UNIT 25 FANTASY, STORY TELLING
AND DRAMATIC PLAY

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“Once upon a time there lived a king and a queen in a big palace...”
25.1 INTRODUCTION

"Once upon a time there lived a king and a queen in a big palace...."

"This is a story about those times when the trees and the flowers used to speak...."

"In the deep woods there once lived a woodcutter with his wife and seven children...."

Who amongst us is not familiar with sentences such as these? Each one of them revives memories of childhood when we spent many an evening listening to stories. And since then, many of us have relived those moments, as we have told stories to our children. As you see their faces reflecting the feelings being experienced by the characters in the story, you are gazing back at your own childhood. They exclaim in surprise, huddle close to you in fear and dance with joy when the hero emerges victorious. And doesn't the child's enjoyment add to your pleasure in telling the story? A story transports the child into a new world.

Our country has a rich heritage of folk tales, fairy stories and mythological lore that has been passed down from parents to children through generations. However, story telling is being relegated to the background, particularly in the urban context today. The fast pace of urban life leaves very little time for parents to spend in leisure activities with their children. The time they have is spent in teaching the preschooler how to read and write, since these are seen as the skills that will get her an entry into school. Story telling is considered by some people as a waste of time. This view is totally wrong. Listening to stories is an integral part of growing up and the children who have missed it have missed the world of fantasy. You may question: "Is there a need for imagination? Is fantasy important?" Yes, it is. Fantasy helps the child to deal with emotions and to adjust to various situations. And there is no better way of presenting material for imagination than telling a story.

All of us who have grown up hearing and telling stories hardly need an introduction to them. What then, you may ask, is the purpose of this Unit? Through this Unit, we wish to bring out the significance of stories in children's life, how they contribute to their development, and why children enjoy some stories more than others. We will also make a few comments about narration and how to involve children in story telling. Finally, we will talk about dramatic play and how you can organize this.

In the Unit we have dealt with fantasy, story telling and dramatic play under different Sections. However, there are many points of overlap. The division into separate Sections has been done only for ease of discussion.

Objectives

After studying this Unit, you should be able to

- understand the purpose that fantasy serves in a child's life
- explain how stories help the child to develop her personality
- discuss why children like some stories more as compared to others
- describe how the educator can organize children's dramatic play
- select an appropriate story for children, narrate it well and involve them in it
- encourage children to narrate stories and to dramatize
- prepare some supports for story telling and use them during the narration
- understand the value of story telling, dramatization and dramatic play
Off and on, throughout the earlier five Blocks, we have talked about the fantasy play of children. You would remember reading the numerous examples we have given. It would be helpful for you to note down, in the space provided below, what you recollect before you read any further.

If you have observed children at play, you would have seen that they take on different roles. Father, mother, grandfather, doctor, nurse, teacher, magician, fruit seller, farmer, truck driver and bus conductor are some of their favourite characters. By and large, children pretend to be characters they see around them in real life. They fantasize about how it will be when they grow up. They see their parents and other adults and imitate them in their pretend games.

What purpose does this fantasy play serve? There are some people who believe that children use fantasies to get away from the real world, to escape from their immediate problems, creating a world of fantasy in which they are all powerful and all knowing. In such a world, they can do as they please and make others do what they want. This is one perspective, true only in some cases. In general, children use fantasy to know the real world. Children wish to be part of the world of adults and to work, talk, behave, dress, read, write, drive a cycle or plough the land just like the adults. These are the fantasies that they have and this is what their pretend play reflects. Fantasies are children's day dreams, expressing what they want to do and what they want to be. The following episode from a pretend play being enacted by four children playing "House" illustrates this point clearly.

*Rajni, six years old, is sitting by the 'stove' and is 'making chappatis'. She is the 'mother'. The 'father', five year old Kalu, has just returned from the 'fields'. He says: "Oh! I am very tired today. Kamla, give me water."

'Kamla' is the daughter. This role is being enacted by four year old Saroj. She runs and gets an empty tin can, which symbolizes the glass of water. As her 'father' is 'drinking from it', the 'mother' says: "You can eat the meal now. I have made cabbage and chappati.'

Upon hearing this Saroj interrupts the play and says, "No, no, Rajni! Say you have made ladyfinger. I do not like cabbage at all!"

Rajni replies: "Let me say what I am saying Saroj! I have made cabbage, not ladyfinger. You don't get ladyfinger in winter."

Saroj nods her head and resumes her role as the daughter. Rajni goes back to being the wife. She serves food to her 'husband' and 'daughter' and while doing so says: "Do you know that a baby has been born next door?" At this point Saroj imitates the cry of a newborn baby, 'O oo, ooo........!'"
The play continued for the next ten minutes. The 'father' talked about his 'fields' and how the 'crop was growing'. The 'mother' and 'daughter' laid out the 'cots' and after sometime they all went to 'sleep'.

These children from a village in Western India see their parents working on the land and at home everyday. They are familiar with the seasons and the types of vegetables grown during these periods. In a close-knit village community, everyone knows the others and children are aware of the events of marriage or childbirth in their neighbourhood. You can see how closely children's fantasy play reflects the real experiences of everyday life. They have used fantasy to organize and understand the world around them. They have projected into their play what they have seen.

You may have seen children playing the game of buying and selling goods, using newspaper as currency notes or you may have seen them playing as fishermen, repairing their 'boats' and casting their 'nets' into the 'sea'. Through these and similar games, they explore the world of adults and add that part of reality to their experience. Their fantasy grows out of reality and, subsequently, helps them to understand reality better. This is how fantasy helps children to accept reality.

When children pretend to be 'Batman' or 'Superman', what is it that they are learning about the world? How do children come to fantasize about these things? Sometimes they may consider the father, who seems all powerful, as 'Superman'. Then they imagine that they themselves are 'Superman', having power and control. It has also been said that the fantasies of 'Superman' are not the children's own, and that they have been made up by adults and introduced to the children through the mass media. When children read comics and see cartoon films regularly, they come to adopt the characters depicted in them. We would have to observe those children who do not have access to the mass media of television and films, to find out about fantasy not influenced by the media.

Fantasy also helps children to understand abstract facts, a point which adults often fail to realize. An example will bring this out clearly. A preschool teacher once gave a child a set of five wooden blocks of varying heights and asked him to arrange them serially (from the longest to the shortest). The child was unable to do so. Two or three days later the teacher found that the child had arranged the blocks in order, from the longest to the shortest, and was playing with them. She said: "Oh Anil! You have arranged the blocks so well! How did you do so?"

The child, seeing her interest in what he was doing, pointed to each block by turn, beginning from the longest, and said: "This is Papa, this is Mummy, this is my sister, this is me and this is my brother! We are all going for a picnic!" Thus the child's fantasy play with the blocks had helped him to understand the relative size of each—a concept which the teacher had not been able to "teach". In this case, fantasy helped the child to relate his new experience with what he already knew. The child had noticed the differences in height among his parents and siblings. He then applied this to the blocks. Anything is easier to learn when it is related to what is already known. Fantasy is children's way of connecting new ideas to the ones they already have.

Fantasy also helps children to deal with their emotions. This aspect has been mentioned many times in the earlier Blocks. Fantasy makes the child's life richer and gives her courage to face situations. Let us go to the next Section on story telling where this aspect will be discussed in detail.

Check Your Progress Exercise 1

1) The following is a conversation between two friends. Read it carefully. If you were in Suman's place, how would you react to Madhu's complaint? Write your answer in the space provided.

Madhu—"You know Meenu, my daughter, has turned five and she now goes to Class I."
Suman—"That is very nice. You must bring her to my house one day. My daughter, who is four, and she can play together while we talk."

Madhu—"Now that you mention playing, there is one thing which is worrying me a lot. Meenu spends such a lot of time playing with dolls and other toys. Sometimes she wears my saree and makes the dolls wear different dresses and talks to them. And when the neighbor's child comes home, then both of them carry on with their play for a long time. Sometimes they play Teacher, sometimes Market. I think I should stop her from playing too much. She wastes a lot of time. Now that she has joined school she must study."

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25.3 STORIES FOR CHILDREN

Do you remember some of the stories you heard or read as a child? Did you like some more than the others? If so, try and analyse why. Was it the happy ending of the story, the bravery of the hero or was it because the wicked characters are outwitted? Perhaps these were some factors; there may be many others. You may like to note down your thoughts on why you liked certain stories.

25.3.1 What Stories Can Do

For ease of discussion we can classify the many different types of children's stories into three categories:

a) Stories based on real life: These would include stories based on some phenomena of nature, science stories, stories about children growing up in different regions or stories about growing up itself, stories about brave men and women.

b) Stories based on imagination and fantasy: These would include fairy tales, folk tales, stories containing impossible events, stories from the Panchatantra, stories based on 'Superman' or 'Batman'.
c) Stories from a specific culture: These would include myths, legends, epics and other folklore. Some example of these are the epic about Ram and Sita, stories about gods, goddesses and demons.

Stories tend to be appealing to children for a variety of reasons. For a story to interest children, it must serve one of the several functions. It must arouse their curiosity, entertain them, stimulate their imagination, appeal to their sense of adventure, be in tune with their hopes, desires and fears, help them clarify and deal with their emotions, give recognition to their problems and suggest solutions or help them develop their intellect and self-confidence. In other words, the story must enrich children’s life and relate to aspects of their personality; it must help them to develop their inner resources. These are characteristics of good stories, but all of them need not be found in every story.

Let us understand some of the points made in the above paragraph. What do we mean when we say that “the story should give recognition to the child’s problems....”, “it must help her clarify and deal with her emotions....”, and “it must be in tune with her hopes, desires and fears ...”. Do children have problems? What are their hopes and fears? What is meant by “inner resources”?

If you are able to remember your childhood experiences and think about them, you may find an answer to some of these questions. Read the discussion that follows and see if it describes some of your own thoughts.

The child often finds life very complicated. She gets caught up in various emotions and does not know what she ought to do. There are many problems to face and resolve as she grows. One of the most common is the birth of a new baby, with whom the child has to share the parents’ love and attention. She wishes the baby would go away and leave her parents free to attend to her. She may even have thoughts of causing harm to the baby. Her feelings are so strong that they threaten to overpower her. What she needs is a safe way to express her emotions.

Another aspect which the child must attend to is the balance between dependence and independence. As she grows, she has to learn to do things on her own and to move away from her dependence on the parents. The parents too have to allow autonomy to the child. While the child welcomes the feelings of independence, she is also a little scared. She wonders: “What if I cannot handle something on my own? Will there be someone to help me? What should I do if I am all alone?” The child needs help in managing these conflicting feelings and anxieties about being a baby or growing up. There are also extreme situations when either the parents do not allow any freedom to the child or they allow her to do as she wants without any restriction. In all these cases, the child needs some guidance about what she should do.

Children may have fears that adults find worthless and good for nothing. And indeed, in the world of adults where there are so many things that children cannot do, it is easy for them to develop feelings of inferiority. At such times they need to be reassured of self-worth and self-confidence.

The child also fears being separated from her parents and other loved ones. She wishes to be with them forever and feels lonely when she is away from them. There are other situations in which the child feels unhappy. Adults may appear to her as unreasonable people. She may be forced to do as she is told, having no right to say anything. At such times, what the child needs is the assurance that things will get better in the future. She must feel that if she faces the present boldly, she will be all right. She needs to develop confidence and inner strength.

One may ask why we should not confront the child directly with her fears, discuss them rationally and do away with them? This may help in some cases, but not in all. It may, in fact, worsen her fears. For one thing, the child cannot deal with them rationally—she does not have the emotional or the cognitive capacity to do so. Also the child herself may not clearly realize that she has fears and anxieties, and to
discuss them with her would confuse her. It is better to help the child by telling stories and giving her opportunities to act in simple drama, participate in pretend games or related group activities. This enables the child to fantasize about her anxieties and emotions, which helps her to deal with them.

25.3.2 Why Fairy Tales are so Popular

Of all the different stories, the folk fairy story fulfils this role the best and therefore, it is no surprise that most children, from any cultural background, when asked to name a few of their favourite stories, predominantly mention fairy tales.

The fairy tale may be about a king and his sons, the bear and the wolf, the giant and the little boy, the woodcutter and his seven children or the clever rabbit and the lion. There may be witches, animals and giants in a fairy tale. Some of the common themes of fairy tales are:

- A king wants to give up his throne and must choose his heir from among his three sons. To do so, he gives them difficult tasks to do and the one who completes the tasks is named the heir.
- A parent has three children, of whom two are considered clever and the third, a simpleton. As the story progresses the simpleton proves to be better than the other two.
- The family treats the step child badly but finally the child's patience and goodness are rewarded.
- A witch casts a spell on the heroine and the hero must perform certain tasks before the spell can be broken and they are married.
- The children are deserted by the parents or they are thrown out of the house and they must struggle and face many challenges before all is well again.

Each region has its own store of fairy tales. It would be impossible to mention all of them here. Whatever may be the specific content of a fairy tale, it has certain characteristic features which set it apart from other stories. Let us see what they are.

Right in the beginning of the story, you are told that it is a story about a far-away land, and about a distant past. Sentences like: "Once upon a time......." or "When the trees used to speak......." convey that this is not a story about present times.

The fairy tale often starts in a realistic way, with a real but problematic situation. For example—a child who is illtreated by the family or the bear who has to find a house for the winter. From this simple and every day beginning, it leads to miraculous and fantastic events. The hero and the heroine have many adventures, with their life being in danger. But through their presence of mind and with help from some good characters, they emerge victorious. From these miraculous events the story again comes back to reality with endings such as "Then they got married and lived happily ever after.......".

The events of the fairy tale are unreal and yet the feeling that is conveyed is that these situations could happen to us. One of the ways this is done is by using common names for the hero and the heroine. Sometimes there are no names at all—the hero is addressed as 'the youngest prince' or "Because he was so simple he was called Simpleton". This makes it easier for the child to identify with the hero/heroine. Usually, no other character has a name. They remain nameless—they are called mother, father, king, woodcutter, giant, witch, bad wolf and so on. Reading or hearing a fairy tale makes one believe that a benevolent person will come to one's aid when one is in trouble.

Besides the above aspects, there are four basic elements in a fairy story: it is high in fantasy, there is recovery from deep despair, there is escape from great danger, and there is confidence that evil will be punished and good will be rewarded. However terrible and dangerous the hero's adventure is, things turn out right at the end. The
fairy tale builds up to a pitch of great excitement and danger and then culminates in a happy ending. This happy ending is a characteristic and important feature of a fairy tale. In fact, a tale cannot be considered a fairy tale unless everything is well in the end, the good people have been rewarded and the bad ones punished.

Let us now see why children find the fairy tale so absorbing and why it has such appeal.

One of most important reasons why children find the fairy tale satisfying is that it reflects their inner struggles and enables them to deal with them. The fairy story refers to universal human problems. It gives body to the problems that bother the child and offers solutions, temporary or permanent. These problems are addressed not directly, but symbolically, through the adventures of the different characters in the story. Let us try and understand this point with some examples.

You have read in earlier Section that the child is anxious when facing a conflict between the wish to be independent and to be dependent upon the parents. These anxieties of the child are reflected in many stories. There are fairy tales in which the parents turn their children out of the house, i.e., the parents want them to be independent and face life on their own. Like these hero/heroines of the story, the child in real life also knows that she has to move away from the parents at some time. In the fairy tale, the hero/heroine has encounters with witches, wicked people or animals after he/she has been turned out of the house. These could be considered to symbolize the difficulties that the child will have in the process of moving away from the parents. As the fairy tale hero confronts these powerful people in good faith, some benevolent powers come to his help. Finally, the hero is able to defeat the wicked powers and is victorious. Thus the fairy tale gives the child the message that there are difficulties in life, and that the struggle against them is unavoidable. If one is courageous, one will get help from others and will be able to get over the difficulties. The story thus helps the child to develop a belief in her own self.

We may feel that the child will not understand this message of the fairy tale because it is not direct. The message is hidden and the child may not relate it to her own problems. We may also feel that she likes the story because she enjoys the fantastic events in the story.

It is true that the child likes the story because of its appeal to her sense of adventure. If you were to ask her why she likes the story, she is not likely to say: "Because it teaches me to be brave." But nonetheless, the child does understand the underlying message unconsciously, as she listens to the story again and again. And since the story is so close to what she herself has been thinking indirectly, she finds it satisfying.

Another conflict that the child is confronted with is whether to be "good" or "bad", i.e., the question of morality. We know that preaching is not the way to inculcate moral values. Stories which are didactic and which have a moral lesson as their conclusion, often become boring. Instilling in the child a sense of moral obligation and values has to be a subtle process. The fairy tale does this most sensitively, without appearing to be doing so. Let us see how this is done.

In the fairy tale, the hero and the heroine are always good people. They are generous, helpful and have no wicked thoughts. There is also a "bad" character in the fairy tale, who does wrong things and who is evil. The evil figure is usually quite powerful and there are times in the story when the evil seems stronger than the good. But finally, it is the hero/heroine who is victorious over the evil. For example, it is the hero who marries the princess; it is the hero who becomes the father's successor, not his clever and wicked brother; it is the poor but good heroine with whom the prince falls in love, and not with her rich sisters. As they hear the story, the children identify with the hero or the heroine because they like them and through this identification, they imbibe the right values. The moral education also comes from the fact that the evil person loses in the end and is punished.
In all the fairy stories, the hero/heroine is eventually victorious. In some they win because of their goodness, as we have discussed above. In others, they win because of their wit. These are stories where the young child outwits the giant or the helpless rabbit foils the mighty tiger’s plan. In these stories, the choice is not between good and bad. These stories give the child the assurance that even the little person can succeed. It is important to face life with self-confidence. The giant of the story can be considered to signify the parents and other adults around the child. We adults may seem threatening to the child, with the various pressures we put on her.

The child also fears separation from the loved ones, as we have said earlier. This fear is allayed when the fairy tale concludes by saying: “And they lived happily ever after.” It is not as if the child believes that it is possible to live forever. The child knows about death. The fairy tale with the sentence that “They lived till eternity”, conveys the message that when one forms a bond of affection with another in adult life, then one does not fear death.

You know that the child often gets overwhelmed by jealousy, usually in connection with brothers and sisters. If the child is able to act out her feelings in an imaginary setting, her emotions find a safe outlet. In this way, she is prevented from directing anger and jealousy towards siblings. Fairy stories help the child to deal with these emotions. You know that the child identifies with the hero or the heroine. When the hero expresses his anger towards the wicked person, the child experiences it. Thus the child has expressed her anger (which is healthy for her) but not directly at the sibling (which, if done, would have been harmful for the sibling). These stories have happy endings as well, which helps the child. The child, troubled by her negative feelings, cannot imagine that a happy solution is possible. The fairy tale helps her to expect a happy future and with this hope, the child does not find the present situation so unbearable. The child needs such images to tide over the present situation. As the child grows up, she can deal with her emotions in a more mature manner.

The fairy tale also speaks about the child’s feelings of incompetence and worthlessness. In most fairy tales, the hero or the heroine helps out a person in distress by a simple deed—by sharing a meal or by relieving pain. These people/animals whom the hero has befriended, then help him out through great dangers. Thus the tale reassures the child that even a little kindness will not go unrewarded and that help will be repaid. Do you remember having heard or read such stories as a child?

These are a few examples to illustrate how the fairy tale addresses several aspects of children's personality and helps them to develop inner resources. This may be one reason why children enjoy stories.

A second reason is that fairy tales conform to a child’s way of thinking. A fairy tale is a simple story. All situations and scenes are simplified. Details are omitted, unless they are important. There are no descriptions of the scenery or of the clothes worn by the characters. The characters in the story are all good or all bad—one sister is beautiful, the other is ugly; one brother is honest and generous, the other is spiteful and cruel; one is brave, the other is timid. This is not so in real life. If the characters in the fairy stories were to be more true to life, they would also have to be more complex. This would make it difficult for the child to understand. While listening to the fairy tale, the child sees that there are types of people and that she has to make a choice about which type to be. The child then identifies with the good character in the story, who has an appeal for her. Through this process, she learns the value of being good.

You have read in Block 4 that the preschoolers’ thought is “magical”. The fairy tale appeals to this aspect of children’s thought. Anything is possible! Children believe that animals, trees, the wind and the flowers talk and so they find nothing strange that they guide the hero in his adventures. Being egocentric, they expect these
characters to talk about the things important to them and they do. Also, in children's view, the bad person must be punished, and there should be no mercy. This is what happens in the fairy tale.

The third reason for the appeal of the fairy tale is related to the first two reasons. Even while the fairy tale reflects children's inner conflicts, it does so indirectly, and hence, more effectively. The tale is about another person in another land and so the children can handle the feelings coming out of the story. On a conscious level, they know that this story is imaginary. They do not have to acknowledge the emotions or situations reflected in the story as their own. Yet as they feel for the characters, the story helps them to manage their emotions, without their knowing how it does so.

The fairy tale does not preach and therefore, it must not be used to teach children how to behave. The purpose of the story is enjoyment and if it also helps the child to understand something about herself, that is an additional gain. Some parts of the tale the child will understand immediately and some others will become clear to her gradually as she hears it again and again. But whatever the child understands, it will enrich her life. It is this undemanding and indirect nature of the fairy tale that makes it all the more effective psychologically. A fairy tale will mean different things to different children, depending upon their life experiences. If the teacher draws out and explains the moral of the story to the child, it loses much of its purpose.

25.3.3 Why Some People Object to Fairy Tales

Some people who criticize fairy tales point out that the suggestions and solutions offered by fairy tales are not found in real life. They say that these are not true or realistic suggestions and may mislead the child. They also say that the fairy tale may involve the child so much in a world of fantasy that she may fail to cope with reality. They also fear that the child may come to believe in magic. They feel that the fairy tale does not depict "the picture of life as it really is". Let us see whether these ideas are right.

All children believe in magic, whether or not they have heard fairy stories. They gradually give up magical beliefs as they grow up. The feeling that the fairy tale does not depict life as it really is, appears true on the surface. The situations and adventures in the fairy tale certainly do not generally happen. But the inner conflicts, the emotions, the fears and anxieties in the tale are real. They are what children experience everyday. The fairy tale is not true to outward reality but it is true to inner psychological reality. And the child, in her own way, understands this.

When the child is anxious about being separated from the parents, there is no point in being realistic and telling her then that separation is inevitable. One needs happy fantasies, more so at the time when one is feeling unhappy and troubled. Think of your own experiences as a child or even as an adult. If you do not have hope for the future, you cannot cope with the present.

Childhood is the time when fantasies need to be nurtured. Unrealistic but happy fantasies during childhood give the child a sense of security and confidence, as we have said earlier. While the fantasy itself is unreal, the good feelings that it gives one about oneself and the future are real. The fairy tale provides happy fantasies in a manner which the child finds easy to understand. When the future seems hopeful, the anxiety is gone and the present becomes more bearable.

25.3.4 Modern Children's Literature

What about the literature for children written recently? Is it like the traditional fairy tales and the folklore? Stories written in modern times vary in type and quality. Many of the present day stories are low in fantasy and are based on fact. They are more realistic. They may not nurture the child's personality and inner resources. Some, on the other hand, share the traits of fairy stories and help the child develop inner strength and self-confidence.
However, you must bear in mind that the various points we have made regarding fairy tales and modern children’s literature are generalities. Each story in the collection of fairy tales does not meet all the criteria of the good fairy story or add richness to the child’s life. Similarly, there are quite a few stories in the modern children’s literature which nurture the child’s inner resources. The purpose of this discussion is to help you to understand what makes a story good, so that you can choose appropriate stories for children. Your understanding of the child’s needs will guide your selection of the story.

It would be useful for you to analyse the different children’s stories along the line mentioned in this Unit. This will help you to decide if the story is suitable. When you were reading the Unit, you must have remembered the stories of your own childhood. Reflecting back on them, can you see why you liked some stories and wanted to hear them again? Do your experiences and reflections match with what we have discussed in the Unit so far?

Check Your Progress Exercise 2

Answer the following questions briefly in the space provided below.

1) What are the four basic elements in a fairy tale?

2) What are the reasons for the universal popularity of fairy tales?

It may be interesting to note down the stories you found enjoyable as a child. You can compare your list with those of other learners at the study centre. For stories of common interest, it would be interesting to discuss what aspects appealed to each of you.
Narration is a crucial part of storytelling. You may have selected a good story but it may still fail to hold the children's attention, if it is not told in an interesting manner. The way a story is presented will also determine how much the children enjoy it and participate in it. Eye contact with the child/children when narrating the story is important. The choice of the words, the modulation of voice and facial expressions contribute to the liveliness of the story. Let us consider each of these aspects.

Use words that enable children to picture the scene and stimulate their imagination. A narration which says "The mice tiptoed to the cupboard and slowly and noiselessly munched the sweet", is more interesting than saying "the mice cautiously went to the cupboard and quietly ate the sweet." Similarly, the statement that "The crow's eyes opened wide in amazement" is more eloquent than the simple statement "The crow was surprised."

Voice modulation is a must to bring feeling into the story. Imagine hearing a story which is told in a monotone—with the same tone to express delight, fear, anxiety or caution. The tone communicates a great deal to the listener and must be appropriate to the content being expressed. While speaking the above-mentioned sentence about the mice, for example, one can linger upon the words—"The mice slowly tiptoed"—which will convey the mood. The pitch of the voice must be lowered too. For the brave hero the voice can be strong and gruff; for the scared kangaroo it can be weak, thin, squeaky or stammering in fear, and for the sleepy giant, it can be fuzzy, with a few yawns and snores.

Along with voice modulation, there must be facial expressions and body movements to convey the horror, amazement, delight, fear, anxiety, bravery, timidity or humour in the story. Besides, one can "become" the various characters in the story. You can become an elephant by bending over, extending one arm to the floor like a trunk and keeping the other one hidden from view at your back. A rabbit's long ears can be depicted by placing your hands on your head.

You must not feel self-conscious or inhibited while doing this. Children like it when you act and think like a child.

You must have told numerous stories to children in your family. It would be useful for you to evaluate how you narrate the stories, keeping in mind the three aspects we have mentioned. You may write down the points which will help you to make story telling more interesting.

Story telling can also be made more interesting by using masks and puppets. You will read about these in Section 25.6 of this Unit.
The story telling session does not come to an end once the story has been told. A careful observer would notice that after listening to a story, children talk about it to each other, imitate the characters of the story and make comments. Each child will have her own response to the story and must be allowed to express it. Therefore, talk to the children giving each child an opportunity to talk and to listen. This helps her to understand other points of view. You can ask specific questions related to the story such as: “Should the goat have done as she did?”, “Do you like what the hunter did in the story?” In this way, children can evaluate the actions of the characters.

Stories arouse strong feelings and emotions in children. They may become so involved in it that they take on the feelings of the characters in the story. Often, in response to the story, they will tell you how they themselves were involved in some great adventure. This is their fantasy and you must encourage it. Do not belittle or ridicule their fantasy. Your comment should not be: “You are telling a lie” or “This never happens”. Encourage children to talk so that they can express what they feel.

Children’s comments must be understood in the context of their experiences. When the narrator gets the same response from a child to every story, she must find out the reason.

**25.6 SUPPORTS FOR STORY TELLING**

The use of supports like masks, puppets, illustrated story books, drawings and flash cards help the children to imagine the scene and make the story more interesting. Let us find out about some of these supports.

Flash cards are cards which have different scenes from the story. These scenes are either drawn or are depicted by pasting available pictures. The description of the scene is written at the back of the card. During narration, the children can see the pictures. The narrator shows one card at a time and reads out the script written at the back of the card. The following are two flash cards from a set, depicting the story sequentially. The script behind the first card reads: “In the deep jungle there once lived a woodcutter with his seven children.”
The script behind the second flash card reads: “He used to go to the jungle to cut wood. One day as he was cutting the wood, an old lady appeared by his side.” The story goes on in this manner.

**Flannellograph** is based on the same principle as flash cards. Here each pictorial card has a piece of sandpaper pasted at the back, so that it can be stuck on a board which is covered with flannel. As the story progresses, the relevant card is stuck on the board. Thus the events of the story are depicted on the board.

**Illustrated story books** too are effective during narration. As you tell the story, you can turn the pages of the book, so that the relevant illustration can be seen by children. The illustration should be clear and colourful.

You may have seen **masks** of animals, birds or people at toy shops or at fairs. Children enjoy wearing these. You can make masks for children from materials easily available at home such as used envelopes, old newspapers, used paper bags, pieces of cloth, buttons, twigs, and so forth. To make a mask, draw the face of the animal/character you want on a paper. Then cut out the mask and attach threads to it, so that it can be tied across the face. Make two holes in the mask for the eyes.

Take a rectangular piece of paper and fold it into half.
Open out the fold. Make two holes for the eyes. To wear the mask, tie threads at the two edges.

To make the mask colourful, draw the nose, ears, whiskers, teeth, eyebrows and other details. You can paste leaves, twigs, buttons or used wool on the mask to give different effects. Given below is a way of making a mask of an elephant.

There can be as many masks as the number of characters in the story. While telling the story, you can wear the mask of the character being talked about. Alternatively, you can involve more people in story telling, where each person wears the mask of a particular character and acts out that part. In this way, you can dramatize the story.

Another thing that can be done is making drawings of the characters of the story and the sequence of events on blackboard/floor/ground/paper, as you are telling the story. The entire sequence of events can be thus shown. The following is the sequence of a story as drawn by a preschool worker.
In the first illustration is shown an old tiger who is feeling hungry. He sees a deer and pounces on it, but being old he cannot catch it, as shown in the second illustration. He thinks hard about how he can obtain some food and finally hits upon an idea, as depicted in the third illustration. The story and the depiction continued in this manner.

An interesting variation is the use of puppets in story telling. Children like to see puppets as puppets make the characters of the story life-like. When the puppet talks, children feel that the puppet is talking to them and will respond. Puppets are the most popular of all supports.

Our country has a rich heritage of puppets. Traditional puppets are used all over the country. Making puppets is an age-old art and for many people, puppetry is a means of earning a living. You may have seen or heard about the leather puppets of Andhra Pradesh or the string puppets of Rajasthan. The type of puppets you are going to learn to make in this Unit are not so intricate. They are easily made from low cost material available at home.

You can make finger puppets to be worn on the finger. You have read in Block 3 how to make them. You can use paper or cloth to make the puppet. Used buttons, twigs, leaves and even the inedible portion of vegetables (like the stalk of brinjal, the heads of lady's finger) can be used as eyes, tail, cap, trunk of elephant, nose and crown.

To make stick puppets draw the characters or figures on paper, then cut out the figure and paste it on to a stick. During narration the stick is held in the hand and moved to show movement. Another method of making stick puppets is shown in the following illustration.

Take a used paper bag. Fill it up with old newspapers, used papers, old cloth pieces and rags. Insert a long stick and tie it with a strong thread.

On one side, draw the character that you want. Hold the stick and move it to show movement.
Glove puppets are to be worn on the hand. They are usually made of cloth. The following illustration shows how they can be made.

To handle the glove puppet, insert the index finger through the hole in the neck. Insert the thumb and the middle finger into the sleeves of the dress. By flexing the fingers, the head and arms move. By moving the wrist, the entire puppet moves.

There are many other ways of making puppets. Some ideas must have occurred to you as you read this Section. Try out your ideas with the children. A teacher once pasted two eyes, a nose and a mouth on a potato, onion and radish and thus made them 'come alive'. She narrated a story about how they all went together to a fair.

While using puppets to tell a story, there may be as many puppets as the characters in the story. For narration, there can be as many people as the number of puppets so that one person acts as one character. Alternatively, the story can be enacted using a smaller number of people, where one person acts as more than one character. The entire story can be told by just one person, though this would need a lot of expertise and skill.
When using puppets, put a screen between yourself and the children so that only the puppets are visible to the children. The screen can be made by using a cloth curtain or a wooden partition. The use of the screen makes the situation more exciting for children. However, the screen is not a strict requirement.

It is important to emphasize that you do not have to be an artist or a painter to make any of these supports. The children will enjoy whatever you make for them. Make some of the supports described here and use them the next time you narrate a story. Observe how the children respond and encourage them to use them and make some of their own.

A word of caution about props or supports is necessary here. Their use does not mean that you ignore voice modulation and expression. Supports are an added advantage but will not add magic to an inappropriate story or a bad narration.

**Encouraging Children to Use Supports**

Children will want to play with the masks, puppets or flash cards that you have made. Encourage them to do so. This will foster participation. As they handle the puppets or the masks, you will see that they create their own stories. They may also recount segments of the story that you have narrated using the supports. In fact, in this way, you can encourage them to dramatize the story.

**25.7 STORY TELLING BY CHILDREN AND DRAMATIZATION**

A story telling session need not be confined to an adult telling a story. Encourage children to tell stories. If you were to ask your group of children for a story, somebody may volunteer. They may tell an entire story or a part of it. Here are some ways through which you can encourage children's participation in story telling.
Pictures can be used to make a story. Give the children a set of pictures, which when arranged in a sequence, tell a story. This is a little difficult for the younger children to do and so the number of pictures should not be too many. With five year olds, you can use a set of about four to five pictures. You can help them by giving hints: “Look at these two pictures. Which one do you think should come next?” Given here are six pictures used by a preschool worker with children. You can use these or make other pictures and ask preschoolers in your family or neighbourhood to make a story with them.

(i) [Image of a child lifting a basket of fruit]
(ii) [Image of a monkey picking up a fruit from the ground]
(iii) [Image of a monkey sitting on the ground eating fruit]
(iv) [Image of a monkey catching a fruit from the air]
(v) [Image of a monkey eating a fruit]
(vi) [Image of a monkey sitting on a branch]

Narrate a story till it is half over and then ask the children to complete it. Children will come up with different situations and endings. There is, of course, no right or wrong end to a story. Each child's efforts must be appreciated.

You can also make a drawing on a card depicting a scene or a situation or some people and ask the child to make a story based on it. When using this technique you must give sufficient time to the child. Also, you will have to work with each child individually. The story made by the child is likely to reveal her hopes, fears and anxieties, providing an insight into her personality. The following card will give you some ideas about what you can draw.
You can involve the entire group of children in making a story in the following manner. This is suitable for children over 6 years of age. The younger children are likely to find it difficult to make a story in this manner. You begin the story by saying a sentence. The next child then adds another sentence which is related to the first one. This continues till the story is complete. In this way, each child contributes in making a story. The following is a part of a story made by a primary school teacher, Ashok, with five seven year olds.

_Ashok—“Today is Sohan’s birthday and he is going to celebrate it.”_

1st Child—“He is going to invite a lot of his friends from school.”

2nd Child—“All his friends wore their best clothes.”

3rd Child—“He got many presents.”

4th Child—“They played a lot of games.”

Initially children will need help and some may not say anything when their turn comes. Do not force these children. As they see the others playing this game, they will also start participating. Such a story created at the spur of the moment may not have a proper body and a climax and a logical sequence of events. Th’s would be especially true in the case of the first few efforts of children. They may not fully understand what they are required to do. However, their efforts must be appreciated. Do not say “This was not a good story.” Instead, say: “That was a good try. Next time we will make a better story and one that makes us laugh!” The important point is that while making up a story together, children learn to work together in a group and think of sequential events on their own. In such a story, the emphasis has shifted from fantasy and imagination to furthering language and thinking.

If while making up a story, you feel that children are not able to say much, you can introduce an exciting event. In the above story, Ashok added: “Sohan had a friend in the jungle—the elephant. He also came to the party and, along with him, came a monkey.” After this sentence the story took a new direction.

You can encourage children to dramatize stories. For dramatization, choose a story that has a simple theme. Ask children to volunteer for the characters they would like
Help children to practise their parts a few times and then present it to the

group. Over a period of time, you must give each child a chance to take a role.

It may take some time before the children feel confident to participate in
dramatization. They will need help with this. You could begin by encouraging the
children who are more vocal and find it easy to express themselves. But this must not
lead to a neglect of the quieter ones. Dramatization is a good way of helping children
to express themselves and they must be skilfully drawn out.

25.8 DRAMATIC PLAY

By now, you need no introduction to dramatic play, having read about it in other
Units. The earlier Section on fantasy in this Unit also contained examples of
children's dramatic play. We have used various terms in the earlier Blocks for
dramatic play: fantasy play, pretend games and symbolic play. They all mean the same
thing and have been used interchangeably.

You know that dramatic play is spontaneous play, where children on their own,
choose certain roles and enact them. This is in contrast with dramatization, where
children are assigned roles by someone else and enact them. When children engage
in dramatic play, they are their own actors and directors. They choose the setting,
select their costumes and props and develop their own dialogues.

Children do not need to be prompted to play pretend games. Yet, some guidance
from sensitive adults can make their play more interesting. Let us see how you can
encourage dramatic play.

Provide a variety of play materials which lend themselves to imaginative play and
stimulate children's creativity. The availability of such play materials makes fantasy
easier. ‘House’ is one of the common themes of children’s play. You can encourage
this game by leaving clothes like a saree, a scarf, a coat, other men’s and women’s
garments, shoes, toy utensils, toy beds, toy shelves and cupboards, some dolls, toy
animals, empty cans or boxes, a toy cycle or a scooter in one area of the room. A
mirror in this area makes it all the more attractive. This area can be the ‘house’.

Wooden blocks of various sizes are another good support for dramatic play. They
can be solid or hollow. A wooden block can be converted into almost anything that a
child wants—a bus, an aeroplane, a ship. Blocks can also be piled, arranged or
stacked together to make a room or house. Children's play with blocks progresses
through a series of stages. At first they simply carry the blocks about. Then comes the
stage when they stack them. Then, using blocks, they make a bridge or a tower and
finally they build structures like a bus or a house.

In fact, any interesting play material like big wooden beads, puppets or masks can
start fantasy play. You must be alert to support such activity.

Encourage children to use these play materials in creative ways, without causing
harm to themselves or to others. Sometimes, the centre has all the different types of
play materials but the children do not use them. One of the reasons could be that
they are placed in inaccessible areas. There is no point in having play materials that
are going to be locked in the cupboard. They should be within easy reach of children.

A second reason why children may not use the materials for dramatic play is that the
educator may be very particular about their not making a mess. When children play,
their things will get mixed up. This is more true in the case of some play material
than others. At the end of block play, one will most often find blocks all over the
room. Children must learn to put them back, but this rule must not be enforced too
rigidly. If you can make a game of putting back the blocks in their places and you
yourself help the children in this activity, cleaning up becomes fun.
Sometimes children do not use a particular play material because they do not know how. In such cases, you can introduce the material in a way which will attract the children. Show them some ways of using it and leave them. What you have made is not a model for the children to copy, but something to stimulate their interest.

**Keep the play area appealing and interesting.** You must keep adding something new to the area for dramatic play once in a while.

**Give children enough time for dramatic play.** A period of 45-60 minutes is suitable. If at the end of the time you feel that children have not finished their acting of roles, give them a little more time. Do not put an end to their play abruptly. When in a world of fantasy, children will take some time to come back to reality.

**Provide a setting that is relaxed and non-judgmental.** Do not criticize the children. There is no wrong way in dramatic play, provided that the children’s safety and well-being are ensured.

**The teacher’s role during dramatic play is a supportive one.** Children's play should be encouraged, not dominated. You, as a caregiver, must remain in the background. Allow children to form their own groups; do not assign them to a particular place of play. Children like to choose their own playmates. They should be free to move from one play area to another. If a child does not want to play with puppets but with a shop game of buying and selling, allow her to do so.

Your role is primarily to keep the activities going in the group. Observe children unobtrusively and see where you are needed. You can help a child who is being rejected by the group as Suresh, a preschool educator, did. He could see that Reshma wanted to join the group of three boys who were playing 'train' by arranging the chairs in a line. She approached them many times but they refused to acknowledge her. Suresh took Reshma along and addressed the group: "Hey boys! We want to go for a ride in your train. Where can we buy a ticket?" He played with them for some time and moved away when he saw Reshma getting involved in the game.

Sometimes the older children may bully the younger ones, taking their toys away. You will have to be alert and prevent confusion. Perhaps you could say to the older children: “You can use the toys after these children have finished playing with them”, or whatever the situation may require.

Dramatic play may arouse emotions in children and give them opportunities to vent their feelings. You will have to help the children get their anger or fear under control and see that they do not hurt themselves or anyone else. A group of children playing 'Police-and-thief' were enacting out the chase, and, subsequently, actually started fighting with each other. The teacher quickly intervened at that point, and separated the two groups.

It would be useful for you to observe children during dramatic play. Write about the themes you see them developing during their play. How do you think you could have encouraged their play? In what ways was the dramatic play important for children? How did it help the group of children that you looked after?
By now, the link between story telling, fantasy and dramatic play must have become clear to you. Story telling and dramatic play are the means through which children's fantasies are nurtured. They help to enrich children's lives. Apart from this, they also contribute to other aspects of children's development. We will read about this in the following Section.

25.9 OTHER VALUES OF STORY TELLING AND DRAMATIC PLAY

Listening to stories and engaging in dramatic play provides for social development. Children learn to share, to take turns, to play co-operatively and to play within the rules defined by their roles. Friendships are formed as children discover themes of mutual interest.

Since they are an excellent means of expressing emotions, dramatic play and story telling sessions add to children's feelings of well being. It is good to express one's fears, anxieties, joys and happiness with others who feel the same. And in the reassuring setting of dramatic play, the fears and anxieties of children gradually decrease.

Language develops well in the relaxed atmosphere of the story telling session or pretend play. Children learn new words, they practise words they already know and combine them creatively.

Children learn new concepts and, expressing what they have learnt through their fantasy play, helps to clarify their concepts. To aid in this, the narrator can build a story around a particular concept. For example, the story can be about different colours, or how birds make their nests or about the creatures that live in water.

Children learn to make decisions as they choose among roles, the play materials and the clothes they will wear.

Creativity is the soul of dramatic play. Such play gives the children an opportunity to give full rein to their imagination. As children create their stories and scenes, they develop confidence in themselves.

Dramatic play also helps the caregiver to know more about the children. It gives her a glimpse of their thoughts and feelings and how they view the world. Knowing the children better, she can be more attuned to them.

Check Your Progress Exercise 3

1) Read the following statements carefully and fill in the blanks appropriately.

(a) A narration can be made more interesting by ..............................................................
and ..............................................................

(b) Some of the supports that can be used during story telling are ..........................
..............................................................
and ..............................................................

2) What is the difference between dramatic play and dramatization?

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...................................................................................................................................................
...................................................................................................................................................
3) How can one encourage children’s dramatic play?

4) Imagine that you are a teacher in a preschool. You feel that there are not enough play materials in the centre to encourage dramatic play. Look around your house and in the neighbourhood, and see what materials, which are not being used by anyone (waste), will stimulate dramatic play and can be taken to the preschool. You should be able to make a list of at least 10–15 such materials/items.

25.10 SUMMING UP

In this Unit you have read about the importance of fantasy, story telling and dramatic play. Some people believe that children use fantasy to escape from the real world. While this happens in some cases, in general fantasy helps children to know the real world and to organize and understand events. Their pretend games emerge from what they see around them and, subsequently, help them to understand reality better. Fantasy helps children to understand abstract facts and enables them to deal with their emotions.

Story telling and dramatic play are means through which children’s fantasies are nurtured. A story which is good stimulates children’s imagination, gives recognition to their problems and suggests solutions, helps them deal with emotions and enables them to develop their intellect and self-confidence. In other words, the story should help children develop their inner resources. Of all the types of stories, children find fairy tales to be the most enjoyable and satisfying because they conform to their way of thinking, address their inner conflicts and offer solutions indirectly. The
miraculous events in the story, the victory of the good over the evil and the simple way in which the story is narrated appeal to the child.

Stories written in modern times vary in type and quality. Some of them share the traits of fairy stories, while others are more realistic.

Whatever be the type of story, it must be told with and for enjoyment. Do not use it to give rules to the child. If the child gains something from the story, let it happen gradually.

While narrating a story, you must choose appropriate words, modulate your voice and use body movements and facial expressions to convey emotions. The use of props like masks, puppets, flash cards and story books can make story telling more interesting. After the story is over, give children time to express their thoughts and feelings. Encourage children to tell stories and involve them in dramatization.

You can encourage dramatic play by providing a variety of play materials that lend themselves to imaginative play. Keep the play area appealing and give children enough time for dramatic play.

Besides nurturing fantasy and creativity, stories and dramatic play enhance cognitive, social, emotional and language development.

25.11 ANSWERS TO CHECK YOUR PROGRESS EXERCISES

Check Your Progress Exercise 1

1) Your answer should contain the following aspects:

- Fantasy play should be encouraged rather than discouraged since it helps the children to cope with reality.
- Through fantasies children understand abstract facts and so this may help Meenu as she enters formal education.
- By enabling Meenu to express her emotions, fantasy play will help her to adjust to the new school environment.

Check Your Progress Exercise 2

1) In a fairy story there is

- fantasy as is evident from the miraculous and impossible events that happen in it.
- escape from some great danger—often the hero’s/heroine’s life is in danger and finally they escape unhurt.
- recovery from despair—the hero’s situation seems very despairing but finally all is well.
- a confidence that the good will win and evil will lose out.

2) The reasons why fairy tales are popular with children are:

- they address the child’s inner struggles and conflicts and indicate how they can be resolved.
- they conform to the child’s way of thinking.
- they suggest ways to overcome conflicts in a subtle and indirect manner.
Check Your Progress Exercise 3

1) a) choosing the right words, modulating the voice, using body movements and facial expressions.
   b) illustrated story books, flash cards, masks, puppets and flannellograph

2) When children spontaneously choose their roles and enact them, it is dramatic play. When they are assigned roles by someone else and then enact them out according to a planned script, it is dramatization.

3) One can encourage dramatic play by
   i) providing a variety of play materials and encouraging children to play creatively
   ii) creating a relaxed atmosphere
   iii) making the play area interesting and appealing
   iv) giving children enough time for dramatic play
   v) supporting children's play

4) Some of the items that you can locate are
   a) empty bottles and tins
   b) old clothes
   c) match boxes
   d) empty packets
   e) beads
   f) strings or plastic wires
   g) pebbles and stones
   h) scraps of cloth from the tailor's shop
   i) some cut pieces of carpet from carpet shops
   j) thread reels
   k) spectacle frames
   l) chipped mud pots from home or the potter's shop
   m) old newspapers
   n) leaves and twigs
   o) old chairs and table, pieces of wood from the carpenter's shop.