

## EARLYPOLY TAL\_707\_EN

Author's name and institution: **Dr. Kristóf Fenyvesi**, Experience Workshop, Finland

Formal / non-formal setting: **Formal**

Most relevant age group: **5–6 years**

Description of the idea / problem / exercise: **Storytime with Shapes**

**Competence Area(s):** Multiliteracy (narrative skills, interpreting symbols), Language/Interaction (oral storytelling, listening), Creativity (imaginative play)

**Materials:** A set of Poly-Universe shapes for each child or pair (ensure a mix of shapes and colors). Optionally, a large felt board or flannel board where shapes with velcro can be placed as story visuals, or simply a table space for each child to lay out a story scene. Also prepare a few example story prompts (short scenarios or themes like “A Trip to the Moon” or “Under the Sea”) to inspire them if needed.

**Learning Goals:** Encourage children to construct and articulate their own stories, enhancing vocabulary and narrative structure skills; use shapes as visual prompts (pictorial literacy) to support storytelling – aligning with **multiliteracy** by interpreting and creating messages with symbols; build social and emotional skills by having children listen to others and ask questions about each other's stories. Fine motor skills are practiced in manipulating the shapes to set up scenes.

**Game Description & Rules:** This activity is an adaptation of the “Stories by Puppets” idea – but instead of puppets, children will use Poly-Universe pieces to create characters and settings for a story:

**Step 1:** Introduction – Explain that shapes can tell stories! Show an example: place a green triangle and a blue circle on the board. Make up a simple tale like, “Once upon a time, Triangle (point to it) was a little mountain, and Circle was the sun in the sky. Every morning, Sun would wake Mountain up with its warm rays...” This whimsical demonstration helps children see how a triangle or circle can represent things in a story (mountain, sun, characters, etc.).

**Step 2:** Create a Scene – Give children time to select some shapes and arrange them into any scene or “picture” they imagine. They can work solo or in pairs for collaborative storytelling. Encourage creative interpretations: a circle could be a face or a ball; a square might be a house or a robot. There is no wrong way – the aim is to ignite imagination. (For example, one child might group a blue circle and a green triangle and decide it's “a turtle with a shell,” while another stacks shapes to make a rocket ship.) Teachers can walk around and ask guiding questions about what they see forming: “I notice you put a small red circle on a big yellow circle – what could that be?” to spark ideas.

**Step 3:** Tell the Story – Now each child (or pair) gets a turn to present their shape story to the group. They describe what they created and weave a short narrative around it. For instance: “This is a castle (square) on a hill (triangle). The circle is a dragon who lives there...” Allow them to move the pieces as they talk (making the circle “dragon” fly, etc.). The other children practice being a respectful audience – listening and then asking one or two questions of the storyteller: “What is the dragon’s name? Why is he on the hill?” etc. This Q&A builds interactive communication, much like the puppet story activity where peers ask the puppets questions.

**Step 4:** (Optional) Group Story – If time permits, do a collective storytelling: Start with a blank board and one shape. Each child in circle adds one shape to the board and adds one sentence to continue a joint story. For example, the first child places a shape and says, “There was once a lonely red circle who wanted a friend.” The next child adds another shape, “Along came a green triangle...” and so on around the circle. By the end, the whole class has built a story together using many shapes. This extension fosters group imagination and listening, as they must build on each other’s ideas.

**Formative Assessment:** Pay attention to each child’s storytelling abilities: Do they sequence events logically? Are they using descriptive language? Note if the child assigns creative roles to shapes (this shows symbolic thinking – a key pre-literacy skill). Also observe audience skills: who listens patiently, who is eager to ask questions or who struggles to wait their turn. These observations relate to interaction competence. You can tape-record or jot down key phrases from their stories to later evaluate language development (vocabulary, sentence length) and narrative structure. After the session, reflect with the class: “How else could we use shapes to tell stories?” The goal is for children to realize that their ideas can be represented in many forms – an important aspect of multiliteracy. The shapes serve as an engaging medium for expression, much like picture books or puppets, and the children’s enthusiasm during this game can indicate growing confidence in communication.