

An Introduction to Making a Story Line

This is an exercise that can help children reflect on which parts of a story are happy or sad. This can generate considerable discussion in a family or group of students, depending on the story. We are enclosing an activity sheet that can be used for this activity and some alternatives.

The first step is to identify 6-10 key events in a story. To make the story line, you will need to decide whether each event is happy or sad or somewhere in between. Take for example, the story of Joseph. Is “Joseph receiving a special coat from his father” an event that is happy, sad, or somewhere in between? Note that there is a neutral, middle line on the story line chart. Anything above the line is happy, and anything below the line is sad. The degree of happiness or sadness is shown by how far away from the middle line it is placed.

The story line can be plotted out on paper (see below) or on a chalk board. You can also write the events on index cards, place them in sequential order, and then arrange them on a table or the floor (making the neutral line with a rope or masking tape). Another alternative is to have each person represent one event and stand “above” or “below” the neutral line.































Decide whether you want to make a story line showing your response to each event or showing how a character in the story responded to the events. Discussion is key here! Make 2 separate story lines if students disagree and have good reasons for different points of view.

Other Options:

- Take a different color pen or marker and plot another story line from the perspective of someone else in the story—someone whose view is likely to differ. (Take the example of Joseph’s brothers going to Egypt to buy food and finding that they are accused of spying and theft. It might be interesting to plot a story line from the perspective of the brothers.) Then see how these lines compare.
- Let older students work together in small groups to develop story lines from the point of view of several different characters in a story.

Story Line

Decide whether each event is happy or sad. Draw a line going up and down from left to right to show how the different parts of this story make us feel.

Very happy										
Rather happy										
A little bit happy										
Neutral or mixed feelings										
A little bit angry or sad										
Rather angry or sad										
Very angry or sad										
Events in the Story	Joseph receives a special coat from his father.	Joseph's brothers strip off his coat and throw him into a pit.	Joseph is lifted out of the pit and sold to Midianite traders.	While working for Potiphar Joseph is unjustly accused and thrown into prison.	Joseph interprets dreams for the butler and the baker in prison.	Joseph is taken out of prison and interprets Pharaoh's dreams.	Joseph is made ruler in Egypt.	Joseph's brothers come to buy food from him.	Joseph reveals himself to his brothers.	Joseph is reunited with his father in Egypt.