

# Story Power

A guide to getting your school reading and writing



# Welcome!

Schools are important places for literacy teaching, but they also have another important role to fulfil – to help inspire children to be lifelong readers!


When a school believes in the power of reading for enjoyment, and it allows its children to experience this first-hand, it sparks in them an interest in reading and writing. When you as a school take the time to tell children stories and to read and write with them in fun ways, they experience how literacy can be satisfying and useful.

Do you want to know how to put stories at the heart of your school? Then this Story Power guide is for you! In it you can find suggestions on making stories and reading for enjoyment part of every aspect of school life – from the classroom to the playground; from before school to during school to after school.

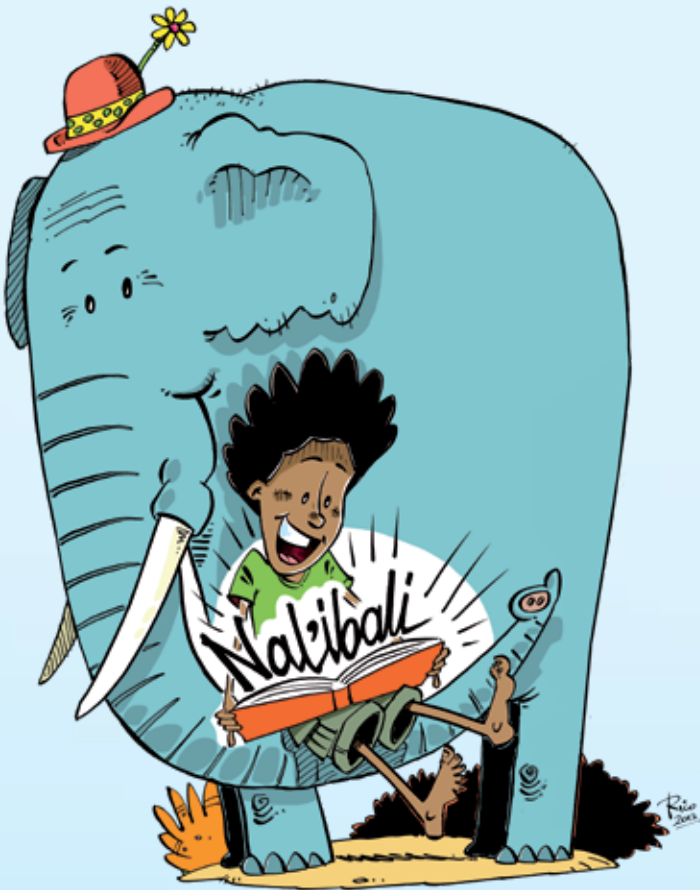
Join us on a reading adventure that inspires children to use reading and writing to achieve their potential.

## *The Nal'ibali team*

**PS:** Look out for other guides in the Story Power series! Go to [www.nalibali.org](http://www.nalibali.org) to find them.



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# Why reading for enjoyment matters



More and more adults are beginning to realise what a difference they can make in children's lives simply by sharing stories with them.

We have known for some time that stories feed the language parts of our brains. But now, brain scans can show how stories stimulate many other parts of our brains too. They suggest that our brains do not see much difference between our reading about an experience and us actually having it. This means that the worlds that we read about in stories, allow us to experience and learn about so much more than we ever could in our own lives! So, reading for enjoyment is an essential part of school, and not just a nice activity tacked on to the end of the school day.

There are lots of other benefits! Here are a few.

- ★ Reading aloud with children is known to be the single most important activity for building the knowledge and skills they need to learn to read.
- ★ Stories expose children to rich, complex language. They deepen children's knowledge of how we use language, teach them vocabulary and grammar, and offer them new ways to express themselves.
- ★ Interesting and exciting stories help stimulate children's imagination and creativity.
- ★ Stories provide examples of how people meet the challenges that face them, and help children develop empathy.
- ★ Children who have stories read to them, find it easier to form abstract concepts in different subjects at school. In other words, listening to stories makes you more brainy!

- ★ Reading aloud to children will not magically rocket them to the top of the school ladder, but it will help them to develop excellent memories, to understand and know more, and to think critically and logically.

When stories and reading feel good to children, they become readers. We all repeat things that are pleasurable. So, when children see and feel the excitement around books and reading at their school, they want to be part of the reading buzz.



# Reading aloud to groups of children

Children are able to understand and enjoy stories that are far beyond their own reading ability when they hear them read aloud well in languages they know. But reading aloud well does not always come naturally! It takes lots of practice to bring a story to life – whether you are reading to a group of children, a class or the whole school. Here are some tips to help you.

## Getting ready

Each group of children you read to is unique, so knowing lots of books will help you find one that they will enjoy. You'll also need to find ways to adjust the way you read a story to suit different settings. Ask yourself these questions to help you prepare.

★ **What story should I choose?** Choose stories that *you* enjoy reading, that match your audience's interests and are in languages that they understand easily, and that expand their world. Beautifully illustrated picture books can be enjoyed by children of all ages. Books with rhyme, rhythm and repetition make good read-aloud books for young children and are also a great way of introducing a new language. Stories with opportunities to read using different characters' voices, often make good read-aloud stories for groups.

- ★ **Who am I reading to?** Think about the ages of the children listening to the story and then adjust the way you read according to this. If you're reading to a group of children who are different ages, then choose a style that will appeal to the younger children in the group.
- ★ **What size group will I be reading to?** Are you going to read to your class or the whole school? If you're reading to a group who can see the pictures clearly or you can move around as you read, then show the children the pictures in the book as you read. When you're reading to a large group, use body movements, sound effects and props to bring your story to life.
- ★ **Where will I be reading?** Decide where you'll read the story and then decide how to help the children feel comfortable and relaxed while you read to them. For example, if you're reading to them outside, seat them comfortably in a shaded space where they can all hear you easily. (You may need to use a loudspeaker if the group is very big!)
- ★ **What story aids can I use?** Pictures, puppets, hats and objects mentioned in the story can all be used to help a story come alive.

Practice makes perfect, so it's always a good idea to read the story aloud a few times before you read it to a group of children!



## Reading the story

- ★ Children may need time to settle before you begin reading. Young children respond well to guessing what the story might be about from the cover picture and title. Ask older children to recall what happened in a novel at the end of your last read-aloud session. Or, invite a child to light a candle at the beginning of the story and another child to blow it out at the end.
- ★ Start by reading the name of the author (and illustrator) so children appreciate that books are created by people just like them!
- ★ Reading aloud is always a performance! Put lots of expression in your voice to create the mood! Pause in the right places to help build suspense.
- ★ Be aware of your listeners and don't read too fast! Allow time for them to look closely at the illustrations or to create a mental picture as you read.
- ★ Draw the children into the story. Ask them what they think might happen next and encourage them to think about how the story links to their own ideas and experiences.
- ★ As they get to know the story, encourage the children to join in as you read.
- ★ When you read a picture book, make sure each child can see the pictures. Pause to show the pictures and allow comments or questions as you read or after you've read the whole book through once.
- ★ If you are reading a novel aloud, read a chapter or part of a chapter each day. Find a place in the story to stop that will make your listeners eager for you to continue reading the next day.



# Reading-for-enjoyment activities

For the children in your class to learn to love reading, you need to read to them regularly – not so that you can assess their listening skills or comprehension, or anything else; just so that they can experience the pleasure of stories and books. When you focus on helping them to explore the joy of reading, important literacy learning happens quite naturally at the same time.

Here are some ideas that you can use with children of different ages to talk about and extend the stories you read to them.



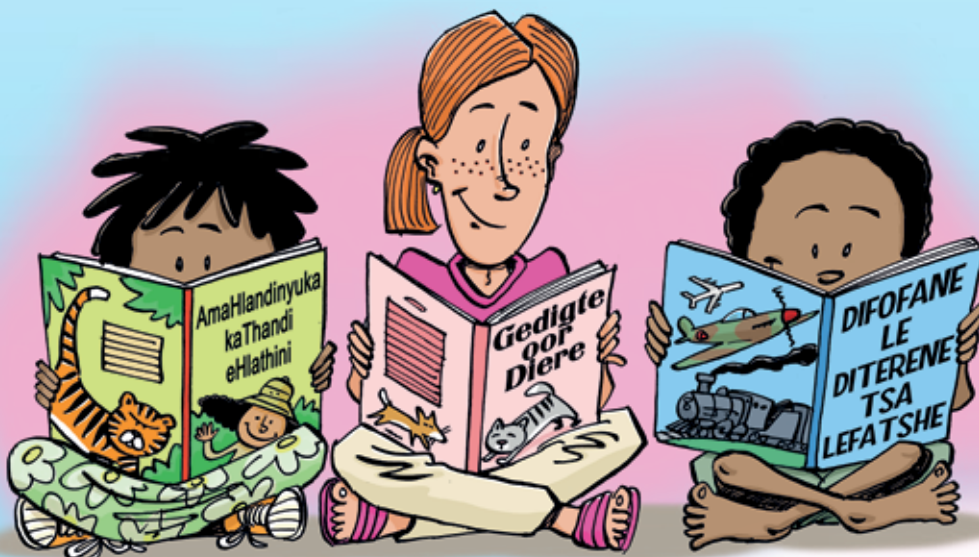
## Talking about books

Talking to children about books is just as important as reading the words to them. Through discussion about the pictures, characters and what is happening in a story, children learn how books work and how to explore them. Rather than trying to teach the children, let the conversation flow naturally. Remember that the idea is to explore books together.

- ★ Help develop the children's prediction skills, which are so important to reading well, by sometimes asking as you read, "What do you think will happen next?"
- ★ Pause while reading so that the children can comment on details in the illustrations that interest them.
- ★ Deepen the children's understanding of a story by asking open-ended questions.

These kinds of questions have no right or wrong answers and they help children to think and talk about stories. For example, "How would you feel if ...?", "If you were him, what would you have done?", "Why do you think she did that?", "What does that remind you of?"

- ★ Allow children to ask their own questions too. Answer these questions if you can or find answers together by re-reading the relevant parts of the story.
- ★ Encourage the children to think about the story by commenting on characters and events. For example, "I wonder why she did that?" and "I don't think I would have been as brave as Tselane if I had seen that scary giant at my front door!"





## Extending the story

Here are some ideas for extending the stories you read aloud. Choose the ones you think the children in your class will enjoy the most and the ones that are best-suited to their ages.

- ★ Invite the children to act out the story in groups.
- ★ Turn a story into a play. With the children, choose and write down what the characters will say, and then they can take turns reading the different characters' parts in the play.
- ★ Make puppets, or clay or playdough figures of the story characters with the children. Then let them use these to retell the story in their own way, or to create a new story of their own.
- ★ Suggest that the children draw a picture about the story, or one inspired by it. Encourage them to write about their picture and/or copy the sentences from the story that go with their picture.
- ★ Let the children write a letter or an email to one of the story characters. Or, suggest that they write a letter from one story character to another.
- ★ Let the children draw a comic strip of their favourite scene from a book.
- ★ Suggest that they write a diary entry that one of the story's characters may have written.
- ★ Encourage the children to design a new cover for the book.
- ★ Ask the children if there is a quote in the story that they particularly like. Let them copy it out and then display these quotes. Find time for the children to read these to the rest of the class too.

## Other book activities

- ★ Let the children give a "sales talk" where they pretend to sell a book that they've read to other children in the class.
- ★ Invite the children to make story-themed bookmarks. Ask them to write the book title and author's name on one side, and a brief summary of the story on the other side.
- ★ Let older children keep a record of the stories they have read on a reading log. You can download one from the "Story supplies" section of the Nal'ibali website: [www.nalibali.org](http://www.nalibali.org). Younger children can draw a picture of the cover of the books they've read (or pretended to read) and then keep these in a folder or cardboard box.

# Stories as part of the curriculum



Have you thought about how to use stories to strengthen children's learning in different subjects? Here are a few ideas for doing this. Choose the ones that best suit the ages of your children.

## Ideas for language activities

These ideas can be used in home language and additional language lessons.

- ★ Create a story-centred classroom by starting and ending each day with a story.
- ★ Poems tell stories too. Let the children read a poem and then act it out, or they can draw pictures that are inspired by the poem, or add their own verses to it. You can also ask the children to write their own poems and when they have finished, they can share them by whispering them to a few classmates.
- ★ Help the children explore how to create different kinds of texts. They could work in groups to create a TV news report about one of the events in a story. Or they could write a list of interview questions and then interview a classmate who pretends to be a character from the story.
- ★ Create a multilingual word wall. Encourage the children to write down interesting words that they've read in stories and add them to the wall.
- ★ Encourage the children to imagine that they are going on a journey with one or more of the characters in a story. They can draw pictures and write lists of the things they will need to take with them on the journey. (If necessary, let younger children tell you what they want you to write for them on their lists.)
- ★ Invite the children to write a description of the appearance and personality of their favourite character from a story you have read together. Or, let them draw a picture of their favourite characters and discuss each one with some classmates.
- ★ Are there things that happen in the story that the children are curious about? For example, why a character made certain choices. Suggest that they write a letter to this character asking for more information – and then they can write the character's response to this letter!
- ★ After reading a story, invite the children to write a different beginning or ending for it. (For example, if the story's ending is sad, write a happy one.) Or, they could write the first few paragraphs of a chapter that follows on from the end of a novel.
- ★ Collect lots of small, easy-to-find objects, like a feather, hairclip, rubber band, pencil, addressed envelope, stone, sock and spoon. Let each child choose one of the objects and imagine and write its "life story", for example, who it belonged to, how this person used it, how they came to own it and where it came from before they owned it.





## Story ideas for other subjects



- ★ Bring History to life by reading stories about events that happened in the past. Stories about great discoveries and the lives of scientists, doctors, leaders and inventors provide role models as well as information.
- ★ Traditional stories are a wonderful way to get to know how people from different places and a different time understood the world around them.
- ★ Read a story that is set in another country and then let the children use the Internet and information books to find out more about this country.
- ★ Let the children use maps and/or atlases to find the places they read about in stories or to trace the journey of a story character.
- ★ Many children face challenging situations, like being on the receiving end of prejudice, or the death of a loved one, or divorce.

Stories give us a great starting point to discuss things that form part of Life Skills/ Life Orientation that are sometimes difficult to talk about. Asking open-ended questions about a story, offers a safe way for children to think and talk about their personal concerns, emotions or ideas. Stories can help children to better understand a challenging situation, discover how to cope with it and explore what options are available to them.

- ★ Stories offer lots of visual art opportunities. For example, children can draw and paint pictures inspired by the story to illustrate parts of the story, or make models of scenes from the story using clay or recycled waste materials.



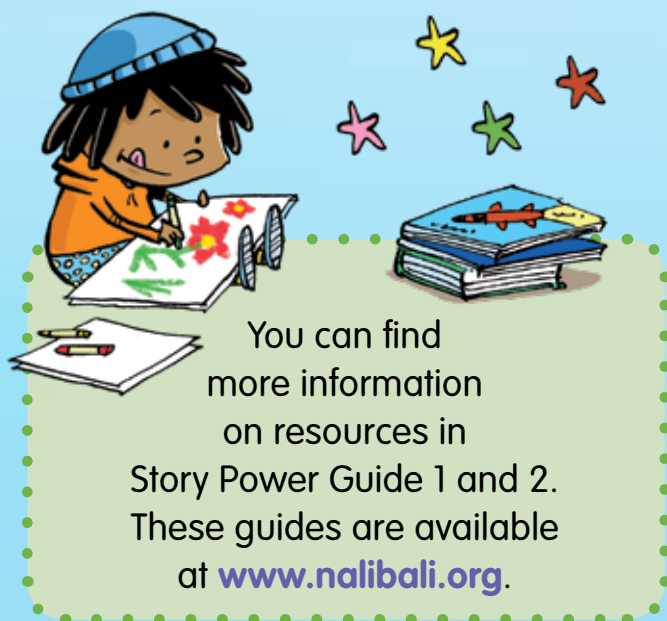
# Resources and reading for enjoyment



Any book that children enjoy, is a good book because it encourages their love of reading and stories.

## Finding reading resources

- ★ Have as many different types of reading materials as possible for children to choose from: picture books, novels (for older children), information books, biographies, poetry, children's magazines, and the bilingual Story Corner stories and cut-out-and-keep books from the Nal'ibali Newspaper Supplement.
- ★ Nothing beats reading a story in your home language, so make sure that you have books in the children's home language/s as well as in their additional language.
- ★ Choose books that suit the interests and reading levels of the children in your class.
- ★ Remember that you can read books more than once! Children often enjoy having their favourite stories re-read to them.
- ★ Reading, writing and drawing go together! So, make sure that you always have a good supply of paper, crayons, pens and pencils in your classroom.



You can find more information on resources in Story Power Guide 1 and 2. These guides are available at [www.nalibali.org](http://www.nalibali.org).

## Displaying books

Book displays invite children to try out books! They highlight the books that are available for them to choose from when they want to read.

Display books that you want the children to notice. These may be books related to a particular holiday, celebration or a theme. Or, create a display of books that have been read and reviewed by the children!

Remember!

- ★ Display books in all the languages the children speak.
- ★ Include the books that you have read aloud so that the children can explore these on their own and with friends.
- ★ The display needs to be at the children's head height so that they can see and reach the books easily.
- ★ Keep the display interesting and fresh by changing the books every one to two weeks. (You can reuse books as part of a later display.)

Besides using traditional bookshelves or a small, low table, there are other attractive ways to create a book display. For example:

- ★ Hang picture books over a washing line strung low from one side of the classroom to the other.
- ★ Make bookshelves from plastic guttering attached to a wall and display books on these.
- ★ Use an old kitchen dish-drying rack and display some of the books in the slots usually used for plates.

## Caring for books

Books are precious and so it is understandable that we want them to last. But we also need children to read them and they can't do that if they're kept locked up! Children need to spend time looking at or reading books on their own. It is natural for their favourite books to become worn after a while.

Here are some suggestions of ways to help children learn to take care of books so that they can be enjoyed over and over again.

- ★ We cannot expect children to treat books well if they do not love stories! When you spend time reading and enjoying stories with children, they soon learn to treasure books.
- ★ Children learn more by watching us than by being told what to do. So, if you don't treat books well, you can't expect children to do so! Show them how to treat books. For example, as you read to them, turn

the pages carefully, and when you have finished reading a story, return the book to its place on the bookshelf.

- ★ Encourage age-appropriate book behaviour. For example, we can expect seven-year-olds to turn the pages of a book gently, but many five-year-olds are still learning to do this.
- ★ Help children learn to care for books by creating special places to store them. You can use shelves that are easy for them to reach, as well as decorated cereal boxes, shoe boxes, plastic ice-cream containers and baskets.

As with most things in life, learning to take care of books involves time, practice and encouragement. Children will learn this so much faster if they experience the pleasure that reading and books offer.



### Where to get free stories

- ★ Nal'ibali: [www.nalibali.org](http://www.nalibali.org), [www.nalibali.mobi](http://www.nalibali.mobi)
- ★ Bookdash: [www.bookdash.org](http://www.bookdash.org)
- ★ African Storybook: [www.africanstorybook.org](http://www.africanstorybook.org)
- ★ FunDza (for teenagers): [www.fundza.co.za](http://www.fundza.co.za), [www.live.fundza.mobi](http://www.live.fundza.mobi)

# More languages, more resources

Being read to in your own language should not be an optional extra for children. It is really an essential and powerful part of learning language and developing literacy. When you regularly read to children in their home language/s, you give them a strong language foundation that makes all learning easier.

If you don't understand what you are reading, then you are not really reading – no matter how well you can say the words on the page! It takes many years to learn another language well. So, because understanding is at the heart of reading, children need to listen to stories being read in their home language/s. They can then concentrate completely on the flow of the story instead of struggling to understand a language they don't know properly.

You should also read some stories to children in their additional language – this helps them learn the new language.

And the more languages you have in your classroom and your school, the more resources you have to draw on! Celebrate and use all the languages in some of these ways.

- ★ Sing songs and say rhymes in the home language/s of all the children, and then gradually introduce them in their additional language too.

- ★ Surround children with print in all their languages by making your own bilingual or multilingual posters on topics that interest them. Or, write rhymes, songs and riddles in different languages onto large sheets of paper and display them.
- ★ Use all the languages that you can speak and read, to read aloud to the children. If not all of the children know these languages, use another adult as an interpreter to translate for you after you have read each page.
- ★ Use a cellphone to record parents, grandparents and other caregivers telling and/or reading stories in their home language/s – then let the children listen to these stories.
- ★ Let the children who speak the same home language, read and talk about storybooks together in groups.
- ★ Create a message wall where teachers and children can write messages to each other in the language of their choice.



Find stories in eleven languages at [www.nalibali.org](http://www.nalibali.org) and [www.nalibali.mobi](http://www.nalibali.mobi). Find ideas for creating a print-rich environment in Story Power Guide 2, available at [www.nalibali.org](http://www.nalibali.org).

# Making stories part of school life



Let the children at your school experience storytelling and reading regularly as a part of their lives at school – not just in the classroom, but at other times too.

## Before school

- ★ Encourage parents and other caregivers to read and tell stories to children on their way to school. They can enjoy stories in all eleven languages on their cellphones at [www.nalibali.mobi](http://www.nalibali.mobi).
- ★ Create a space for picture books where older children who arrive at school early can sit with younger children and read stories to them.



- ★ Use your school's intercom system for regular storytelling sessions. Teachers and older children can read or tell a story while the rest of the children enjoy listening to it in their classrooms.
- ★ Organise fun book activities for break (interval) times. For example, have a book hunt. Photocopy the covers of about ten of the children's favourite books. On the back of each photocopy, write clues that tell everyone where they need to look to find the next hidden book cover. Then hide the book covers in different places in the playground and let the children have fun using the clues to find them all.
- ★ Start a #Get-Caught-Reading campaign. Let the teachers on playground duty at break time use their cellphones to take photos of children they see reading during break. Print out the photos and display them on a notice board. Create your school's own special "I got caught reading" stickers using self-adhesive labels and give one to each child who is photographed!

## During school

- ★ Turn at least one school assembly a month into a story-focussed one. Arrange for a staff member to tell a story, let a group of children act one out, or ask a class to share with the rest of the school what they have been doing to develop a love of reading.

## After school

- ★ Make reading for enjoyment part of what children do after school too by starting a reading club at your school. You can find out how to do this in Story Power Guide 2, available at [www.nalibali.org](http://www.nalibali.org).



# Special story celebrations

Keep the story spirit alive at your school by celebrating special days throughout the year and hosting other story events. Plan to celebrate one or two of these special literacy events each year, or choose others that you know of.

**World Read Aloud Day:** February/March each year

**International Mother Language Day:** 21 February

**Storytelling Day:** 20 March

**World Book Day:** 23 April

**Get-Caught-Reading Month:** May

**Book Lovers' Day:** 9 August

**International Literacy Day:** 8 September

**International Picture Book Month:** November

## Ideas for events

★ **Storytellers on tour.** Set aside time over a few days for the children in one class to practise telling a story. Then form small groups that go from classroom to classroom giving a storytelling concert to the children in other classes.

★ **Author and illustrator visits.** Invite authors and/or illustrators to visit your school to read to the children from one of their books, and then chat about how they go about writing and/or illustrating their books.



★ **Book making.** Host a “make a book” family day. Provide lots of paper, crayons, pencil crayons, pencils and pens and invite the children and their families to come to school to make their own books. Everyone can make their own books, or they can work in pairs or small groups to create books.

★ **Dress up.** Let the children come to school dressed up as their favourite story characters. (Don’t forget to remind the staff to dress up too!)

★ **Reading marathon.** Find out how long your school can keep reading without stopping by hosting a reading marathon. Let three or four children from each class read for about 10 to 15 minutes before the next group starts. Keep doing this for as long as possible to see which class can read for the longest amount of time without stopping.

★ **Storytelling talent show.** Hold a storytelling talent show where children can win book prizes for telling stories to an audience of parents, staff and other children.

Special story events inspire the whole school community, including children, staff, parents and other caregivers, and community members, to keep reading and telling stories.

# Stories all around us

Making stories part of the physical environment of your school sends a clear message to everyone that your school believes in the importance of reading and storytelling. Here are some practical ways you can do this.



- ★ Create a notice board where children can post information about what they are reading. Write a heading for the notice board, for example, “What we are reading” or “Our reading”. Then leave slips of paper next to the board for children to express whatever they want to about a book, and pin this onto the board. The slips should have space for the child to write the title of the book, the author and a comment about it. You might also want to include some star shapes at the bottom for the child to colour in depending on how much they enjoyed the book.
- ★ Find some wall space in the staffroom to display information about books, authors, illustrators, literacy articles and activity ideas for the staff to read. Make sure to change these regularly to keep them fresh and interesting.
- ★ Paint a wall in the playground with chalkboard paint and supply chalk for children to write or draw their stories on it. Children could also have fun continuing another child’s story thread. Encourage them to leave positive comments on the wall about the stories they have read.
- ★ Find inspiring quotes about reading and writing in books and on the Internet. Translate the quotes into all the languages spoken at your school and copy each quote in large writing onto a separate sheet of paper. Display the quotes around your school to inspire everyone, including visitors!

“Great books help you understand, and they help you feel understood.”

*John Green*

“The only important thing in a book is the meaning that it has for you.”

*W. Somerset Maugham*

“If you don’t like someone’s story, write your own.”

*Chinua Achebe*

“You can find magic wherever you look. Sit back and relax, all you need is a book!”

*Dr Seuss*



“A children’s story that can only be enjoyed by children is not a good children’s story in the slightest.”

*C.S. Lewis*

# Connect with Nal'ibali

Become part of the Nal'ibali network and use the power of stories to inspire children to want to read and write.

Visit our different platforms for reading-for-enjoyment resources and tips, and children's stories in 11 languages.

## Nal'ibali supplements

Get your bilingual reading-for-enjoyment newspaper supplement in the *Sowetan*, *Sunday Times Express*, the *Daily Dispatch* and *The Herald*. For more information, visit [www.nalibali.org](http://www.nalibali.org).



## Nal'ibali on radio

Tune in to Nal'ibali's radio programmes on SABC's public stations and enjoy children's stories in all 11 official languages. Visit [www.nalibali.org](http://www.nalibali.org) for the Nal'ibali radio schedule.

## [www.nalibali.org](http://www.nalibali.org)

Visit the Nal'ibali website for free tip sheets, literacy blogs, reading tips and children's stories.



## [www.nalibali.mobi](http://www.nalibali.mobi)

Get storytelling and reading tips, reading club support and stories in 11 South African languages – on your cellphone!



## Social media

Join the conversation on Facebook and follow us on Twitter and Instagram for inspirational reading-for-enjoyment tips and updates. You can also visit our YouTube channel, [www.youtube.com/user/TheNalibaliChannel](http://www.youtube.com/user/TheNalibaliChannel) for useful reading club tips.



Contact us by calling our call centre on 02 11 80 40 80,

or in any of these ways: [www.nalibali.org](http://www.nalibali.org) [www.nalibali.mobi](http://www.nalibali.mobi)

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