



Story Explorers



Have you ever wanted to explore a story? Perhaps you would like to visit the Chocolate Factory with Charlie, ride a polar bear in the frozen North with Lyra or travel to Middle-earth's Lonely Mountain with Bilbo Baggins? Whatever your favourite, our Story Explorers competition, in partnership with ALCS, challenges pupils to **write a short visitor's guide to OR create a map of their favourite story setting in children's literature.**

ALCS is a not-for-profit organisation which looks after the rights of writers to ensure they are recognised and rewarded for the important work they do.

This competition provides a great opportunity to celebrate the wonderful worlds created in children's literature. It will encourage children (and staff) to share their reading experiences and think about what makes a good story setting, using their imaginations to explore a story.

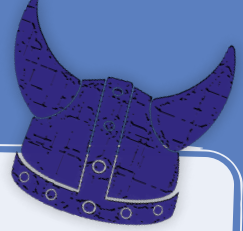
Teachers can use the activities in this resource to support pupils to create a really good entry. The competition could be run as a whole class project or even a whole school celebration of the worlds we visit when we read, sharing favourite stories, settings and authors. Activities would make great displays for the classroom.

Location, location, location!

Start by reading a favourite story aloud. When you finish, ask pupils what they enjoyed about it and what they liked in particular about the setting. Then invite pupils to think about all the settings they have visited through stories. Pupils can choose any kind of story – a picture book, chapter book or graphic novel. This is a wonderful chance to share reading experiences. If they are stuck for ideas, have a look at our Young Readers Programme [booklists](#) for inspiration or visit [Words for Life](#) for more ideas.

You can also download and read the two extracts from stories written by Katherine Rundell which demonstrate the wonder of different story locations – a wintry landscape complete with wolves in Russia (The Wolf Wilder) and the hidden depths of the Amazon jungle (The Explorer).

With so many to choose from, pupils might find it difficult to choose a story setting to focus on! Ask them to think of all the elements that make up a good story setting. What is it about certain stories that make you want to go there? The characters?



The things you could do there? Or the setting; is it scary, magical, funny or historical? Maybe they would like to visit the Gruffalo's deep dark wood, hide with Mr Stink in the garden shed or go to school with Greg Heffley? Pupils can record their ideas about what makes a good story world on the **sheet** provided. Have a classroom debate about what makes a great story setting and which ones are their favourites. Take a vote and use the **template** provided to create a signpost for your class's top five story settings. Or you could ask each pupil to create a signpost for their own top five. This would make a great display!

Each pupil needs to then choose **one** place to focus on for their competition entry.

Explore the story

Story worlds are full of exciting places to go, things to do and people (or maybe magical creatures!) to see. Using the **template** provided, ask pupils to list what they know about their chosen story setting. What are the things that will make the setting exciting to explore? They could think about:

• Location

What kind of atmosphere does the place have? Scary, funny, exciting? Is the setting a 'real' place or fantasy, or a combination of both? Or is the setting historical?

• Climate

Is it a hot or cold place? Will they need to wear special clothes? They might need a costume! What will the weather be like? Maybe the story is set in space!

• Transport

How will visitors get there? If it's a different place in time, they might need a time machine. If the story is set in space, they might need a rocket. Or maybe they'll travel by horse and cart! Is there a special way to explore the world they're visiting? Maybe they'll have to travel by umbrella!

• Attractions

Are there different attractions that could be visited? For example, if you went to Hogwarts you might like to visit Hogsmeade and the Shrieking Shack. Or if you went to Dream Country you might want to see the dream jars. Is there anywhere that should be avoided if it's dangerous?

• Things to do

What can they do while they're there? Ride a dragon with Horrendous Hiccup or go on a motorbike with Gangsta Granny? Or maybe race through the jungle with Mowgli and Baloo the Bear?

• Food

What food can they expect to eat when they get there? Are there places to eat? Will they be able to eat the food or is it dangerous? Maybe they could try Willy Wonka's everlasting gobstoppers or have a picnic with The Famous Five?



• People

Who might they see when they are there? Maybe they'll meet some hobbits, or Tom Gates or Mabel Jones! This is a great opportunity to talk about the characters in the book and think about what kinds of people or creatures live in the story world they're focusing on.

Share the story

Run a hot seating activity where children can share what they know about their favourite story setting. Choose one pupil to sit in the hot seat and the rest of the class can ask them questions about the story setting they have chosen. Teachers could also participate and share their favourite story setting. You could ask them questions like:

- What is your story called?
- Where is the story set?
- Why would you want to visit this story world?
- Can you describe what the story setting is like?
- Who the characters are in the story and what are they like?
- Can you tell us which character you like the least/most and why?
- Can you tell us what kinds of things you can do in the story world?



If children need more ideas about their story setting they could look at the author of their chosen book's website or they might want to read their book again to find out even more about the setting.

Map the story

Every story deserves a good map! Maps help us explore and when it comes to a good story we don't want to miss anything. Think about the maps you remember from children's books - The Hobbit, Lord of the Rings, Narnia, The Marauder's Map in Harry Potter or The Isle of Berk in How to Train Your Dragon. Maps can be really creative and show more than just locations and geographical features - they can bring all the elements of the story to life and show us what it might be like to explore them! Whether they are going to create just a map or a visitor's guide with a map, help pupils think about what they can include. The map could be of a whole world or just a small cityscape, depending on the setting. To help pupils practice creating a story setting map, challenge pupils to create a map of a well-known fairy tale such as Jack and the Beanstalk or Little Red Riding Hood. See our **example** to help you.

Story style - genre activity

Ask pupils to consider what kind of genre the story setting is - is it comedy, fantasy, adventure, science fiction? Play the genre game to help pupils work out what genre their story is. Gather enough fiction books to share between the class. Label each table in the classroom with a specific genre and then ask the pupils to match the books to the right genre. They will need to read the blurb as well as look at the cover and title to help them decide. This will help them develop their understanding of genre and how they will present their entry.

See beyond the surface - writing activity

To help pupils write interesting descriptions of their chosen story setting, ask pupils to list everything they see in the classroom. Then ask pupils to notice the colours/textures/smells/tiny details that they didn't see the first time around. They can either do this verbally or on paper. This will help them think about how their descriptions can create interest. Now see if they can do this in relation to how they describe their chosen story setting! Use the **explorer's word wall** to give them some inspiration for the language they could use to describe their story setting.

Time to explore!

Once the pupils are ready to write their visitor's guide or draw their map, please make a note of the following:

Story Explorer visitor's guides:

- must be about a setting from a published children's book
- should be made by hand or on the computer
- should be created on A4 paper
- can be either in the style of a poster, a folded leaflet or even a booklet
- should have no more than 400 words
- may include images and a map.

Story Explorer maps:

- must be about a setting in a published children's book
- should be made by hand or on the computer
- should be created on A4 paper
- can include words/labels
- can be made using the template provided

Please note entries must not be reproductions of maps from children's books – they must be original designs based on a children's book.

Any kind of research involves using information whether it is fictional or real. You can explore the issues around copyright and plagiarism in our [Get Your Copy Right](#) resource and in particular the pages Guide to Copyright and Guide to Plagiarism.

