

What is true inside a made-up story

Is that true, and how would you find out?

5 days · 4 books · 207 min in full · 106 min short · Grades 2-3

The idea

A made-up story can contain accurate information, and a made-up story can also be assembled out of accurate details so that the invention sounds believable. These four books do both, and one of them has a narrator who explains her method while she is using it.

The unit separates three things: a fact, a fiction, and a fiction assembled out of facts. Princess Angelica supplies the third and supplies it twice, which is why it carries two days.

The closing days move from asking what is true to asking where the information came from and how it could be checked. That distinction matters: naming a source is not the same thing as verifying a claim.

The arc

1. A story can carry real information
2. A made-up story can be built out of true details
3. A method can be explained by the person using it
4. A fact can travel with its source attached
5. A source tells you where information came from; checking tells you how to test it

Where this fits

When to run it. Grades 2-3, after the evidence unit. Asking whether a claim is true assumes the habit of checking it.

What it assumes. The evidence unit, or the ability to say what evidence would make a claim change.

What it builds. Separating fact from fiction inside one text; recognising a fiction assembled from facts; attaching a source to a fact; distinguishing source from verification.

What it leads to. Later research work and later work on the reliability of sources.

The 5 days

DAY 1

Using Information: Everything True in This Book Collect the facts about lions in this book, and say where Jelly learned each one.

Why here. First: real information carried inside an invented claim. The class finds the true parts of something untrue.

From Princess Angelica, Part-Time Lion Trainer by Monique Polak · Real information carried inside a made-up claim 43 min full · 22 min short · Makes: Three fact sheets: bodies, behaviour, and the three jobs

DAY 2

Fact and Fiction: How Jelly Builds a Story Separate the true parts of Jelly's stories from the invented parts, and explain why she mixes them.

Why here. Second, the pair to day 1 - the narrator explains the method she is using while she uses it. Nothing else in the corpus does this so plainly.

From Princess Angelica, Part-Time Lion Trainer by Monique Polak · A method the narrator explains while she is using it 43 min full · 22 min short · Makes: A two-column sorting sheet: true, and invented

DAY 3

Story and Facts: What the Last Pages Add Sort what the story invents from what the closing pages state as fact about Captain Kidd's ship.

Why here. Third: made-up story and factual closing material side by side in one book. The class compares two kinds of writing about one subject.

From Captain Jake by Shannon Stewart · A made-up story and factual closing pages side by side 35 min full · 18 min short · Makes: A two-column chart sorting story details from stated facts

DAY 4

Using Information: Where Every Beaver Fact Comes From Sort the beaver facts in the book by who or what supplied them, and explain how each source came to know.

Why here. Fourth. Facts with their sources attached, including children doing their own research. The class starts asking where information came from rather than accepting "the book says so." From Badir and the Beaver by Shannon Stewart · Facts with their sources attached, including children doing their own

research

43 min full · 22 min short · Makes: A fact sheet with the fact, its source, and how that source came to know

DAY 5

Using Information: Fifteen Desserts

Collect what this book tells you about the desserts in the contest, identify who supplies each piece of information, and explain what would need checking if you wanted to use it as a factual source.

Why here. Last: recipes and traditions described by the people who make or practise them. The class ends by separating firsthand information from the separate question of how a factual claim could be checked.

From Lark and the Dessert Disaster by Natasha Deen · Recipes and traditions described by the people connected to them 43 min full · 22 min short · Makes: A gallery list of desserts, their sources, and the three judging rules

Words to use	
Word	How it is used
fact	Something presented as true and capable of being checked. Established day 1.
source	Where the information came from. Introduced explicitly on day 4.
check	The separate act of testing whether a factual claim holds up.
made up out of	Day 2. Distinguished from simply “made up.”

What to prepare

- Checkpoint 1 page, one per child
- Checkpoint 2 page, one per child
- A two-column sorting sheet per child

Checkpoints

After day 2 · True, made up, or made up out of true things Six statements from Princess Angelica. The child sorts them three ways.

Without a book. Six slips and no book.

Look for. The third category is used. A child sorting only two ways has missed the unit's subject.

Say to the child. Sort these three ways. Which ones are made up out of true things?

After day 5 · Source and check Four factual claims from the unit's books. For each one, the child names where the information came from and then names a reasonable way they could check it.

Without a book. Four statements and no book.

Look for. Two different answers: a source and a check. "The book says so" is not enough for either one.

Say to the child. Where did this information come from? Now, if you wanted to know whether it was accurate, how could you check?

The task at the end

Build one and take one apart Each child writes a short invented animal claim assembled from three accurate details, following Jelly's method, and labels it invented before handing it to a partner.

The partner separates the three factual details from the invented claim and says which detail did the most work in making the claim sound believable.

Collect. The labelled invented claim, the partner's separation, and the judgement on the load-bearing fact.

Time. One session of about 40 minutes.

Teacher key

- Checkpoint 1: the lion's habits are factual information in the text, the training job is invented, and Jelly's account is built by combining true details with an invented claim.
- Checkpoint 2: a full answer contains both parts: where the information came from and a separate method or place that could be used to check it.
- Task: the load-bearing fact is the interesting part. It is often the most specific detail, but any answer is acceptable when the child explains why that fact made the invention more believable.

What a strong answer looks like

Strand	What to see
Sorting	Separates fact from fiction inside one text.
Assembly	Recognises a fiction built from true facts.
Source	Names where information came from.

Checking

Gives a separate way the factual claim could be verified.

Keeping the daily evidence

Keep each child's answer to “how would you find out?” from day 1 and day 5. The unit works when the answer develops from “the book says so” into two separate ideas: where the information came from and how it could be checked.

What to pass on

- A child who can name a source but cannot explain how to check a claim needs that distinction made explicit in later research work.
- The task deliberately produces plausible invented animal claims. Every one should be labelled as invented before it is shared, and the activity should end with the factual details separated clearly from the invented claims.

The books this unit uses

- Captain Jake by Shannon Stewart · 1 lesson
- Badir and the Beaver by Shannon Stewart · 1 lesson
- Lark and the Dessert Disaster by Natasha Deen · 1 lesson
- Princess Angelica, Part-Time Lion Trainer by Monique Polak · 2 lessons

What was considered and left out

65 lessons were available at this grade. These were wanted and not used:

- 7470 · imagining-being-a-lion — A prediction from three feelings, tested twice. It closes the evidence unit; it is also the third Princess Angelica lesson, which the cap would have excluded anyway.
- 7469 · how-lark-investigates — An investigation method. Also wanted by the evidence unit and excluded there by the cap; genuinely unplaced and the band's best loss.
- 7212 · pulling-the-quills — A real first-aid procedure. Real information, but it belongs in the procedures unit, where following and evaluating the procedure is the point.