Storytelling baskets (EYFS) – Put a range of linked story prompts in baskets, e.g. one with a pirate figure, ship, coins etc., another with a farmer, toy tractor, farmyard animals etc., and allow the children some time to play freely with them. Ask each child to tell you a story using the items in their basket. Prompt them to add more detail through questioning, e.g. Where is the pirate? What has he found? How do you think he knew where the treasure was? etc.

Talk for writing (KS1) – Choose a traditional tale, such as Little Red Riding Hood or Goldilocks and read it to the children. Create a story map along the way and add actions to key vocabulary to help the children recall the story. Throughout the week, build the story piece by piece until the children are able to retell the story from start to finish as a class. If possible, arrange for the class to tell their story to the rest of the school in assembly.

BYOB: Bring your own book! (KS1 and KS2) – Encourage the children to bring in their favourite book from home, or they could choose their favourite story from the school library. Give each child the opportunity to read their favourite scene or chapter to the rest of the class throughout the week and explain why it is their favourite book. Their classmates should be encouraged to ask questions to find out more about the story and characters.

Tell the story (KS1 and KS2) – Give the children a location, e.g. the Amazon rainforest, and characters, e.g. an explorer and her pet dog, and challenge them to create a story. How will the story begin? Can they think of a problem or dilemma that the character/s might face? How could the problem be resolved? For KS1, you may want to provide an idea for the problem, e.g. they have run out of food / water supplies. Encourage the children to ‘flesh out’ the location using their senses, i.e. what can you see/ hear/ smell etc.? Ask the children to consider how they picture the characters, what sort of personalities they might have and how they might be feeling.

Pass on the story (lower KS2) – Sit with the class in a circle and share an opening line for a story with the class, e.g. “In the middle of the night, Sam woke up to the sound of a loud crash downstairs.” ‘Pass’ the story around the class for each child to add their own line and put together a short class story. Remind the children to consider the beginning, middle and ending, i.e. when you get half way round the circle you should be reaching the middle of the story then the last few children in the circle should try and bring it to an end.
Be the star (KS2) – Challenge the children to tell the class a story about themselves. They must choose whether to tell a real story or make one up. If the children are inventing their own story, remind them to try and make it convincing to trick their classmates. Give them some time to plan their story and mind map the details. Allow each child a fair turn in telling their story without interruption. The rest of the class should vote on whether they think the story is true or made up. Encourage the children to ask questions and listen carefully to the storyteller’s responses to help them catch out any made up stories.

New ending (KS2) – Recap the ending of a familiar story with the children. Ask them to consider alternative ways the story could have ended. Ask leading questions, such as: “In what other ways could the main character have resolved their problem?”; “What would have happened if the main character wasn’t happy with that resolution?” etc. Create a class book filled with alternative endings.

Reading buddies (all ages) – Ask children in KS2 to pick a book to share with a child in EYFS or KS1. The older children should read the story to the younger pupils for a fabulous peer teaching and learning experience.