



Story Building

A Practical Guide for Bringing the
Power of Stories into Classrooms
and Communities

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Stories into Classrooms and Communities

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All questions and comments regarding the contents of this book and requests for workshops, presentations and teacher training intensives must be in writing and directed to:

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Confessions and Preparations

While I enjoy the writing process, at the end of the day I am a Teacher. I have been dragging my literary feet for several years before writing this book. I have been hesitant (to say the least) to share the story building process on paper. I feel most at home in the middle of the action. I would prefer to be teaching the work in the basement of a public school or musty studio in an old warehouse than writing about it from the comfy confines of my university office. I also have an unreasonable fear that if I were to write down what I have learned over the past three decades the work will stop being organic, necessary or effective. Perhaps both of these ‘reasons’ were just me being lazy? Regardless, I have four ways of combatting my fears that you will note throughout the book:

1. I have had the most success communicating the work by teaching the work. I share the process through this book as a Teacher, so I write like I am teaching and you are on your feet learning. The multiple *#Breadcrumb Alerts#* are reflections of the classroom rhythm as they are ideas that must be attended to in the moment so proper context can be achieved. Each ‘crumb’ will not only support and inform the issue presently being taught, but it will also combine with other ‘crumbs’ to form the Anne Frank Project’s (AFP) ethos and foundational philosophies...the ‘loaf’ if you will. My hope is that the *#Breadcrumb Alerts#* will illuminate the present topic without derailing the lesson.

2. This book is a supplement to the practice of AFP’s story building process. This is extremely important and will be

impossible for me to manage so... *I'm trusting you.* You should only be reading this book AFTER you have personally, physically experienced the AFP story building process facilitated by an employee of the Anne Frank Project. This can happen in an AFP workshop, residency, semester-long course or professional development training. This 'Do First, Think Second' sequence is at the heart of our philosophy. The nature of meaningful story building requires each participant to first experience the process kinesthetically followed by intellectual support; Heart first, head second. If you were to read this book first and then engage in the physical experience your brain will have convinced you that you 'know' the story building process and thus your physical commitment would be reduced, and your instrument would steer clear of anything new or risky. 'Knowing' is extremely overrated, and 'Doing' is extremely underrated. Do yourself a favor—if you are genuinely interested in this work and have not yet experienced it with your body, close this book and contact us at the Anne Frank Project. We will plug you into a story building experience and this book will be waiting for you after.

3. Returning to the world of food metaphors, I will be guiding you through preparation of the 'full meal' of a story; your plate will undoubtedly floweth over. This meal may involve steps, elements and time you don't have access to in your workplace. Story building is not an all or nothing process. Rather, it is a process that you can partake in at multiple levels, from the simplest classroom moment to

clarify an abstract topic to the creation of a full-length play; it is not an "all you can eat" meal, it is an "eat what you need" opportunity. Please, please, please never allow yourself to work under the cloud of educational guilt, "I'm a terrible teacher if I don't do every single thing I read in this book!" Creating an entire play from start to finish might seem

daunting—that's understandable. Story building is not like prescribing medication where the wrong dose can create serious problems. You will not hurt your students by delivering smaller doses of what you may have assumed the 'proper dose.' Building your "meal" one "helping" at a time may, in fact, be the best way to progress. Simple rule for this work: If you are using ANY element we share in this book that involves your students activating the class content with their bodies, you are invested in the process of story-building and story-based learning! Think of the "meal" of this book more like a "buffet," where you can eat whatever you like and whatever amount that is required to satisfy your appetite. As long as you are AT the buffet you are doing the right thing!! Bon appétit!

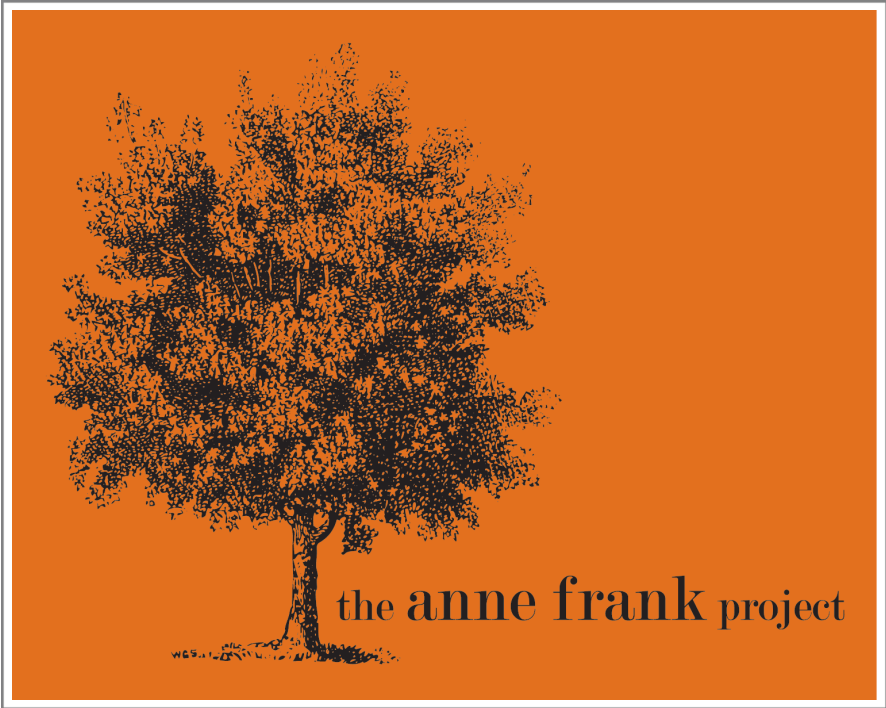
4. Most importantly, this book is a response to the demand from teachers and organizations that have experienced the positive impact of AFP's story-building process. We have bonded through common story and achieved great things together in compact times. Amidst the joys and tears that are typically expressed at the conclusion of our work together, a repeated question regularly surfaces: "What next?" If this question doesn't surface right away it will a few weeks after we have left. I get it. It is easier to apply the work of story-building when the AFP crew is present. The schools and organizations have cleared the days, gathered participants, made flyers and prepared their environments for us. Once the honeymoon is over, it's not so easy to apply the work. Our model provides possibilities for filling gaps in instruction, which means the work is outside the norm and difficult to maintain without reminders and support. There is nothing more liberating than our story-building communities (villages) collaborating, sharing and creating together for a common purpose. Doing this alone or with fewer collaborators can be challenging. The demand for our work has, thankfully, grown beyond our ability to provide staffing

for every request. This is especially true with the requests for follow-up workshops, trainings and residencies. I am honored the Anne Frank Project's success has expanded our audience to hundreds of schools and colleges, several U.S states, international partnerships in Rwanda, Kenya and Switzerland and future international locations in Burma, India and Viet Nam. So, the brilliant solution to this great problem: Write a book!



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