



Storytelling & Bookmaking Field Trips

at The Greater Boston Bigfoot Research Institute



Dear 826 Boston Volunteer,

Storytelling and Bookmaking Field Trips are action-packed, two-hour workshops where volunteers act as members of the publishing house of Archibald, Spangler, and Klobbersteen, and guide students through writing a book for our very demanding publisher. This guide provides more information on volunteer roles and responsibilities during the Field Trip.

Thank you,

The 826 Boston Team

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Field Trip Overview

During an 826 Boston Storytelling and Bookmaking Field Trip, a class of 1st–6th grade students visits the center for an energetic writing experience. A greeter introduces them to 826 Boston, the Greater Boston Bigfoot Research Institute, and the publishing house of Archibald, Spangler, and Klobbersteen.

A photographer and their assistant hand out props (glasses, scarves, hats, etc.) to take *serious* author photos before ushering students into the publishing space. Students work with storytellers, typists, and illustrators to create an original story in about 90 minutes.

The students write the first two thirds of the story together, adding characterization, detail, dialogue, and plot twists. During this time, the illustrator produces a cover and second picture and the publishing team scans, prints, and collates all pages for the final books. Then students split apart to individually write their own ending while the publishing team binds their books.

A publishing assistant runs the books to Klobbersteen (or one of their colleagues, Archibald or Spangler) for approval while the class anxiously waits. Our publisher delivers specific feedback to at least a few students via video or phone call and makes sure the students keep writing. Students cheer for each other and leave with their personalized copies of the story they wrote. We all encourage them to keep writing and to come back and visit soon.



What will I do during a Field Trip?

Volunteers help build out the publishing house of Archibald, Spangler, and Klobbersteen by acting as the different team members. We encourage volunteers to lean into the role and build the illusion that we are part of a real publishing house welcoming our guest authors for the day! An 826 Boston team member will review the different roles and responsibilities before students arrive.

A general outline of a Field Trip:

- **9:00 AM–9:30 AM – Training**
Group info session and training with first-time Field Trip volunteers.
- **9:30 AM–10:00 AM – Set up**
Returning volunteers arrive and everyone arranges the room, reviews roles and responsibilities, and assembles supplies.
- **10:00 AM–10:15 AM – Students arrive**
Staff greets and orients students. Volunteers take author photos and make name tags. Storyteller leads a welcoming activity with students in their seats while waiting for the rest of the class to take their author photos and get their name tags made.
- **10:15 AM–11:00 AM – Group storytelling**
The storyteller facilitates the story development. The typist and typist assistant record the story. Volunteers sit with shyer students and encourage them to share ideas and help with book production.
- **11:00 AM–11:45 AM – Write individual endings**
Most volunteers help students finish individual stories. Staff and volunteers print and assemble books.
- **11:45 AM–12:00 PM – Bind books and write author bios**
The students write their author bios and volunteers finish book production. A volunteer “runs” books to the publisher (aka the Dunkin’ Donuts next door) to sign.
- **12:00 PM–12:10 PM – Books are approved!**
The publisher calls, approves the books, and praises some students for their endings.
- **12:10 PM–12:15 PM – Students leave**
The staff give the students a tour of the book, the runner returns, and the full team assembles a high five tunnel send-off for the class.
- **12:15 PM–12:25 PM – Volunteers debrief**
Volunteers and staff reflect on highlights and challenges that came up during the shift.
- **12:25 PM–12:30 PM – Rearrange room and depart!**

Overview of Volunteer Roles

Veteran Field Trip volunteers can sign up in advance for the Publisher and Storyteller roles. See expanded Publisher and Storyteller Guides for more details on those roles. We typically have an illustrator from MassArt, but when they are not available, another volunteer can flex their artistic muscles.

An 826 Boston team member will assign tasks and provide training for all other volunteer roles the day of.

As Students Arrive:

In-person volunteers run two stations that students visit before group storytelling begins: Author Bios and Name Tags. The Storyteller and Illustrator help students settle into their seats for group storytelling.

PHOTOGRAPHER

- Takes photos of all students and teachers.
- Hands camera/iPad to production staff when all students and teachers have been photographed.
- Puts props away and out of reach once all students are photographed.

PHOTOGRAPHER'S ASSISTANT

- Directs students into the room and shows where to leave their belongings
- Gets students into props speedily and directs them to sit in the chair.
- Lets the greeter know when they are ready for two more students (once the second student is wearing props and ready to be photographed).

NAME TAG MAKER

- Asks every student to spell their name and writes it down legibly in a thick marker.
- Directs students to sit by the screen once they have a name tag.

STORYTELLER

- Greets students after they receive a name tag.
- Leads a round of hangman with students while their peers finish getting author photos and name tags.

ILLUSTRATOR

- Draws an illustration of their choice on the whiteboard while students arrive to show they can illustrate ANYTHING.

During Group Storytelling:

The Storyteller and Illustrator lead the students through group storytelling. The other in-person volunteers act as the typist and typist assistant or get started on production.

PUBLISHER

- Calls in via video call four times during the Field Trip.
- Sets goals for students to work toward at different intervals.
- Reinforces guidelines and expectations while championing and praising students' ideas.

STORYTELLER

- Facilitates group storytelling process.
- Sets tone, fostering a safe space where students can share ideas equally.
- Walks students through the elements of a story, including characters, setting, plot, and dialogue.

TYPIST

- Types story in InDesign as it takes shape, prompts/nudges story forward.
- Answers Publisher's calls (if we are using video calls during the Field Trip, instead of phone calls).
- Makes 1–2 typing mistakes/typos to keep kids on their toes.
- Alerts production staff that the story is ready for proofreading and printing.

TYPIST'S ASSISTANT

- Keeps track of other plot points/details that typist may miss as they are typing up the story.
- Helps proofread the story after the cliffhanger is written.

ILLUSTRATOR

- Creates two black-and-white illustrations on paper for the book based on students' ideas and hands them off to production.
- Partners with the storyteller.

During Individual Endings:

All of the in-person volunteers, including the Storyteller and Illustrator, will split up into writing or production assistants.

WRITING ASSISTANT

- Helps students write their unique ending to the story.
- Delivers finished endings to the production table.
- Works with students on Author Bio sheets after they finish their endings.

PRODUCTION ASSISTANT

- Trims author photos and pastes into final books.
- Assists with printing, assembly, and binding books.

The Publisher

As one of the three curmudgeonly publishers (Archibald, Klobbersteen, or Spangler) you will be adding dramatic flair and a sense of urgency to the Field Trips, while continuing to lead the publishing house of Archibald, Spangler, and Klobbersteen to great publishing glory. You'll keep your no-good, uncreative staff (that is, us) in line by watching and checking in on us, and you will demand books be done by noon each day. Here's what you need to know:

Choose your Quirky Publisher persona (or make your own!):

Klobbersteen: Loves anything orange; just melts their cold heart.

Archibald: Loves words that start with the letter "A;" and uses them A LOT.

Spangler: Loves words that describe how things sound, smell, feel, and taste.

Publisher Tips

- If you're doing a video call, remember to change your display name to the name of your publisher persona.
- While calling in, make sure you speak clearly and get close to the camera so your face is big and scary.
- Remember: the kids are your only hope! You are gruff with them, but they continuously amaze you with their ideas and you have a hard time keeping up a mean front when they tell you about their characters! You catch yourself before you get too melty though, and make comments like, "OK, but I still need to know what happens next."
- Also, the kids can help you keep tabs on the staff, who you can continue to be gruff with. Ask the students how the adults are doing, and remind them to make sure to keep the adults in line.
- Be especially harsh on storytellers, typists, and the illustrator. Give them a hard time, not the students. You can get their names wrong on purpose, cut them off, be dismissive, etc.
- Have a bottle of water or something for your throat handy, and keep an eye out for covert messages from the staff (typically text or email) to let you know when to call in.

Publisher Script

This is a framework you can use, but feel free to embellish! Want to call us back two minutes after you hung up? It's totally in character! Feel free to keep us on our toes, you battleaxe, you.

An 826 Boston team member will communicate with you via text throughout the Field Trip to confirm when you should call in. They may also provide some details to mention to help the students stay on task.

Call #1 – around 10:25 AM:

The purpose of this call is to check in with your new authors and establish the urgency to GET THESE BOOKS DONE by noon! This is also your chance to set expectations around the tone and content for their stories and build your grumpy, curmudgeonly character. Pretend you just woke up from a nap and that your no-good team of adults might keep you from getting to your noon cat yoga or basket weaving class.

- **KLOBBERSTEEN:** Hello? Are you there? Hello, I'm Mx. Klobbersteen, co-owner of Archibald, Spangler, and Klobbersteen. You just woke me up from a nap, and, let me tell you, I had a horrible dream! Do you know what I was dreaming about? Unfinished books! Speaking of, have you started your stories yet?
- [Storyteller explains that they have some ideas and that the stories will be done by noon.]
- **KLOBBERSTEEN:** I'm gonna be keeping an eye on you, so no fooling around! You're on a deadline! I have to be at [make up your own destination here if you want!] by noon. Yesterday, my staff let me down. They gave me lots of talk, but no books! A bunch of jokers!
- [Storyteller continues to assure Klobbersteen that they will be done in time.]
- **KLOBBERSTEEN:** And remember, no gross stuff and no violence. If there's any of that, I'll faint! Or have even more nightmares! And keep it original, nothing I've seen a thousand times before. And make sure you finish by noon! No funny business or wasting time! What's a publishing house without books? Nothing! I'll call you later to see how it's going. Goodbye.

Call #2 – around 10:45 AM:

For this call, you want to know that it hasn't all been fooling around at the center and that the students have started developing characters and the start of a story.

- **KLOBBERSTEEN:** What's going on there? Have you created original characters?

- [Storyteller starts to explain the story, Klobbersteen interrupts and asks for one of the authors because he's tired of hearing from the adults.]
- **KLOBBERSTEEN:** Hello, what's your name? Can you tell me about the characters you've created?
- [Feel free to ask a follow-up question here if you want! Make a note of the characters' name(s).]
- **KLOBBERSTEEN:** Okay, that's good, I like that [something you picked up on that's fun]. But you're not done yet! I need a story with excitement! Tell that storyteller to get back to work!

Call #3 – around 11:05 AM

Check in on story development in this call. Continue to build up the young authors as creative geniuses.

- **KLOBBERSTEEN:** Alright, hello, very good, still working hard are we? I need to know what's happened with [character name]. Can one of the authors give me an update?
- **KLOBBERSTEEN:** Hello, yes, what's your name? All right, what's happening with [character name]? That sounds really thrilling (or another positive response to what you've heard.) Now I have a very important question for you. I need you to come very close to the screen/phone. How is the typist doing? Have you noticed any mistakes? I can always get another one. That would be no problem. Oh, OK, well, I see that the clock in that room is still ticking, so writers, I need you to keep writing.

Call #4 – after the stories are delivered, around 11:50 AM

You can play with a bait and switch here, where you give them the impression you didn't like the books, but then quickly confirm what you suspected all along—these students are incredible writers who will save your company! You are publishing all of their books. A member of the production team will send you a few students' endings in advance for you to pull out some details to share.

- **KLOBBERSTEEN:** Well, I finally got your books. I wasn't sure you could manage it. I read them, and well, um, harrumph, I don't quite know how to say this, but... these are all amazing!
- [Highlight a few things you appreciate about the story in general.]

- **KLOBBERSTEEN:** Now, I don't have time to talk about all of the different amazing endings before I have to go, but I want to mention at least a few. Is [name] in the room?
- [Highlight what you liked about the story, and repeat with the other endings you received.]
- **KLOBBERSTEEN:** Okay, I'm sending your books back now, and I've approved all of them! Good work. You're all very talented, so make sure to keep writing! I'm running late for my [random event]. Okay, goodbye.

The Storyteller

Huzzah, you're leading the storytelling part of the Field Trip! Sharing narratives is a vital part of the human experience that dates back thousands of years. Stories have the important task of reminding us about our era, our culture, and ourselves. During this Field Trip, originality, spontaneity, and sheer imagination will guide your scholars as they embark on a storytelling trek.

Storyteller Tips

- The Golden Rule: During the brainstorm, every idea submitted by a student is great and correct IN SOME WAY. Find a nugget of gold in there and polish it so everyone can see that what the student suggested has at least one great thing about it.
- Above all else, this is the students' story and you're only helping facilitate it. Ask lots of questions, and then put their ideas into sentences for the typist.
- Write the story as you go, sentence by sentence. It's much harder to go back after discussing a plot line for a while (and the students may forget what they came up with!)
- Don't give the students ideas; they definitely have enough! If the group gets stuck at any point, ask questions like "How does the character feel?" or "What does the scene look like?" so the students can contribute their own ideas for how to move forward.
- Periodically pause and ask students (or teachers) to read out loud what has been written so far or recently.
- If you are ever at a loss, remember that at its core, storytelling is asking variations on the same three questions:
 - What happened next?
 - How did the character feel?
 - What did it look/smell/feel/taste like?

Storyteller Guide

This is the general framework for group storytelling. As you move through the process, you should ask lots of questions to help the students generate ideas, and then translate their ideas into full sentences for the typist.

Establish Group Norms and Set the Tone:

Welcome the students and give them an overview of the Field Trip schedule and set our goal: to collectively write an AMAZING original story for our demanding and terrifying publisher. Let students know we will be building the story as a group, and have them contribute some ideas for group norms. Have the illustrator take notes on the dry erase board, and add your own, including:

- Raise silent hands to share an idea
- Use kind language, especially about other students' ideas
- Be safe with our bodies and the space

Also include a few expectations for writing the story itself:

- We have to make our noon deadline
- No violence or gross stuff (The publishers HATE violence and bathroom humor)
- All characters and settings must be unique and original! Spider-Man already exists and is owned by Marvel, so we can't write about him

Let students know that we cannot make the story without them and their great ideas, so we will be calling on a lot of students (this is a heads-up for quieter/shyer students).

Review Storytelling Basics:

Start off with the first letter of each of the story components on a dry erase board. Tell students that most stories, at their heart, have the same elements or building blocks. Use prompting questions to have students guess the different parts of a story, filling in the words as they guess them (or at least get close). Share a description of each component as you go, and let students know that this is what we will be creating together:

- **Title**
All stories must have a title; we'll do this last.
- **Characters**
All stories have people, animals, or creatures, so start thinking about what ours will be.
- **Setting**
The place where things happen in your story.

- **Problem**
Stories can be boring if nothing happens to the characters. They'll need to have at least one problem or challenge which they will then need to find a...
- **Solution**
What do your characters do to solve the problem or overcome the challenge?
- **Details**
Remember to use sensory details in your story! We'll want to come up with smells and colors to paint a full picture about happening in the story.
- **Beginning, Middle, End**
By the end of today, our story will have a beginning, middle, and end.
- **Originality**
Keep it original! We want to read new stories that we haven't seen before. Let's try to avoid writing fanfiction today.

Develop the Characters:

Designing compelling characters is essential for writing. Guide the students to describe enough about the character so the illustrator knows what to draw. Try asking students the following questions:

- What is the character's name?
- Who is this character?
- What is this character's favorite food?
- How would you describe what this character looks like?
- What pronouns does this character use—she and her, he and him, they and them?
- Where are they?
- How do they feel about being there? Why?
- What is special or unique about them?
- What is this character afraid of?
- Do they have superpowers? If so, what kind?
- What does the character want, need, or dream about?

Once you have started to develop the main character, it's time to start writing! Ask the students: "Does anyone have an idea for a first sentence to introduce our main character?" Spend about a paragraph introducing the main character, focusing on special talents.

Ask the students who else is with the main character—a friend or sidekick? An antagonist or minion? Consider transitioning to describe the secondary character by having the students discuss what they wish for, and plan for the day, etc.

Build the Setting:

Guide students to describe a geographic place. This can be anywhere in the universe like a forest, tundra, desert, city, or even inside of a glow stick. Here are some guiding questions:

- What does the place look, sound, or feel like?
- What kinds of activities are there to do there?
- Can people go swimming or snowboarding?
- Do animals live there? If so, what kinds of animals?

Listen to the class discussion and use the students' language and suggestions to create a description to add to the story.

Introduce the Plot and Conflict:

If the students haven't already come up with the beginning of a plot, remind them that we need to create a problem and, eventually, a solution for our story. Some questions to help set up a problem:

- What do our characters want, more than anything in the world?
- What's keeping the characters from what they want?
- Is there a specific thing that our characters want? How do they get it?
- Is there a place our characters would like to be? How do they get there?
- Is there a person they'd like to see? How do they find them?

Once there's a problem, ask "what's the character going to do about it?" **Use some of the ideas generated when creating the characters to create conflict and challenges.**

If your students were to write a story about someone who wants a banana more than anything else in the world, there are a number of ways they could approach the plot. Tell them how boring (and short) that story would be if all this character had to do is walk from the bedroom to the kitchen, walk to the counter, and peel open a sweet banana.

What if this same character was afraid of the dark or spiders and had to walk through three spider webs on the way to the garage refrigerator only to find that a mutant, banana-eating spider colony had made a home out of the character's refrigerator? This is more what we like to see. This story has just begun! Questions to help develop the plot:

- What would the characters say to each other?
- How do they feel about this obstacle?
- What do they do next?

Continue to ask the students questions to develop their plot. Translate their ideas and language into full sentences for the typist to write their story until you reach... THE CLIFFHANGER.

Create a Cliffhanger:

Once a problem or conflict reaches a key decision point, introduce the concept of a cliffhanger. A cliffhanger is a part of a story where the story gets SO exciting, and the main character is in SO much trouble, that you have no idea how it's going to end and you're on the edge of your seat, biting your nails because you gotta know WHAT HAPPENS NEXT.

Try to guide the cliffhanger so there's a clear question the ending can answer ("Will the wolf ever get home?" "Will the zombie attack on the Candyland house work?" "Will Snazzy the Chicken defeat the monster?"). The cliffhanger should leave the plot open so that the students have many options for their individual endings. It's helpful to be able to have ONE BIG QUESTION that you can verbally ask the students to summarize the cliffhanger and give them a specific problem to solve.

Some example cliffhangers:

- "What are you doing, Glass Man?" Mr. Lee asked him. Glass Man looked up at Bellina and Mr. Lee, and then suddenly...
 - ONE BIG QUESTION: What does Glass Man do next?
- "Just when Fluffy the Dinosaur thought his tail would be stuck in the gate forever, he heard footsteps coming from..."
 - ONE BIG QUESTION: Who is walking towards Fluffy and what happens to Fluffy next?

Choose a Title:

Before you send students off to write individually, let them know we need to pick a title. Depending on time and group temperament, you can take a few suggestions and vote, or just use the first idea.

Write the Ending:

AND NOW, they get to write their endings! Remind students where the story left off. If there's time, you can even ask a student (or teacher!) to read the story out loud. Reiterate the cliffhanger and the ONE BIG QUESTION and send the students to the tables to invent their own original endings that will resolve the problem that arose in the story.

Navigating Uncomfortable Story Ideas

Themes of Violence

It's not uncommon for students to share ideas that include violence. These themes are common in media such as cartoons or superhero movies. It's important to not dismiss the idea, but demonstrate that there are other narrative options available.

Strategies for addressing themes of violence:

- Build a menu of choices: "Okay great, so he could hit the monster with a club, what else could he do to get what he wants?"
- Include the violent plot point, but build in reflection for the victim: "So now that Jeff has just hit the monster, how does the monster feel? What emotions is he feeling?"
- Be direct: "I want this book to be for all ages, so can you think of a way the hero could escape without violence?"
- Blame the publisher: "Ah, great idea, but unfortunately, Klobbersteen is very anti-violence. Can you think of a way the hero could escape without violence?"
- Force creativity: "You know, bombs have been in a million stories. Bombs that shoot poisonous M&Ms that make you turn into chocolate, not so much! What else could we do that we haven't heard of before?"

Bathroom Humor

The more you focus on it, the more they will. Try to ignore it when it comes up. If you can't get away from it, say "Ah, I love a silly idea, but I know Klobbersteen/Archibald/Spangler hates bathroom humor. Any other silly idea that's not a bathroom joke?"

Sexist/Ableist/Racist/Mean Ideas

Sometimes, students may suggest sexist, ableist, racist, or mean ideas in their stories, without even knowing the full impact or source of their thoughts (e.g., if they consume a lot of media where bad things always happen to a marginalized group, then they make the decision to do the same thing in their story).

Strategies for addressing sexist/ableist/racist/mean ideas:

- Encourage reflection and understanding: "Why did you decide to do that?" or "What made you choose to do X instead of Y?"
- Be direct: "Thanks for that idea, but that makes me uncomfortable."
- Foster empathy: "Creative idea, but I want everybody to enjoy reading this book, and I think maybe that might hurt someone".
- Reinforce established norms: "Remember, we can't write about someone in the room, the same way we can't write about Spider-Man."

Additional Resources

826 Boston Resources

- [Tutoring Trail Guide](#)

Additional Resources

- [Making Connections - The Power of Oral Storytelling](#)
- [How Students of Color Confront Impostor Syndrome](#)
- [The Power of Storytelling to Change the World](#)

THANK YOU for volunteering for a Storyteller and
and Book Making Field Trip. You are a rock star and
we cannot wait to work with you!