

Stories

A routine for uncovering accounts of complex issues.

Consider how accounts of issues, events, people, society, etc. are presented; what has been left out, and how might you want to present the account.

What is the **story** that is presented?

What is the account that is told?

What is the **untold** story?

What is left out in the account? What other angles are missing in the account?

What is **your** story?

What is the account that you think should be the one told?

PURPOSE

What kind of thinking does this routine encourage?

This thinking routine invites learners to (1) explore how accounts of issues, events, people, society, etc. are presented; (2) tease apart and rethink the various angles, dimensions and scope of accounts; (3) consider what has been left out in the account; and (4) take a stand on the kind of account that they would want to hear.

APPLICATION

When and where can I use it?

It is advisable to use the routine's prompts in the order they are presented, as the sequence is designed to support learners in uncovering how narratives are presented and how they could be re-thought. You may want to use additional prompts to target specific goals, such as:

- To move from a local to a global perspective: "*What is a **bigger** story that this story could be connected or related to?*"
- To think about what an individual's account could be: "*What is a **smaller** story that this story could be connected or related to?*"
- To consider how different disciplinary experts might explain or describe the issue, event, people, society, etc.: "*What is the **scientific/historical/literary/etc.** story?*"

You may also consider framing the prompt "*What is **your** story?*" as "*What is **his/her** story? What is **our** story?*" when you want learners to explore multiple perspectives on the issue, event, people, society, etc., and begin to craft a collective account.

LAUNCH

What are some tips for starting and using this routine?

- The prompt “What is the **story**?” invites learners to understand how an issue, event, people, society, etc., is presented. If the material used with the thinking routine presents more than one perspective, consider dividing the learners into groups and assigning them a specific perspective. That way, these different “stories” will flow naturally into the next prompt, where different angles and perspectives are brought into the mix.
- The prompt “What is the **untold** story?” invites learners to explore the multiple angles, perspectives and dimensions in complex issues, events, people, society, etc., as well as hypothesize the motivations for the account: whose account is this? What has been left out? What has been emphasized? What was made less significant? Who does this account advantage and disadvantage? In what way is it easy to not pay attention to? Unpack it for learners by asking them: what might people not want us to know about the issue, event, people, society, etc., or what do people not pay attention to or don’t think about?
- The prompt “What is **your** story?” invites learners to bring their own perspective and aspirations into the topic or issue. Unpack the prompt by asking learners: How would you rewrite this story? What perspective would you take and why? How would the story ideally be like ‘in a different world’? While it is not intended to be an invitation for learners to relate their own experiences, the prompt is still roomy enough for learners to use their lived experiences as a basis for what they hope to see happen with the topic or issue, or why their aspiration matters.

This thinking routine was developed as part of the PZ Connect project at Project Zero at the Harvard Graduate School of Education. Explore the full PZ Thinking Routine Toolbox at pz.harvard.edu/thinking-routines.