

Environmental Story Games

By John Hamilton

The object of these games is to allow people to explore the environment creatively.

The end result will be a new story set in your exact landscape, bringing in features and creatures that are there, or might just be there with a little imagination.

The games could be played indoors, with a bag of props, but are much better outdoors.

These are designed as confidence-building steps, starting with the simplest game which might require only a one word answer, leading to the creation of a whole story. The order is important. Don't spend too long on each of the first three steps.

Lies

Get everyone to pick up an object – a twig or stone, anything at all. Gather in a vague circle – sitting, standing – whatever is comfortable. Everyone has to say what their object is. The only rules are that what you say has to be a lie and that you can't tell the same lie twice.

Encourage any answer. Some people will launch into a whole story others will come up with just one word – that's fine!

"It's a horn from the Splat Wombat that lives on the planet Zig!"

Go round again, but faster and again faster still. Keep it moving. Encourage silly answers – the whole point is to move the object away from being a stick or a stone.

"It's a fridge!"

"It's a Ferrari!"

This game is just about getting people to let their hair down.

Sales Patter

With the same object, or a new one, everybody has to come up with a description of what the object is – again a lie – but this time they have to convince the group why they should want to buy it. Give people a bit more time for this one.

If necessary ask a few questions.

"Why would I want that?"

“How much are you asking for it?”

One Careful Owner

What is the object? Get everyone to describe the character who previously owned the object. Look for a description of the character.

Find a Story

Now everyone has just proved to themselves that they can think creatively, they can move on to making a full story.

Ideally, move to a new location. Send them out to explore. (Remember to set strict boundaries or you'll have folk disappearing over the horizon!). Working with a partner or in a small group is a good idea.

The object is to find a place – a burrow, a tree root, a rock – where someone lives or where something happened. They can choose to use any object or number of objects as props, or none at all. What is the story behind that person, place or thing?

The group gathers together and goes on a story-walk hearing a brand new story at each location.