

Story Spark

You find a map in your cereal box.
It has one red X. Where does it
lead?

Brain note: imagining a scene lights up the
same brain areas as seeing it.

NextGen Learners • Learning Realm

Story Spark

You open your front door and the whole street is upside down. What do you do first?

Brain note: open questions grow language faster than yes-or-no ones.

NextGen Learners • Learning Realm

Story Spark

Your backpack starts talking on the way to school. What is it complaining about?

Brain note: making up stories builds the brain's sense of order and sequence.

NextGen Learners • Learning Realm

Story Spark

A fox knocks on your window and asks for help. What does the fox need?

Brain note: a few seconds of wait time gives new ideas room to form.

Story Spark

You wake up and gravity is gone in
your bedroom only. What floats
past you first?

Brain note: playing with ideas strengthens
flexible thinking.

NextGen Learners • Learning Realm

Story Spark

You can breathe underwater for one hour. Where do you swim and what do you find?

Brain note: novel situations switch on the brain's attention systems.

NextGen Learners • Learning Realm

Story Spark

A pebble in your pocket grants
one wish, but only on Tuesdays.
What do you wish?

Brain note: naming feelings in a story helps
kids name their own.

NextGen Learners • Learning Realm

Story Spark

Someone new sits alone at lunch
every day. What happens when
you sit down too?

Brain note: kids remember stories far better
than lists of facts.

NextGen Learners • Learning Realm

Story Spark

You are the only one who hears the
noise in the basement. What do
you do?

Brain note: pretend play is early practice for
planning ahead.

Story Spark

You invent a machine that makes mornings easier. What does it do first?

Brain note: describing what you picture out loud builds vocabulary.

Story Spark

Every shoe in the house has
vanished except one. Whose shoe
is it?

Brain note: asking what happens next builds
cause-and-effect thinking.

NextGen Learners • Learning Realm

Story Spark

You step in a puddle and land in the year 1750. What do you notice first?

Brain note: silly ideas still train real problem-solving skills.

NextGen Learners • Learning Realm

Story Spark

Your best friend has a secret talent
nobody knows about. What is it?

Brain note: storytelling links memory and
language in the brain.

NextGen Learners • Learning Realm

Story Spark

A small worry follows you around
like a shadow. What does it look
like?

Brain note: choosing an ending is quiet
practice at making decisions.

NextGen Learners • Learning Realm

Story Spark

The town clock has stopped and
nobody can climb the tower. What
is your plan?

Brain note: curiosity makes new information
easier to remember.

Story Spark

You get one wish, but it comes true
for someone else. Who do you
choose?

Brain note: imagining another person's view
builds perspective taking.

NextGen Learners • Learning Realm

Story Spark

The cats on your street hold a meeting in your garden. What are they deciding?

Brain note: talking through a plan strengthens working memory.

Story Spark

A hot air balloon lands in the park
with nobody inside. Do you climb
in?

Brain note: kids who tell stories often read
with better understanding.

NextGen Learners • Learning Realm

Story Spark

You are the first kid on Mars. What is the first thing you write home about?

Brain note: with no wrong answer, the brain takes bigger creative risks.

NextGen Learners • Learning Realm

Story Spark

Your drawings come alive at night.
What did you draw yesterday?

Brain note: drawing a scene first can unlock
words that felt stuck.

NextGen Learners • Learning Realm

Story Spark

A whale offers you a ride to the deepest place in the sea. What do you pack?

Brain note: describing sounds and smells
builds sensory vocabulary.

NextGen Learners • Learning Realm

Story Spark

Footprints lead up to the wall and
stop. Nothing waits on the other
side. Why?

Brain note: retelling a story in their own
words deepens memory.

NextGen Learners • Learning Realm

Story Spark

The last cookie in the jar begs you
not to eat it. What does it say?

Brain note: surprise flags a moment as worth
remembering.

NextGen Learners • Learning Realm

Story Spark

You must give a speech in one hour
and your notes blew away. Now
what?

Brain note: imagining a brave moment is
practice for the real one.

NextGen Learners • Learning Realm

Story Spark

You find a lost wallet with a photo of a family inside. What happens next?

Brain note: guessing before knowing helps new facts stick.

NextGen Learners • Learning Realm

Story Spark

Everything in your kitchen is now
made of jelly. What is for
breakfast?

Brain note: long pauses are thinking time, not
stalling.

Story Spark

You build a robot to do one chore.
It decides to do something else
instead.

Brain note: inventing a character helps kids
explore who they are.

Story Spark

You meet yourself, ten years older.
What is the first question you ask?

Brain note: explaining an idea out loud makes
the idea sharper.

NextGen Learners • Learning Realm

Story Spark

Your anger turns into a loud red bird that follows you. How do you calm it?

Brain note: putting feelings into words can lower their intensity.

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Story Spark

A friend stops speaking to you and will not say why. What do you try first?

Brain note: rehearsing tricky moments in play makes them less scary.

Story Spark

The school bus is stuck in mud and
the driver is out of ideas. What is
yours?

Brain note: many possible answers grow
divergent thinking.

NextGen Learners • Learning Realm

Story Spark

You learn to speak one animal language. Which one, and what do you ask first?

Brain note: word play strengthens the brain's sound-to-meaning links.

Story Spark

A tiny comet parks outside your window and waits. What does it want?

Brain note: wondering out loud models curiosity for children.

NextGen Learners • Learning Realm

Story Spark

A door in the old tree only opens
when you tell the truth. What do
you say?

Brain note: stories give kids safe practice with
big ideas.

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Story Spark

Your family finds a treasure map,
but half of it is missing. Where do
you start?

Brain note: making choices in a story builds a
sense of control.

NextGen Learners • Learning Realm

Story Spark

Every mirror in town shows
tomorrow instead of today. What
do you see?

Brain note: picturing the future uses the same
network as remembering.

NextGen Learners • Learning Realm

Story Spark

Your shoes refuse to go to school today. What are they trying to tell you?

Brain note: humor lowers stress and makes learning easier.

NextGen Learners • Learning Realm

Story Spark

Someone must go first into the dark tunnel. What makes you step forward?

Brain note: naming a fear out loud makes it feel more manageable.

Story Spark

You invent a jar that keeps one sound forever. Which sound do you catch?

Brain note: focusing on one sense sharpens attention and detail.

NextGen Learners • Learning Realm

Story Spark

A city sits under the lake and the
lights just came on. Who lives
there?

Brain note: rich detail in stories builds
stronger mental pictures.

NextGen Learners • Learning Realm

Story Spark

A letter arrives with your name on it and no stamp. What is inside?

Brain note: unanswered questions keep the brain engaged and alert.

NextGen Learners • Learning Realm

Story Spark

A star grants you a wish for your whole street. What do you ask for?

Brain note: imagining what others need
strengthens empathy over time.

NextGen Learners • Learning Realm

Story Spark

You wake up feeling brave for no reason at all. What do you do with it?

Brain note: positive feelings widen what the brain notices.

NextGen Learners • Learning Realm

Story Spark

You can give one person a perfect day. Who gets it, and what happens?

Brain note: kind acts feel good and get easier with repetition.

NextGen Learners • Learning Realm

Story Spark

You get one minute in the past.
What small thing do you change,
and why?

Brain note: explaining why builds reasoning,
not just recall.

Story Spark

A new kid says they are from a
place nobody has heard of. Do you
believe them?

Brain note: taking turns in conversation builds
listening skills.

NextGen Learners • Learning Realm

Story Spark

Your homework has written a reply
back to you. What does it say?

Brain note: writing and storytelling use
overlapping brain networks.

NextGen Learners • Learning Realm

Story Spark

The power is out for three days.
What is your family's first good
idea?

Brain note: thinking through problems in play
builds real coping skills.

NextGen Learners • Learning Realm

Story Spark

A stray dog leads you somewhere
you have never been. Do you
follow?

Brain note: making up an ending strengthens
the brain's planning skills.

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Also try: Divergent Thinking
Games, What If Reasoning Cards,
and Read-Aloud Guides.

Brain note: Find every set at
NextGenLearners.com.

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