

# Talespinners Collection 2

## Study Guide



**Animation for Modern Kids**

A NATIONAL FILM BOARD OF CANADA PRODUCTION



## General Introduction to the Series

*Talespinners 2* for ages 5-9 features stories of children who deal successfully with personal challenges. They are resourceful, responsible and resilient, and even though they're animated characters, they portray very human emotions. They turn negatives into positives. They deal with anger and disappointment constructively. They overcome obstacles and demonstrate personal growth. They succeed in small, but authentic, ways.

## Curriculum Links

1. Language Arts and Literacy
2. Health and Wellness
3. Citizenship: getting along with and understanding others
4. Conflict Resolution and Problem Solving
5. Critical Thinking
6. Interpersonal skills
7. Personal identity
8. Fine Arts
9. Geography
10. Media Literacy
11. Science
12. Information and communication technologies (ICT)

# Individual Story Lesson Ideas



## Asthma Tech

1. Winston's severe asthma affects his daily activities and he has to use a puffer several times a day. Have the students research:
  - a. What is asthma
  - b. How and why puffers help asthmatics
  - c. Why asthmatics have a distinctive cough
  - d. What effects exercise can have on asthmatics
  - e. What triggers asthma attacks
2. Why did Winston want to become a superhero?
3. Every superhero has a supernatural power, but you don't need special powers to help others. Sometimes the biggest help is in the smallest thing – picking up something that drops off someone's desk, carrying the groceries to the kitchen and putting them away, feeding the family pet. Brainstorm similar ideas.
4. Winston's comic book pictures have many asthma puffer shapes. How many examples can the students find? Ask the students to choose another item and incorporate the shape into as many things as possible in a drawing. It may help to draw and cut out a template first. The *Asthma Tech* comic book has superheroes with powers that match their names and personalities. Using these same superheroes, have the class create an adventure comic book. Brainstorm the various roles/jobs involved. Students may apply for these positions or you can assign them.
5. Winston's asthma made him angry and frustrated since he had to stay indoors at recess to use his ventilator. One day rainy and windy weather forced his classmates indoors at recess; Winston found himself in a leadership role in the creation of the comic book and superheroes. The boy turned a bad feeling into positive action. Brainstorm how students could turn their bad feelings into positive and constructive actions.





## The Girl Who Hated Books

1. In Meena's house, books are everywhere. Her parents love them and keep buying, borrowing and acquiring more. Yet their daughter wants nothing to do with the books. Talk about why. Clue: at mealtimes her parents read and interact more with the books than with Meena. How do you think this makes her feel? How could she have expressed her feelings to her parents? Role-play this conversation.
2. When the animals and characters escaped from the books, they created havoc. Although she was angry at them for being out of the books, Meena knew she had to make a responsible decision about getting them back between the covers. She had to weigh different choices. While she didn't like her solution – reading the books – she knew she had to try it. Have you ever had to try something that you really didn't want to do? Brainstorm strategies and positive and negative reasons for trying each solution. NOTE: The NFB animation *Blackberry Subway Jam* tells the story of a home being invaded by unwanted characters.
3. Aardvark likes to talk. Have the students write the next chapter of the story – Aardvark leaves Meena's house and becomes a celebrity. However, Aardvark does return to live at Meena's house. Divide the class into groups so that each group has one of the following tasks:
  - a. Write the speech to be delivered by an animal rights advocate to city council saying that the aardvark must be sent to its natural environment rather than back into the book or to the zoo.
  - b. You are a local newspaper reporter who wants to interview Aardvark. Write a list of questions.
  - c. Write the transcript of a conversation between Meena and the aardvark where they talk about books and stories.
  - d. Write a television news report about a talking aardvark that escaped from a book and is now living in Meena's house.
4. Meena didn't like to read. Perhaps she hadn't found a book or story that really interested her. Ask each student to create a list of their top 5 favourite books. Create a class list that can be used for a school-wide survey. Talk to the librarian and find out how many of these books are in the school library. If necessary, organize a fund raiser to acquire these favourite titles.

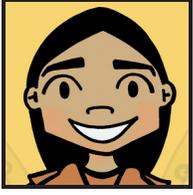




## Jaime Lo, small and shy

1. Talk about the audio at the start of the story: Each line of the script describes a characteristic of Jaime Lo and has a poetic rhythm. Ask the students to write a poem that describes themselves with each line beginning with their own name. They must find a cadence or beat that works with their name. The students can also draw a self portrait to display with the poem.
2. Jaime was very angry with her father because he stayed away longer than she expected. What did she do that showed us she was angry? Is drawing a picture about feelings an effective way to express them? Jaime's father knew that she was angry. How did he try to help her deal with her emotions? How did Jaime let go of her anger? Why was this better than staying angry at her dad?
3. Hong Kong is very far from Canada. When Jaime saw the pictures her father sent, she realized that while they were both in a city, the cities looked very different. Imagine that you want to send someone far away pictures to help them "see" where you live. What familiar places, things and scenes would you photograph?
4. For younger students: they can create a pictorial essay of a day in their classroom or school where they brainstorm lists of items or events to be photographed. This can then be storyboarded with time codes to show when the pictures should be taken. Once the photos are ready, together, the class can write captions for the pictures and either display them in a digital or paper photo album. This album can then be shared with other classes or with parents.
5. The characters in this story are all drawn with their mouths on the side of their faces. The predominant colours are muted or pale. How do these stylistic elements affect your enjoyment of the story? How do they contribute to your understanding of the characters, their situation, their emotions and their actions?





## Maq, Spirit of the Woods

1. In a Talking Circle everyone's right to speak is respected. In a circle, the speaker holds an object such as a talking stick. For the next person to speak, that person must be given the talking stick. Brainstorm a list of behaviours for participating in a Talking Circle, e.g., listen respectfully, share stories, don't interrupt. Create a Talking Circle in the classroom or outside in a green space. Decide what the talking stick will be. Have the students tell a story where each speaker adds to the narrative, introducing a character or commenting on where the story is moving. Afterwards ask the students to reflect, either orally or in a journal entry, on their emotions and sense of community during the experience. In what other situations can the "you may speak now and I'll listen" notion be followed?
2. First Nations people traditionally honour their elders. Their life experiences, combined with the knowledge passed on from previous generations, make them experts and teachers. This information was not written down but passed down orally to each generation. Maq and his grandfather have a close relationship where they can speak honestly, respectfully and with empathy. How did Maq's grandfather use his knowledge to help the boy see and understand his inner strength and abilities? What made the relationship between Maq and his grandfather so special?
3. Many sculptors approach their medium (a chunk of clay, piece of stone or marble) by listening to it "speak." The sculptors believe that there is a creation inside that must be released. The artist and the medium work together to create a piece of art rather than the artist imposing a creative idea onto the medium.

ACTIVITY: Take the class outside on a day where there are many clouds. Everyone should have a pencil and sketch pad. Have students lie on the ground and look up in the sky, looking for shapes, figures or images in the clouds. Then invite them to sketch several on paper. Once back in the classroom talk about the diversity of what they have seen. Give each student some sculpting material (e.g. modelling clay, play dough) and ask them to recreate something inspired by what they saw in the clouds and the medium.

4. How has Maq changed from the person who left to visit his grandfather to the person who arrived at his grandfather's? How did Maq develop self-confidence during his trip?

5. As Maq travels through the woods, we see a background of the sky with what looks like falling stars. This is the animator's rendition of the aurora borealis or northern lights. Have students do some research about this phenomenon. Using different media (paint, crayon, markers, tissue paper and white glue, black magic etc.), have them create a picture of the aurora borealis to accompany the scientific information.
  
6. As Maq walks through the forest, he knows where he is going and how to get there. Signposts or markers tell him he's on the right path. Have the students plan a walking trip to a local playground or park. They can plan a route, map it and note markers or signposts. The students can draw their own maps to scale or freehand and time their walking trip. The students should also note places or people on the route they can turn to should they encounter any hazard, trouble or difficulty.





## “Mind Me Good Now!”

1. The story shares some elements with the familiar tale of *Hansel and Gretel*:
  - A boy and a girl are lost in the woods.
  - They find an inviting house with a witchy character living there.
  - She invites them in and offers them food and lodging for the night.
  - She wants to eat the boy.
  - The girl plans and executes the escape plan.
  - The witch character dies.
  - The children escape and live happily ever after.
  - a. How does “*Mind Me Good Now!*” give the classic *Hansel and Gretel* a Caribbean flavour?
  - b. How does the vibrant background colour add to the story?
  - c. In groups have the children choose a fairy tale and transform it into a modern story by changing references, places and the language to reflect popular culture. For a twist on Cinderella, you can show the NFB animation *The Tender Tale of Cinderella Penguin*.
2. What did Mamma Nettie mean when she told Dalby and Tina, “Mind me good now”? What other expressions do adults use when they want children to listen and do what they’re told?
3. When the cacoya announced what she was and what her intentions were, Tina remembered everything that Mamma Nettie told her about cacoyas. Tina knew that she had to protect and save her younger brother. Tina didn’t pretend to have superhero powers, but she didn’t give up. She used critical thinking to devise a plan; she used logic, previous knowledge, creativity and ingenuity to keep the cacoya busy all night until the sun came up. Tina created a mental if/then strategy. Have the class create a graphical representation of Tina’s if/then reasoning. Create different scenarios and ask the students to create if/then graphic representations of their thinking to solve the problem.
4. The cacoya grabs Tina’s basket to collect river water to wash Tina before bed. Why was the basket good for carrying eggs but not water? What should the cacoya have taken to fetch the water? Choose an object in the classroom and study its design. What geometric shapes are used? Look at the structure – what is the strongest or weakest part? Does it require special storage? What purpose does this item serve? Who uses it, when and why? And so on.

5. The children clearly disobeyed Mamma Nettie by crossing the bridge and putting themselves in danger. However, because of Tina's strategizing and problem solving, they escaped unharmed. What do you think Mamma Nettie should do? Should the children be punished for disobeying her? Should they be rewarded for escaping unharmed and getting rid of the cacoya? These questions should provoke an interesting class discussion.
  
6. Storytelling and public speaking are alike in that there is one speaker and an audience. Talk about how storytelling is special. The person telling the tale must draw the listener into the story and "live" it. A good storyteller uses words, tone of voice and body language. Invite a storyteller to class if possible. Visit Storytellers of Canada at <[www.sc-cc.com](http://www.sc-cc.com)> and this British site <[www.timsheppard.co.uk/story/faq.html#Learning](http://www.timsheppard.co.uk/story/faq.html#Learning)> for information.





## Oma's Quilt

1. *Oma* - Dutch, *Anush* - Hungarian, *Bubbie* - Yiddish, *Nona* - Italian, *Grandma*, *Granny*, *Nana* and *Nanny* - English, *Mémé* - French, *Safta* - Hebrew, *Yaya* - Greek. These are just some of the affectionate names for grandmothers. Do students have any others? Who decided what they were to call their grandmother? Where does the name come from – another language, another country, a family history? If they have more than one grandmother, how do the names help tell them apart?
  
2. A memory quilt, like the one that Emily and her mom made for Oma, is a wonderful way of preserving and handing down history. Each student can make a smaller version of this as a memory pillow of their year in your class.
  - a. Each term give each student a 15 cm square of fabric.
  - b. The students make a sketch, on paper of the same size, that symbolizes, or is a memory of, something that happened that term.
  - c. When they are happy with the picture, they transfer it to the piece of fabric.
  - d. They sew the fabric squares together as they are finished.
  - e. Once the pieces are all finished and assembled, they are sewn onto a backing piece of fabric. Leave one side only partially sewn together.
  - f. Through the opening, the students stuff the pillow – this stuffing can be purchased at a craft or sewing supply store.
  - g. The last quarter of the side is sewn with a slip stitch to finish the memory pillow.
  - h. Classmates and teachers can sign the back of the pillow to add to the memory of the year.
  
3. Oma says how handsome Opa looked in his soldier's uniform. A soldier's uniform tells people the following information:
  - a. Country represented
  - b. Branch of the military
  - c. Rank of the soldier
  - d. What the soldier has accomplished – medals won, campaigns fought in
  - e. Depending on the style of the uniform – what year it was worn

Invite a veteran or member of Canada's military to class to talk about a soldier's uniform. Ask the students to list who else in their community wears a uniform – police officers, firefighters, RCMP, bus drivers. Talk about why people wear uniforms.

4. Dealing with major change is hard for people of all ages, not just for Oma. Arrange the students into groups and ask them to finish the following statements.
- Those first few days in the residence Oma felt\_\_\_\_\_. (angry, frustrated, sad, confused, lonely, happy, involved, loved)
  - Oma felt \_\_\_\_\_ because\_\_\_\_\_.
  - Oma’s family could have \_\_\_\_\_ to help Oma feel \_\_\_\_\_.

What changes have your students dealt with – moving to a new school, a new classroom, a new grade, a new teacher, a new house? How have they dealt with these changes? If a new student walked into their classroom next week, what could they do to help that student adapt?

5. Emily and her mom want to help Oma adjust. They visit often, point out all the activities available and try to help her feel more at home. In many communities there are different kinds of facilities, clubs and services available to seniors. Some are designed to help them live independently in their homes as long as possible. How many different facilities, clubs and services are available to seniors in your community? What could your class do to make a difference in the lives of local seniors?





## Tzaritza

1. What is a *tzaritza*? Why do you think the artist chose this title?
2. The animation of *Tzaritza* involves various items. How many can the students name (buttons, origami boats, découpage, photographs and drawings)? Where are they used and how do they add to the enjoyment of the story? Ask the students to create a picture using unusual items they find around them or brought from home. The picture cannot simply be a collage but must express an emotion, a thought or an action where the items help to tell the story.
3. **For younger students:** Lily is going on a long trip and must pack many things in her suitcase. What would the students pack for such a trip? This question may be answered in the circle and memory game where each student says “I packed my bag and in it I put...” The students must repeat everything that has already been said plus add an item of their own. You can ask each student to bring an item that they would take on the trip, and have a few suitcases in the classroom. In groups, the students could pack the suitcase and weigh it to make sure they would not surpass the maximum luggage weight.
4. When Lily spent time with her Baba, she learned about her father’s childhood. When we learn about our parents as children, we often learn about a different side of them and begin to understand some of their adult quirks and habits. Ask the students to write 3-5 questions to ask their parents about when they were young. They can ask these same questions to their grandparents or to someone else who knew their parents as children. The students should write the answers to the questions. As a follow-up, talk about any insights they gained.
5. No matter which generation leaves the “old country” to immigrate to the “new country,” they do so with mixed emotions:
  - a. loss – loss of familiar people, language, culture, religious institutions, countryside.
  - b. fear – fear of the unknown: Will they understand and will they be understood? What kind of house will they live in?
  - c. excitement – discoveries of new things, people and places.

Often immigrants settle near each other to establish a comfort zone of language, foods, traditions, religious institutions, etc. Taking a look at the local community around the school, list the various places and stores that cater to specific ethnic groups. Why are they located in this area? Why are they successful? Who started them and why? Brainstorm who they could ask. The answers will provide a short history of ethnic groups in the community.

6. Lily experiences many emotions during her story – excitement over the impending trip, curiosity about Baba’s house, wonder at what her father’s life was like growing up with Baba, love and respect for Baba, delight over her special keepsake/tzaritza and finding one of her own, sadness at leaving Baba, joy at Baba’s arrival in Montreal. Have students list some of these emotions. Ask how she expresses them, in words and actions. What strategies does she use to deal with her sad feelings?

