

**Review from *Storylines*, the newsletter/magazine of the Society for Storytelling** Published Summer 2008

*N.B. The first volume in this series, Tall Tale telling was not included in this review having been published 3 years earlier and briefly reviewed in Storylines at that time.*

**'IMAGINE ON', 'YARN SPINNING' and 'NEW LAMPS FROM OLD' – by Rob Parkinson**

Books 2, 3 and 4 from the series "Natural Storytellers" Price £5.25 each + p&p from Rob.

Reviewed by Jaycee La Bouche - Children's Relaxation Teacher and Therapist

**Synopsis of The Series**

These three books are part of the series "Natural Storytellers", written by professional storyteller, educator and therapist Rob Parkinson. Each book builds on techniques introduced in the preceding one; therefore they also compliment each other really well.

I found them to be a true gift to the imagination, ideal for anyone seeking ways of working creatively with stories and helping others to explore emotions and values through the use of metaphors. The general theme of the series focuses on working with the many layers and textures involved in the art of storytelling, from developing plots and characters to gaining confidence in structuring and narrating a story.

The techniques and games can be adapted to use with children as young as 5 - 6 years old, teenagers and adults in a wide variety of settings. I personally was inspired by the vast array of benefits, skills and enjoyment that can be developed from the art of storytelling techniques, especially for use as highly effective teaching, therapeutic and communication tools.

Each book is well presented in an easy to read style, gifting the reader with easy to apply techniques and skills that are fun, flexible and clearly explained. All ideas and techniques are thoughtfully accompanied by explanatory notes that give guidance on how themes can be easily adapted, simplified or extended ; enhance specific skills and aspects of storytelling and how these skills can be applied to a range of areas such as education, healthcare, counselling and holistic therapies such as hypnotherapy.

As a children's relaxation teacher and therapist, I found many useful ideas that I am already applying in creative visualisations and coaching sessions to promote relaxation, self esteem and build confidence.

**Imagine On**

This is Number two in the series and contains 24 fun ways to picture and tell magical stories, with the main focus being on developing multisensory skills. This is all done using basic imagery and ideas based on fantasy, myths and

fairy tales. It also gives guidance and techniques on how storytelling can be used as an aid to developing memory skills, confidence in speaking out loud in front of a group and the ability to verbalise pictures created from the imagination.

I was particularly interested in the many references made to the therapeutic benefits of metaphors and how these can be used to cope with fears, anxieties and challenges and to explore personal qualities, dreams and developing interpersonal skills. All this done very simply, yet allows lots of scope for expanding concepts and level of complexity.

## **Yarn Spinning**

Number three in the series and contains 24 fun ways to develop plots and themes using 'organic' storytelling techniques. This book allows both the listener and the storyteller to really fine tune concentration and listening skills and add attention to detail by adding subtle layers onto basic themes and creating new dimensions.

I found that it follows on beautifully from book 2 Imagine On, encouraging participants to establish their individual meaning and interpretation and develop abstract ideas.

This book is ideal both for those who have the opportunity to work with a group or individuals over a period of time or as a one off workshop.

## **New Lamps From Old**

Number 4 in the series, containing 24 fun games for making new tales from old plots. This book is fantastic for helping others to gain confidence in experimenting with changing plots and new characters and thinking of creative responses to fresh ideas.

The main theme of this book skilfully guides the reader through the process of weaving new plots and making subtle changes to central characters, events and themes whilst still honouring the essence of the original story. I found this inspired me to connect quite naturally with my own passion and enjoyment in creating new ideas and found the fun element really helped me feel comfortable with being spontaneous.

I particularly enjoyed Part 2, which has a selection of games based on the basic plots of traditional folk tales from around the world, which in itself made this book a particularly delightful read.

More suitable for older children (7+), however the author offers plenty of suggestions of how to adapt and simplify the games.

The final part of the book offers solo activities for anyone keen on exercising and keeping the imagination muscles well toned. "ways of making old stories new and of making new stories from old ones".