



Play  
School

# Story Time

PlayWorld

## Ideas for Educators

In this episode of Play School Story Time, Eddie Woo shares 'Stellarphant' by James Foley.



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### Pedagogical characteristics

Selecting a story for the *Conceptual PlayWorld*

#### Story: Stellarphant

Written and illustrated by James Foley

Publisher: Fremantle Press, 2021

### Pedagogical practices

- Select a story that is enjoyable for children and adults.
- Build drama for the characters in the story.
- Build empathy for the characters in the story.
- Choose a plot that lends itself to introducing a problem situation.
- Be clear about the concept(s) and its relation to the story and play plot to be developed.
- Choose adventures or or journeys that spring from the plot.

### Conceptual PlayWorld in action

- **Story Summary:** This is a story about an elephant named Stella who is determined to be an astronaut even though Space Command tells her she can't. It brings forward the concept of living things on earth and in space.
- Develop the drama in the story e.g. Stella's determination and perseverance to accomplish a goal of space travel. Meet other challenges e.g. build a facility on the surface of the moon for Stella and her crew of animal astronauts.
- Develop empathy with Stella who feels excluded (discriminated against) when Space Command tells her she can't be an astronaut. I wonder how Stella felt e.g. when she was at the table with all the managers excluding her?
- **Problem situation:** Having a moon station suitable for animals.
- **Concepts:** Identifying the needs of living things on earth and in space e.g. water, air and resources from the land such as food, shelter.
- **Possible plot extension:** Space Command tells Stella the *moon base* is not set up for animals. But Stella and the other animals need to continue their scientific research. Can they build one?

A partnership between



### Pedagogical characteristics

Designing a *Conceptual PlayWorld* space

### Pedagogical practices

- Find a space in the classroom or outdoor area suitable for an imaginary *Conceptual PlayWorld* of the story.
- Design opportunities for child-initiated play in ways that develop the play plot further or explore concepts and make them more meaningful.
- Plan ways for children to represent their ideas and express their understandings.

### Conceptual PlayWorld in action

- Turn an indoor or outdoor area into a 'Space Lab' to research the needs of various animals on the moon.
- Pretend to be an astronaut like Stella and her crew. You might have to train for space flight. Do you have a spacecraft? Have you experienced micro gravity? Pretend to spacewalk like Stella did in the illustrations. Do you have the right equipment? Watch the [Play School Through the Windows: NASA](#) episode for ideas.
- Pretend to be a scientist or an astrobiologist, identifying the needs of living things in space and on the moon. Where will the animals sleep? Did you know that real life animals have travelled to space e.g. monkey, dogs and cats?
- Invite children to draw their *moon base* labelling the resources and equipment they'll need to keep the animals safe. Classify living things, then compare and contrast living conditions (e.g. food, water, light, temperatures, air) for animals on earth and on the moon.

Entering and exiting the *Conceptual PlayWorld* space

- Plan a routine for the whole group to enter and exit the *Conceptual PlayWorld* of the story where all the children are in the same imaginary situation.
- Children choose characters as they enter into the imaginary situation.
- Educator is always a character in the story.

- To signify entering and exiting the imaginary situation (e.g. the Space Lab) you could walk like an elephant – Do you have a trunk? How much do you weigh? Or walk like a tiger, a monkey, a penguin, or an octopus. How does an octopus move? Do you have tentacles? Getting in role will help you think about the needs of the animals on the *moon base*.
- Children and adults can pretend to be Stella and the other animal astronauts who walk on the moon. Meet Buzz Aldrin or Neil Armstrong who can teach you how to walk around and conduct experiments on the moon. Or meet astrobiologists to help with your research. You could interview animals who have been to space e.g. fruit flies, mice, tortoises – What was the radiation and microgravity like? What did they eat?

Planning the play inquiry or problem scenario

- Problem scenario is not scripted, but a general idea of the problem is planned.
- Problem scenario is dramatic and engaging.

- Stella (educator in role) enters the room and says something like "Hi Children. I need your help. We're ready to launch into space next week to do our scientific research on the moon. But we've just found out that the moon base isn't set up for





### Pedagogical characteristics

Planning the play inquiry or problem scenario

(continued)

Planning educator interactions to build conceptual learning in role

### Pedagogical practices

- The problem invites children to investigate solutions to help the play in the *Conceptual PlayWorld*.
- Be clear about the concepts that will be learned from solving the problem situation, through children's play.

- Educators are not always the same character. Roles are not scripted.
- Plan who will have more knowledge and who will be present with the children to model solving the problem. Educators can take on different roles for the *Conceptual PlayWorld*. Plan your role to be either **equally present** with the children, or to **model practices** in a role, or to be **needing help** from the children. Your role can also be **together with** the child leading, where educators support children to act out the role or solution together.

### Conceptual PlayWorld in action

*animals. I need your help to research what my crew needs to survive on the moon.*" (Stella could also write a letter or leave a phone message for the children with her request).

- Children and educators can meet Stella and her animal crew. Fly to space and investigate living on the moon. What will they need? Is there air on the moon? Is there an atmosphere? What is the temperature? Are there meteoroids? The *moon base* will have to be tough and sturdy. It will need water, power and food storage.
- Meet an astrobiologist. Can fish swim in micro gravity?

- Plan for your role in the *PlayWorld* by choosing one of the following:
  1. **Be equally present with older children** - e.g. *"Let's research how we'll get oxygen to the moon base"*.
  2. **Model practices in a role** - e.g. *"Let's grow lettuce, peas and other crops. We'll need a chamber similar to a green house or bubble dome like they have in international space stations"*.
  3. **Seek help from the children** - e.g. *"I'm doing research for the animal moon station. We'll need water, air and food. What sort of shelter will we need?"*.
  4. **Act out the role together with the child leading** - e.g. *"Let's pretend to fly to space together. Let's put on our spacesuits"*.

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