storytelling, has wound its way through many levels and many stories – personal stories, family stories, community stories, my own writing, and stories from many cultures, past and present. Like the wellspring of stories for the world, it is infinite – I cannot begin to wonder where it will end. All I know is that my deepest satisfaction comes from connecting with others through stories.

In my first book of therapeutic stories, *Healing Stories for Challenging Behaviour*, I shared this passion through my experiences as a teacher and a parent, then I described a framework for writing therapeutic stories, followed by a collection of 80 stories for challenging behaviour and challenging situations. The book found its way into different parts of the world and has been translated into several languages. It opened new doors for me in my work and led (and is still leading!) me to run workshops in many different countries, from China to Africa, Europe to America, and across my own sunburnt land, Australia.

This second book, *Therapeutic Storytelling*, contains story ideas from these workshops (that I have developed into full stories), plus stories written by workshop participants (teachers, therapists and parents worldwide), plus some more stories from my own collection.

The aim of this book is twofold: to help you in the process of creating your own *healing* stories and to share with you many examples of

completed stories that have the potential to address challenging situations and generally nurture and build character. The first section, *Writing Therapeutic Stories*, provides motivational thoughts and tips for creating your own stories to address challenging behaviour, offering a framework of ‘metaphor, journey and resolution’ and new ideas for therapeutic story writing ... work in practice! The second section offers examples of the fruits of such work: 101 Therapeutic Stories for transforming a wide range of challenging behaviour and situations with children.

Categories for healing stories

The 101 stories are divided into different behaviour categories for easy reference – to work with directly, adapt, or use as models for the creation of your own tales. Each story is preceded by brief notes, including an age guide and suggestions for use. As in my first collection, the categories cover many forms of commonly identified challenging behaviour, from anger/aggression through dishonesty, obstinacy, and shyness/timidity to teasing and bullying. These categories also include some new themes identified in many workshops the world over, such as anxiety/insecurity, fussiness, intolerance, lack of confidence/resilience, silly/inappropriate speech, and difficulties relating to toileting/bedwetting.

Healing stories, not moralizing

In addressing what we regard as ‘challenging behaviour’ it is vital to enter imaginatively into the child’s own experience rather than externally imposing a moral code in the form of ‘cautionary tales’ – i.e. working through fear of consequences. The *healing* approach gives the child an impetus to change forms of behaviour from within by developing imaginative metaphorical pictures that he makes his own – a much more durable and effective approach than merely urging conformity to external ‘standards’. Healing stories stand at the very opposite end of the scale from the imposition of norms. They are gentle and child-friendly, respecting the child’s own experience and affirming his desire and capacity to grow in all kinds of hidden and surprising ways.

There can never be a list of stories to suit every situation. 101 stories may sound like a comprehensive collection, but this is just the ‘tip of the iceberg’ of therapeutic stories. Behaviour is relational and contextual. It can rarely be addressed in isolation. Each child exists and develops within an intricate web of relationships and environments – family, school, community and global. It is you, the practising reader,

who is in direct touch with the relationships, context and individual characteristics of the children whom you parent, counsel and teach; and therefore you alone are best placed to create stories for specific, individual needs. The first section, *Writing Therapeutic Stories*, is therefore intended to motivate you to become a story-maker yourself. The imaginative act of creating a story for a particular child or group communicates itself subtly to the children concerned. At some level they will feel affirmed by your care and effort.

In writing your own stories, a positive starting point is to hope that your healing story may simply help a situation ... and what a bonus if it can! I have learnt that the therapeutic story-maker should always work out of this 'helping' intention, with the occasional blessing that a story may indeed 'heal'. Even though this book is about 'healing' stories, I believe it is important to keep this 'helping' intention close to your writer's heart, and beware of an over-expectant or insistent attitude. There is unlikely to be any 'quick fix' for problem behaviour, and storytelling is just one of many possible therapeutic approaches and strategies.

Stories can't be seen as magic pills to heal or fix all problems. To thoroughly address the bigger picture requires a study of the complex 'tapestry' of discipline. Stories have the potential to be light-filled threads in this tapestry, but its underpinning threads are conscious and consistent approaches in caring for children.

Age range for stories

The 101 stories are mostly suitable for ages three through to ten years. It should be stressed however that stories don't have to be squeezed into a single age box. Sometimes a story written for a child may have a transformative effect on an adult. Sometimes an adult who is attending one of my workshops has an urgent need to write a story for their own adult situation, present and/or past. Examples of this are shared though the book. Ideas for using therapeutic stories with teenagers and adults are also included. My framework and techniques for writing stories can indeed be used for all ages.

Stories for global and community situations

As well as stories for challenging behaviour experienced at home and school, the range of examples in *Therapeutic Storytelling* include some for global, national and community challenges.

My work with therapeutic story-writing has led me to many countries over the years, and as I travel I encounter ever more requests for therapeutic stories specifically oriented to our 'global crises'. My first reaction to these requests was 'How can a story help here? World crises are too big for a story!' Then, after one fortnight in 2011, hearing of the horrendous earthquake in New Zealand followed by the tsunami in Japan, I felt motivated to give it a go! I was travelling in China at the time, without my trusty laptop, so I opened a real notebook, and picked up a real pen and started to write, following my framework of 'metaphor, journey and resolution'. Once my resolution was clear (*strength in caring, strength in togetherness*) the metaphors fell into place and *The Shadow Giant* was born (page 71).

Some stories for national situations include *The Rainbow Horses* (page 171), an anti-discrimination story written for the children of the new South Africa, and *The Rose and the Thorn* (page 74), a story for the children of Norway.

An example of community uses for stories is *The Sparkling River* (page 76). This was written after the devastation caused by the Brisbane River floods, to help give Brisbane children a sense of hope by understanding cycles of destruction and recovery. Another is *The Ants and the Storm* (page 75), a post-earthquake story for the children of Chengdu in China. Another is *The Keeper of the Lake* (page 239), written to encourage community involvement in the protection of a sacred aboriginal site near Byron Bay, Australia.

There seems to be no limit to where and how a story can help – anywhere and everywhere – stories know the way!

Stories know the way

In March 2011 I visited Beijing to run workshops and meet with the Chinese editor working on a translation of my first book. The Chinese version changed the title to *Stories Know the Way*. I was very happy to hear this. It captures the essence of my work with therapeutic story-making.

While in Beijing I was privileged to meet a Tao master and several Tao students who introduced me to an awareness of life and understanding that seems to correspond strongly with imaginative story-work. The Tao path creates conditions that favour 'letting things happen' (in a natural way) while many Westerners attempt to create conditions that 'make things happen'. This Tao path shows profound insight into a way of being that is humble, natural and simple.

The Tao intuition of ‘the natural way’ and ‘natural simplicity’ is a healthy foundation for story-making for children. Tao seems beyond words – I have been told it must be experienced first-hand to be known. However, in an attempt to capture it in language, the best description seems to be that it combines both feeling and thought. This resonates strongly with my personal experience of story-writing ... using my thoughts in a way that help me ‘feel’ a good story rather than intellectually plan it. This intuitive process is usually almost impossible to describe – I have only been able to suggest (to eager storytelling students) that once it has been experienced, it will be understood.

Walking in nature, being in nature, is usually the best way for me to ‘feel’ or ‘hear’ a new story. Mother Nature gives great help here – she offers a natural way into story-writing. The Bushmen people in Africa (my other home apart from Australia) also connect story with nature and feelings. They define a story as being ... *like the wind – it comes from a far-off place and we feel it.*¹

Livo and Rietz, in their book *Storytelling: Process and Practice*, define a story as *an ancient, perhaps natural order of mind.*² This description seems to link directly with the Tao understanding of ‘the natural way’. It certainly gives an insight into the importance of stories in our world, and the importance of our children hearing stories – in the past, present and future!

Stories feel the way, stories know the way, stories can find the way. Stories can find their way right into your soul, just as water finds a way through a crack in the wall when nothing else can! And like water, stories rejuvenate and are vital for healthy growth and development.

Many stories together make a ‘well’ for life travellers to dip into and continue on their journey, enlivened and refreshed ...

... travellers from Australia

... travellers from Africa

... travellers from China

... travellers from the East and travellers from the West ...

... travellers from the North and travellers from the South ...

I hope that the travellers who read this book will be enlivened and refreshed as they dip into the well of stories; and that these stories will find their way into them as a living, creative resource – one never fixed but ever-flowing. I also hope they will be encouraged to create their own ‘stories that know the way’.

Susan Perrow

www.healingthroughstories.com

SECTION A
WRITING THERAPEUTIC STORIES

1

A Construction Model for Story Writing

The aim of this section is to share a construction model for story-making that has helped me and many workshop participants create healing stories for children. This was outlined in my previous book but is presented here again with updated observations and experiences based on ‘work in progress’ over the last five years.

My intention is to provide a guide for story-making, but not a ‘fail-safe formula’ – stories are alive and don’t like to be boxed or categorized. Time and time again with my story writing and in my workshops I find I make and then break any formulas or rules!

If there is any fixed guide at all, it is one that encourages ‘intuit and play’. This requires letting go and playing – something that our often over-critical adult consciousness finds hard to do. The story-maker needs openness, trust and stillness of mind, ‘letting things happen’ (in a natural way) rather than trying too hard to ‘make things happen’. As a story-maker I try to ‘feel’ a good story rather than plan it intellectually.

While very hard to describe such an intuitive process – as difficult perhaps as describing water – the first chapter in this section is a humble attempt to give the process some loose form and help readers to experience it.

The second chapter in this section, ‘Getting the Story Juices Flowing’, provides some ideas and exercises to help open up your creativity, and to encourage a playful approach to story-making.

Both chapters in this first section use my previous book as a foundation guide – there is detail to be found in *Healing Stories for Challenging Behaviour* that I have not repeated here – as in the

chapters on 'Understanding Story and Behaviour', 'Different Stories for Different Ages', 'Truth and Morality' and a full section (five chapters) on 'The Art of Storytelling'. I recommend using this earlier book in conjunction with *Therapeutic Storytelling*.

What is a therapeutic story?

All stories are potentially healing or therapeutic. If a story makes people laugh or cry – or both! – the laughter and tears can be healing. Folk- and fairytales, through their universal themes and resolutions, have healing possibilities. They can offer hope and courage for facing the trials of life, affirming our capacity to change and develop.

David Suzuki, a world-renowned environmentalist, suggests that stories can help in 'healing' our earth by building a spiritual connection to 'place'. If a simple nature story, for example, can help connect children to their local beach, river or forest, they can become more conscious of protecting these and caring for them as they get older. Stories can help develop and strengthen our holistic relationship to the environment.

The very experience of listening to a story, no matter what the content, can be 'healing'. Regular storytelling sessions can develop and strengthen children's concentration, and activate their imaginations. These effects are a healing balm today when children frequently spend many hours in passive mode, watching TV and DVDs. A story requires and stimulates the imaginative creation of inner images, whereas the above media present a fixed, pre-created image that must be accepted by the viewer without invoking his own creative capacities.

Alongside this generally healing potential of stories, specific stories can help or heal behaviour in specific situations. For the purposes of this book, such stories are here described as 'therapeutic'.

If our definition of healing is to *restore to health, bring into balance, become sound or whole*, then therapeutic stories can be described as *stories that return balance and wholeness to a behaviour or situation that is out of balance*.

Therapeutic storytelling is a gentle, easy yet often very effective means of addressing difficult topics with children. The story form offers a healing medium that allows children to embark on an imaginative journey, rather than being lectured or directly addressed about their behaviour. By identifying with the main character or characters, the child is empowered as obstacles are overcome and a resolution achieved.

SECTION B
101 THERAPEUTIC STORIES

This section spans a collection of 101 stories for commonly identified forms of challenging behaviour or other challenging situations. To help you find your way, the pages are organized into the following sixteen categories with suggested stories for diverse possibilities. These categories have been chosen as easy reference, but it is certainly not recommended that they be used as 'labels' for behaviour.

- Anger/Aggression/Hitting/Scratching/Biting
- Anxious/Insecure/Fearful
- Bullying/Exclusion/Teasing
- Death/Dying/Illness
- Disrespect/Lack of Care (self/others/things)
- Disruptive/Restless/Over-excited
- Dishonest/Sneaky
- Divorce/Separation/Blended Families
- Fussiness/Complaining
- Intolerance/Lack of Acceptance (of self and others)
- Lack of Confidence/Resilience
- Sexual Abuse/Sexual Awareness
- Shy/Withdrawn/Low Self-esteem
- Swearing/Shouting/Silly Speech
- Toileting/Bedwetting
- Obstinacy/Lack of Social Sense

The 101 stories include some from contributing writers, some from my own writing collection and some transcribed from traditional folk- and fairytales. Some stories have already been used (with different degrees of success) and have notes documenting their use. Others have been newly written or transcribed for this book. Any correspondence from the use of these stories and/or any of your own therapeutic stories is welcome – www.healingthroughstories.com

The stories are mainly suitable for children aged from three to ten, although some have been used successfully with teenagers and adults. Each story is preceded by notes indicating suggested ages and usage.

Story bones

Each category of stories includes the 'bones' of one or more story ideas. These 'story bones' have been included as story-making exercises for you, the reader. Most of these have come from workshop discussions. Each one includes the outline of a story journey for

you to flesh out and complete if you wish with metaphoric ‘clothes’. These are suggestions only. The stories could be written with many different choices of metaphor and journey.

These stories are only a few drawn from a story well that contains inexhaustible resources. With the help of the first section in this book on Writing Therapeutic Stories, it is my hope that you will explore many more ideas.

Reading or telling

The choice between telling or reading these stories to your child or children is left up to you. Unless it comes naturally to you, storytelling usually requires more effort as the adult has to learn the story first, but some ‘stepping stones’ can help here: telling some parts and reading others; drawing pictures of story sequences while telling; or using puppets in storytelling (see Section 5 of *Healing Stories for Challenging Behaviour* for different ways of preparing and learning stories, and using props and puppets to help in the telling). The wonderful oral tradition of telling stories creates more direct contact between teller and listener, since there is no book intervening in the story experience. Maureen Watson, an indigenous Australian storyteller, says that told stories ‘touch’ the audience in a different way. I have experienced this many times – through eyes, voice and gestures the storyteller weaves invisible threads with listeners, and can ‘hold’ them from start to finish. This ‘holding’ power of storytelling can help develop and strengthen concentration, and hence increase the child’s capacity for learning. In her book *Storytelling with Children*,¹² Nancy Mellon offers fine insights into the value and power of this process.

Although the ‘telling’ experience is undoubtedly a more lively and personal way of sharing a story, both telling and reading are important ways of delivering or presenting stories. There is a place for both. Especially with the dominance of ‘screen’ media in children’s lives today, having stories told and/or read by adults is a wonderful blessing. Sometimes, especially in one-to-one situations, the ‘book’ can be a bridge for the story sharing, bringing a sense of closeness through sitting side by side, or with a young child on the adult’s lap.

If you choose to work with a particular story from this book, an option is to turn it into a picture book using your own (or the child or children’s) illustrations, then read from this newly created story-book.

3

Anger/Aggression/Hitting/ Scratching/Biting

The Rhythm Sticks

This story idea came from a group workshop in Nairobi in response to the need for a therapeutic strategy for a six-year-old boy who was continually hitting others. The use of the drum and rhythm sticks seems a perfect metaphor for the 'hitting'. The story offers a transformation from 'hitting for hurting' to 'hitting for playing'. At the end of the story I have included three music games that I have used for many years with groups of children, aged from two (playgroup) to eight years.

There was once a town famous for its musical fairs. In this town lived a boy who loved to beat the drum. This boy wanted to join the band that played at the fair.

Bim-bam, bim-bam, bim-dam dum, this is how I beat my drum!

But the boy was always playing too loud and too fast – he was always beating his drum too hard and too fast – and he didn't get chosen for the band.

Feeling angry and upset, the boy kicked a hole in his drum, left the fairground and walked into the forest. Oh he was angry! He was so angry he started to hit the trees with his drum sticks.

Bim-bam, bim-bam, bim-dam dee, this is how I beat the tree!

Oh he was angry! He was so angry he started to hit the rocks with his drum sticks.

Bim-bam, bim-bam, bim-dam dock, this is how I beat the rock!

Soon the boy grew tired of hitting trees and rocks. He tried to hit out at a butterfly that was flying by, but fortunately the butterfly changed direction just in time! He tried to hit out at a frog that was hopping by, but fortunately the frog changed direction just in time! He tried to hit out at a tortoise that was sleeping near the path, but the tortoise had such a strong hard shell that he didn't seem to notice – he just kept on sleeping.

Then a golden weaver bird flew in front of the boy. The weaver had some sticks in its mouth. The boy watched as the weaver reached its nest and used the sticks to weave into its tree house. The boy was amazed by the skill of the bird and started to play his drumsticks to the rhythm and movement of the bird working its weaving.

Rickity-tick, rickety-tick, rickety-tick, I click my sticks.

After a while, the boy left the weaver to finish its nest, and he returned through the forest. As he walked along the path, he continued to play the weaver-bird rhythm:

Rickity-tick, rickety-tick, rickety-tick, I click my sticks.

As he came closer to the fairground, the band-leader heard him coming. This is just what we need in our band, thought the band-leader, and he invited the boy with his rhythm sticks to join the rest of the musicians.

Rickity-tick, rickety-tick, rickety-tick, I click my sticks.

At the town fair that year, the boy played beautiful music with his rhythm sticks on-stage with the band. He continued to practise his music, and for his next birthday he was given a new drum. Now he was able to make beautiful music with his rhythm sticks and with his drum.

Rat-a-tat, rat-a-tat, rat-a-tat tum, this is how I play my drum!

Rickity-tick, rickety-tick, this is how I click my sticks.

Rat-a-tat, rickety-tick, I play my drum and click my sticks.

There once was a boy who played his body drum

A hand and finger rhyme that can be chanted as a poem or put to music, and can be repeated several times with 'boy', 'girl', 'teacher', 'mother', 'father', etc.

There once was a boy who played his body drum
 Rat-a-tat, rat-a-tat, rum-a-tum-tum.
 He played on his knees to make a body drum
 Rat-a-tat, rat-a-tat, rum-a-tum-tum.
 Sometimes his elbows, and sometimes his hands,
 Rat-a-tat, rat-a-tat, rum-a-tan-tan.
 He played on his toes and he played on his head
 Rat-a-tat, rat-a-tat, rum-a-ted-ted.
 This little boy loved to play his body drum,
 Rat-a-tat, rat-a-tat, rum-a-tum-tum.

Who wants to play on the great big drum?

This music game can be chanted as a poem or put to music. The game will need a drum – either a real drum (an African jembe is perfect for this), or a pumpkin, or an upturned tin. If playing this with a large group of children, you could choose two children at a time, then sing both names – e.g. 'Katie and Jason want to play on the great big drum' followed by 'They can play it loudly' etc.

Who wants to play on the great big drum?
 Katie wants to play on the great big drum.
 Katie can play it loudly,
 Katie can play it softly,
 Katie can play it very fast,
 Katie can play it slowly.

I step and step and step

This is a joyous music game I was taught many years ago when I was training to be a teacher (in 1976!). It is a great one to use at morning ring time – every child is given an instrument and then the teacher leads them round the circle, doing the actions as the children play the instruments. I have used this with instruments as simple as seedpods (for shaking) and sticks (for clapping together). The children very quickly learn how to be careful when making music – the rule, of course, is no hitting others and

no banging on the floor with the instruments. If this were to happen, the instrument would have to go back into the music basket to rest!

I step and step and step and step, and then I turn around,
 I step and step and step and step then stop without a sound;
 I play down low and I play up high;
 I play to the earth and I play to the sky;
 I step and step and step and step; and then I sit right down.

Baby Hippo's New Teeth

The idea for this story poem came from a group workshop in Nairobi in response to a need for a creative strategy for a three-year-old girl who was always biting others whenever she was upset. It has been written with lots of repetition and rhyme to suit the attention span of this young age group. It was suggested at the workshop that the story could be presented to the child, or to a group of young children, as a simple puppet show (using the child's toys as the puppets).

In China the story has been used by teachers and parents and changed to 'Baby Panda's New Teeth' with animals like 'little squirrel' and 'little monkey' used as friends ... but keeping the tortoise in the last section of the story.

Baby Hippo had new teeth,
 But she wasn't sure how to use them.
 Baby Hippo liked new friends
 But she seemed to always lose them!

When little zebra came to play,
 Baby Hippo bit her friend,
 So little zebra wouldn't stay.
 Little zebra went away.

When little giraffe came to play,
 Baby Hippo bit her friend,
 So little giraffe wouldn't stay.
 Little giraffe went away.

When little baboon came to play,
 Baby Hippo bit her friend,
 So little baboon wouldn't stay.
 Little baboon went away.

Then one day,
 Little tortoise came to play.
 Baby Hippo bit her friend,
 But OUCH – Tortoise’s back was hard and strong,
 OUCH – Baby Hippo didn’t bite tortoise for too long!

Wise little tortoise stayed to play,
 And showed Baby Hippo a new way.
 ‘Come and bite the grass so sweet,
 Grass is good for hippos to eat.’

So Baby Hippo used her teeth,
 To bite and chew the grass so sweet.
 When her friends would come to play,
 The friends would stay and play all day!

The Party in the Jungle

This idea came from a group workshop in Nairobi in response to a need for a story for a six-year-old girl who was always throwing things.

Once upon a time, all the animal friends in the jungle decided to hold a party. They wanted to come together and make music. Each animal had to bring an instrument.

The zebra brought some black-and-white-striped rhythm sticks.
 The impala brought a thin brown flute.
 The elephant brought a long grey trumpet.
 The buffalo brought a fat white horn.

The monkey wanted to come to the party but he couldn’t think of any instrument to play, so he decided to have some fun in a different way. He climbed high up in the palm trees above the party.

Up in my tree a zebra I see, if I throw a coconut what fun it could be.

Each time the monkey would say this, he would throw down a coconut to try to hit one of the animals playing music.

*Up in my tree an impala I see, if I throw a coconut what fun it could be.
 Up in my tree an elephant I see, if I throw a coconut what fun it could be.
 Up in my tree a buffalo I see, if I throw a coconut what fun it could be.*