STORY S-T-R-E-T-C-H-E-R-S

Adventure Thru Imagination Books

BOOKS GROUP 1 SAMPLE

- **WHAT IF YOU WERE…?**

AGES: PRESCHOOL

Table of Contents **Page**

HELLO!

We're so glad you're ready to share our story stretchers with the child/ren in your life, whether you're a family member; family friend; homeschool parent/grandparent; preschool or elementary school teacher; or early childhood professional caring for one or more children.

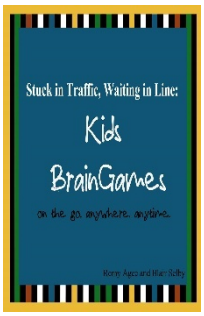
We created all the Story Stretcher activities specific to each of our books with activities and experiences in multiple subjects and to help develop/improve a variety of skills for the targeted audience age of each book. We've incorporated different levels of teaching – some basic for those new to story stretchers and more involved for those looking for more detailed story stretcher ideas.

Research has shown that hands-on experiences help children develop awareness of themselves as learners. They **learn** while ***doing***, when they have an opportunity to construct, or build, knowledge on their own terms.

Yet our Story Stretchers go beyond just 'doing'. We have created them specifically to help children learn HOW to think by focusing on the *process* of the hands-on activity and thought-provoking questions, rather than the end result or product.

Our Story Stretcher activities are intended to be child directed to encourage discovery and exploration. For our activities, 'child directed' means supporting the child as he/she goes through the process of learning the activity, rather than the adult directing the child to a pre-determined outcome of a right/wrong end goal. It's the guided process of our hands-on activity teaching method whereby students gain knowledge by working through their own learning experience.
Watch these two brief videos by Neil DeGrasse Tyson, noted astrophysicist, to grasp this important concept about children needing to learn HOW think.
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=tbX6aMfPtEw
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Sq9ZBzKQAsM

Our Story Stretcher games and activities reinforce the book's message; extend the enjoyment of the story; and help spark a child's curiosity as well as the joy and excitement of learning…all while having fun with you!



Remy Agee, Author
Blair Selby, Author (former Preschool Director and Teacher)

(Co-authors of **Stuck in Traffic, Waiting in Line: Kids BrainGames**
also available on Amazon in Kindle and paperback.)

ART is so much more than just drawing, coloring or gluing.

Creativity in art is the freest form of self-expression. When children are able to express themselves openly without judgement, they learn how to try out new ideas and express new ways of thinking and even problem-solving. Art activities also help develop eye-hand coordination which extends beyond writing. Eye hand coordination is required in sports (catching) and other physical activities like building things.

Approaching art like open-ended play – letting the child choose the art materials and discover on his/her own what happens – is what NAEYC (National Association for the Education of Young Children) calls process-focused art. And that's aligned with our child-directed Story Stretchers activities.

According to NAEYC, process-focused art has these characteristics:

- no step-by-step instructions;
- no sample of what the art should like and no right or wrong way to create the art;
- focus on exploration of techniques, tools and materials;
- the art and the experience are entirely the child's own choice; and
- the experience is relaxing.

To make the process-focus art a joyful experience, adults need to provide sufficient time for children to carry out their plans and explorations; offer new and interesting materials; and allow the child to make their own choices.

Encouraging children to express themselves through art without adult direction or instructions lets them enjoy

- exploring art materials and what they can do with the materials;
- trying out new ideas in an environment where there are no 'correct' solutions; and
- the process of creating something that is uniquely theirs.

(**Language, small motor skills, problem-solving, self-confidence and success**)

Resource: **https://www.naeyc.org/resources/pubs/tyc/feb2014/process-art-experiences**

Math skills are more than just numbers!

Many of our activities provide informal opportunities for children to learn and practice foundational math skills. These concepts lay the foundation for higher level math as well as understanding the world around them and problem-solving skills in everyday life.

These include

- Classifying and sorting objects into groups;
- sequencing;
- understanding sizes, shapes and patterns;
- spatial concepts (above, below, near, far);
- identifying more or less of a quantity; and
- the ability to count verbally and one-to-one correspondence (touching an object as it is counted).

Why children (and adults) use problem-solving skills every day!

Instead of giving up or getting frustrated when a child encounters a challenge, problem-solving skills help the child manage his or her emotions, think creatively, and persist until a solution is found. These skills teach children resilience and perseverance.

Yet, it's not our role to solve problems for children. Rather, it's to teach them to learn how to solve problems on their own through activities like the ones we've included in our Story Stretchers.

Problem-solving is a process which can be learned through

- creative play;
- re-imagining stories and books;
- offering children a variety of art materials to use without adult direction (age appropriate supervision as necessary);
- guiding with open-ended questions that prompt a child to think creatively; and
- breaking a problem into small steps that can achieve the end goal or solution.

Early language and communication skills lay the Foundation for children's success in school and later life.

Studies have found when adults ask questions and engage in other positive talk, children learn and use more words. Children also learn grammar and sentence structure, when engaged in conversations with adults.

Adults promoting high quality language interactions (such as our Story Stretchers activities) support children's development through experiences that foster increased language and communication skills.

Language and communication skills include

- the ability to listen to, and understand, others;
- express oneself using words, gestures, or facial expressions;
- being able to follow directions;
- positional language (where things are in relation to other things); and
- understanding that words represent objects and ideas.

Tips to help a child develop and expand language and communication skills as he/she grows:

1. Read books repeatedly.
2. Interact with children while reading by asking simple , open-ended questions related to the story. That is, questions with answers more than just 'yes' or 'no'.
3. Engage children in conversations, finding ways to *include* the children *rather than only talking to* them. For example, start a conversation around something that interests your child.
4. Use objects to spark conversations, as with the Story Stretcher activities we've included for each book.
5. Look for our Story Stretchers that include music being added to an activity.
6. Label/name objects and actions. Add descriptions of those actions and objects, as your child ages.
7. Use different kinds of words and grammar, when speaking with a child.

Developmental skills combined with academics and "Executive Function' skills are critical to a child's overall success in school and life.

Our Story Stretchers provide experiences through hands-on activities that help children develop or improve skills in these areas:

Foundational skills of development

1. Cognitive Development
   Creative thinking, problem solving, understanding the world around them

2. Social and Emotional Development
   Self-regulation, impulse control, interacting with others, sharing, taking turns, helping themselves, resilience

3. Language Development
   Oral and written language for understanding, communication and reading

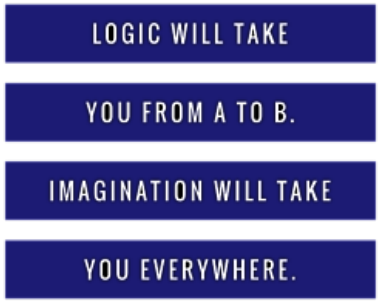
4. Motor Skills Development
   …Fine motor skills for writing, tying shoes, holding a spoon, turning pages in a book
   …Gross motor skills using large muscles for coordination and body awareness and physical activities such as active play, movement and sports

5. Academics
   Foundation skills of math, science and social studies (the world around us) necessary for children to advance their learning

These so-called 'life skills' (also known as Executive Function Skills) are also important to your child's healthy overall development and future success, too!

- Adaptability
- Critical Thinking
- Problem Solving
- Self-Control (following directions, focus, planning)
- Teamwork (social and emotional development)

One Resource: www.ooeygooey.com



-Albert Einstein

<u>Imagination is a critical component of a child's healthy social, emotional, physical and intellectual development. And imagination truly is *the engine of ideas*</u>!

Think about how imagination has impacted our lifestyles and the quality of own lives today. Conside professionals from various fields who asked, "What if…?" Those answers have initiated vast advances in

- medical care and diagnosis, including organ transplants, prosthetics and alternative treatments;
- development of digital devices and the internet;
- streamlined transportation and delivery of goods;
- improved car safety and buildings that are better designed to withstand elements of nature; and
- changes in educational programs to meet the different learning styles and needs of students, children and adults.

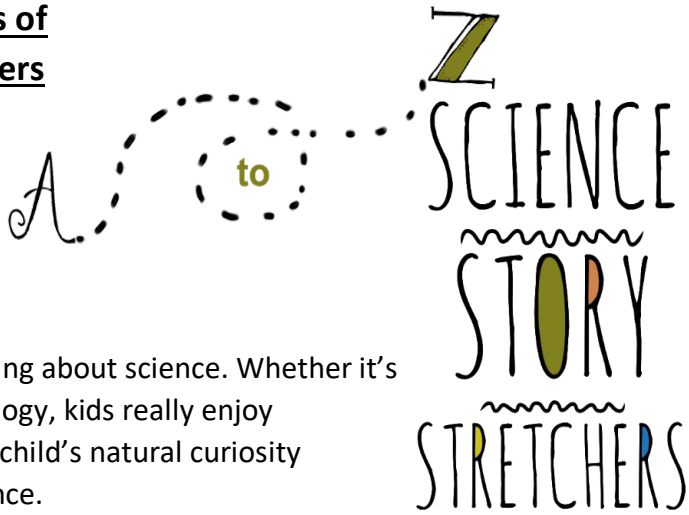
Fostering imagination in children helps develop Executive Skills such as problem solving and critical thinking.

Try asking a child to think of different ways to solve a problem by imagining how each would work and imagining what would happen if decisions were made differently. That gives kids opportunities to try out different scenarios and situations and what they could/should do as well as what works and what doesn't. Imagination gives children the opportunity to practice problem solving. They're learning *how to problem solve and how to use critical thinking.*

'Pretending' is so much more than just PLAYING!

Every child enjoys 'pretending', whether it's acting like a pirate; building a fort; riding an imaginary pony; or mimicking many adult activities such as going to work, grocery shopping or driving a car. Role playing allows children to imagine how to handle difficult social situations and work out relationships with others. Trying out different adult roles also help children learn in a variety of ways. And that's all related to a child's healthy social and emotional development.

From Astronomy to Zoology and lots of topics in between, our Story Stretchers science activities offer learning experiences for children of various ages.



Children love exploring, creating and learning about science. Whether it's astronomy, biology, nature, physics or zoology, kids really enjoy discovering the world around them. And a child's natural curiosity makes learning science truly a fun experience.

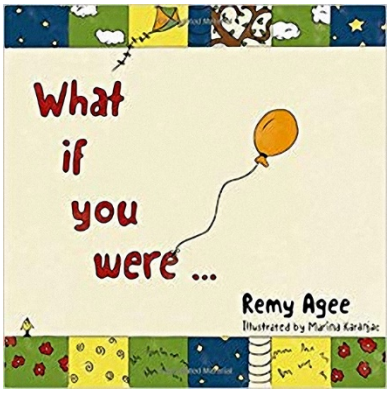
Even young children can learn about scientific concepts and scientific thinking. **Through science, it's not just what is learned…it's also how it's learned that can be the foundation for their future learning**. And kids learn science using a variety of skills, including communication and vocabulary; working together as a team; focus and perseverance; critical thinking; and problem-solving.

Our Story Stretchers offer multiple ideas for using science exploration to extend the enjoyment of our books. From bugs, trees and whales to kites, stars and aliens, our activities provide hands-on experiences to feed your child's curiosity about science.

Just like scientists, even young children can observe; ask questions; and find out (research) across multiple fields in science.

With some guidance and prompts from adults, use these tips with science-related activities:

1. Remember the **process** is more important than the **results** and **observation is part of discovering new information.**
2. Be **open to your child's questions**, allowing plenty of time for children to observe and explore. While you're the guide, let the children move at their own pace as they access their natural curiosity. Patience on the adult's part is key here to real learning and enjoyment.
3. Provide lots of resources and allow time to do some research with your child, sharing pictures and additional information **in response to their questions.**
4. **Follow the child's lead** on how much time to spend and how much information he/she would like. Remember that children of various ages and abilities will need shorter/longer times to observe and explore.



Discover and Explore more about how the <u>What if you were…</u> theme of self-confidence, self-awareness and that each child is special builds on the companion book for younger children, <u>If You Were…</u>

The variety of Story Stretcher activities we've developed for **<u>What if you were…</u>** will help children develop

- their large and small motor skills;

- self-regulation by learning impulse control, taking turns and developing thoughtful behavior;
- awareness of confidence in themselves and who they are;
- how to express their creative thinking and tap into their imagination;
- language and communication skills;
- a beginning foundation of math and science concepts; and
- ability to learn how to think by focusing on the process of an activity.

1. Rhyming word games are lots of fun and the book is filled with them.
   Rhyming teaches phonetic awareness – the focus is on the sound of words. Words that are spelled differently can still sound the same. Here's a fun way to incorporate phonetic awareness learning with our **What if you were…?** Story Stretchers.
   - Use the rhyming words in the book and see how many things you can find in the book that rhyme. What other words can you think of that rhyme?
   - Make up nonsense words that rhyme, adding your own definition of the nonsense rhyming words.
     (**Language, vocabulary, creative thinking**)

2. Go through the book to find things.
   - The concept of 'two' is a good place to start. The book talks about a pair of shoes. Play a game, asking "What do you have two of?"
   - What else can ***you*** find two of in our house/school/center?
     …Examples: books, socks, hats, chairs, blankets, cups
     (**Math concepts of 'pair', one-to-one correspondence counting; critical thinking; body awareness**)
   - Find things that have something in common.
     …Find things you can eat; wear; make noise; grow in nature; fly; etc.
     (**Science, math grouping, counting, word concepts, creative thinking**)

3. Kites fly in the Wind! Children love to learn how things work, even the wind. This is a wonderful activity to help teach children to learn to think like a scientist. Even two-year old children can get involved in this scientific discovery!
   - Go outside on a windy day and ask open ended questions focusing on developing scientific thinking rather than absolute right or wrong answers, e.g. …How can you tell the wind is blowing? What does it feel like? Can you see the wind?
   - How can you "make" wind?

…Ideas could include blowing air really hard out of your mouth; an electric fan or fanning with paper; or a hair dryer. Let your child experience different methods and how they feel.

- How does wind move things? Gather light and heavy items to use for this activity, such as scarves, pieces of paper, balloons, book, stuffed animal, toy.
  …Have your child hold each of the items in his/her hand and talk about the differences your child can feel/observe.
  …Have your child make a prediction (guess) which items will be blown around by the fan or by one or both of you blowing out air.
  …Test the prediction: Let your child hold each item in front of a fan or with you/both of you blowing out air, while observing how the items are blown around. You can make a YES and NO chart or cards OR 2 separate piles (one yes, one no) and have your child sort items after they are tested.
  …Talk about light and heavy.
  (Language, science, math concepts-sort, group, observe, compare)

4. Blow like the wind and paint! Focus here on the process of learning by trying different ways to blow paint, rather than the painting that is produced. NOTE: There is no right or wrong way to do this activity, so be aware of letting the child direct the activity.
   Children use the air from their own breath to paint. This activity is creative and allows children to learn through experimentation.
   - Gather paper (offer different textures); paint (for example, tempera, watercolors, food coloring, acrylic); different size straws; water; droppers (like eye droppers); spoons; and scissors.
   - Invite the child to put paint on paper using spoon or dropper and blow through the straw to make the paint move (wind).
   - Try varying some of the elements, asking questions as you do so.
     …Add water to the paints; try different papers or lengths of straw; and more than one kind of paint or color.
     …As you're adding different elements, ask questions: "What happens when..?" , "What do you want to try next?" Observe and compare.
     (Science, critical thinking, problem solving, language)

5. Watch the wind blow a paper DIY windsock. This is a great activity to foster critical thinking, observation, problem solving, resilience and perseverance.
   Watch and Learn: Our video -Teaching Thru Curiosity and Imagination. Click HERE.

- Make your own **windsock** to let your child experience how the wind moves things. Allow your child to focus on the process, rather than what the windsock is supposed to look like at the end.
  …Offer a variety or supplies: different types and weights of paper and/or paper bags; crayons or colored pencils; crepe paper, ribbons, tissue paper; glue, tape (possibly more than one kind) or staples; yarn, string or even pipe cleaners.
  -Let your child decorate the paper for the windsock, if he/she chooses to do so.
- Ask the child what they can use to make a tube for the windsock.
  …How will they make the paper or bag into a tube? What can they use for streamers (to blow in the wind)? Can they tear or cut the materials?
- Using a hole punch, make holes in the top of the windsock and ask the child to choose something to make a handle.
- Experiment with the windsock in the wind (outdoors or with a fan).
  …To support the child learning, ask them open ended questions (not yes/no answers) as they create their windsock, like these:
  …What can you use? Why did you choose that?
  …What would happen if…...?
  …What if you tried…..? What do you think might happen?
  …Let your child test the idea and then talk about what happened.
  (**Science, problem solving, resilience, language, large and small motor skills, imagination; movement**)

6. Shadow: Go outside on a day that is sunny and see if you can find a 'shadow'.
   Have your child search for his/her shadow, yours and those of trees and other objects outdoors. Use open-ended questions (not yes or no answers) to help your child discover what a shadow is, what it does, etc.
   - Can you find your shadow? Mine?
   - What can you tell me about your shadow and mine?
   - What happens to your shadow, if you move?
   - What do you think makes a shadow?
   - Draw an 'X' in a sunny spot on a sidewalk, driveway, patio, deck or the ground.
     …Have the child stand on the 'X' and outline or mark the height of their shadow.
     …Repeat every half hour to hour and compare and talk about the changes.
     (**Science, critical thinking, vocabulary, movement, math (measuring, time)**

7. Get outside and look at a tree as never before. This is all about your child learning how to view things from different perspectives. Let your child guide the discussion and activity.

- Take a blanket and lie down *under* the tree and look up.
  …What do you see?
- Get up from your blanket and walk away from the tree.
  …Now let's look at the tree from here. What do you see now?
- Make up a story together about animals that might use the tree as their home.
- Walk around and see if you can find places in and around the trees (or other spots) where animals or insects might live.
  (**Science, critical thinking, imagination**)

8. <u>STARS: LOOK UP!</u>
   - What do you see?
     …Ask your child to describe what he/she sees.
     …See how many stars you can find.
     …Lie down on a blanket and look up for a different perspective.
   - Talk about *far* and *near* as *concepts.*
     …You can use trees to help explain the concept: The tree close up looks *big*, but *smalle*r as you walk away from it.
   - Make your own 'starlight' using construction paper, poster board or cardstock.
     …Let your child punch holes of different sizes in the paper using a pencil or hand-held hole punch to make the 'stars'.
   - Hold the paper/posterboard up to different lights or shine a flashlight through it.
     …Project your stars on a wall in dark room by shining a flashlight through the paper/posterboard.
     (**Science, critical thinking, recognizing shapes (math), word concepts, vocabulary**)

9. <u>Get up and dance like a tree!</u>
   - Using different types and tempos of music, discover what it would feel like to dance in the wind like a tree, balloon or kite.
     …What else can you be to dance in the wind?
     …How would YOU dance?
     …You can practice stop, go, fast, slow as you use the music by pretending how the wind might change.
     (**Self-regulation and body control, movement, music, imagination, vocabulary**)

10. In keeping with the theme of the book, make up a song about your child.
    - Sing the words to a favorite and familiar tune or even music that is not any known tune.
      …The words don't have to rhyme or make sense. Focus on what you like about him/her; what makes him/her special; or what he/she likes to do.
      …Perhaps include what kind of animal he/she reminds you of, e.g., a cuddly bear if your child shows his/her love a lot; a fish if your child likes to swim; or a squirrel, if your child likes to climb things.
    - Keep the fun going. If your child is interested, he/she can sing a song about you!
      …The tune doesn't matter, nor do the lyrics or even if the song makes sense. It's more important that the child has fun creating something to share with another. Silly, serious or totally nonsensical is what makes this activity a fun one to share.
      …It might work better, if you create a song first for a younger or more reluctant child to give her/him an idea of how to make up a song.
      (**Music, creative thinking, imagination, communication**)

11. Let others know what you like/enjoy about them, what makes them special!
    - Based on the child's age/ability, begin by sharing what you like or enjoy about him or her. Reinforcing the positive aspects of a child helps raise awareness of their self-confidence and who they are.
      …Then, ask your child to do the same about himself/herself or someone else.
      …Add other adults or children to the activity, even though they aren't participating. This helps children learn to focus on the positive attributes in others.
      (**Self-awareness, social and emotional development**)

12. Get moving with balloons!
    Balloons make great playthings, while getting everyone up and moving.
    - We've played balloon volleyball with children as young as 3 and 4 years old. Blow up standard size balloons. Tie the ends.
      …Cut pool noodles to a shorter size to use to bat the balloons.
      …Your child can help with setting boundaries for this game and help you mark them with tape, extra pool noodles, furniture, etc.
      …Be sure to play in a safe area with enough room to move freely.
    - Create one or two basic rules (your child can help) such as what happens when the balloon goes out past the boundaries.
      …Ask your child to help make up the rules for this game. Some other things to consider: Take turns 'serving' the balloon and keep batting it, until it hits the

ground as in volleyball. Then, the other player 'serves' the balloon. With young children, it may work better if the adult is the only server.
…How long can you work together to keep the balloon from touching the ground?
…With younger children, just play for the fun of it without making it a competition by keeping score.

- What happens when you hit the balloon hard? Gently? With your hand? With the noodle?
(**Movement, large motor skills, eye-hand coordination, math, science, cooperation, taking turns**)

<u>This is a treasure-hunt activity using the items in What if you were… .</u>

<u>Story Hunts help preschoolers develop/improve:</u>

1. Listening and communication skills
   …Listen to the story hunt directions of things to find.
2. `Focus
   …Stay on task and pay attention to finding the items.
   …Mark off items as they are found (with adult help, if needed).
3. Differentiating letter sounds
   …Listen to and make the sound of each letter in the Alphabet Story Hunt.

4. Math skills and concepts
   …Count all the found items.
   …Sort the found items into 'like groups' (e.g., animals, things in the sky, things you can eat).
5. Teamwork
   …Cooperate with others to achieve a goal.

Story Hunt items in the Book:

Print out the Story Hunt page for **What if you were… on p. 29.** With your child, **go through the book finding each item on the list**. Based on the child's age, abilities and interest, you can use this list in its entirety or divide it into two or three activities.

Either you or your child can mark the square next to the object, when it is found. For the youngest children, they can just put their finger on the box and let you make the mark. OR encourage your child to try make some sort of mark as the item is found. This can be a line, a scribble or an 'X' using a crayon. We have included both pictures and words (labels) to reinforce that words have meaning which contributes to self-directed learning.

Active Story Hunts related to the book

We have included one blank list page to print and use as desired for the Story Hunt activities listed below. Use your own drawings of objects or paste cut-out pictures for those items to be found and print the word label.

Choose a short list of items from the story (3-4 items for toddlers and 4-8 for preschoolers) to use for a typical scavenger hunt, depending upon the child's age and abilities. Breaking up the activities into multiple learning sessions works well for all ages, giving time in between (whether minutes, hours or another day) fosters learning and makes the experience of doing the activities more enjoyable.

'Things That Are Alike' Story Hunt

Choose 3-4 objects in the book. Draw pictures or cut out pictures of the items. The goal is to 'hunt' for items that are in the same group as the objects on the list. This is a good team activity working together to find actual items (stuffed animals, toys, figurines) indoors or just spotting

them outdoors. Be sure to give your child enough time to find the items on his/her own before you make any suggestions in keeping with our child-directed activities focus.

1. Things in the sky from the book: stars, moon
   …Look for bird, airplane, clouds, sun.
2. Things that can fly from the book: kite, balloon.
   …Look for bugs, bees, birds, butterflies, falling leaves, airplanes, helicopters.
3. Shoes are all some type of footwear, but after you find them…you can sort them.
   …Search your house for many different type shoes.
   …Sort them into groups, e.g., shoes worn by adults; shoes worn by kids; shoes worn for a specific purpose such as sports; dance; rain, snow, cold weather.
   (**Critical thinking, problem solving, math - sorting/grouping, vocabulary, attention focus, cooperation**)

Alphabet Story Hunt

Again, this is best played with one short list at a time, perhaps 4-6 items. Use the sound of the letter or for older preschoolers print the letter.

The Story Hunt works with actual objects to be found or pictures cut out from magazines or drawn and set out for a child to 'find' the object starting with a specific letter sound. Some examples:

1. B for balloon, bee and bug: baby, banana, bath, bear, bed, bike, bird, blanket, blue, .boat, book, bowl, bubbles, bunny, butterfly
2. K for kite: kangaroo, king, koala bear
   …Note: You can focus only on the hard C/K sound and hunt for items that begin with both letters: cat – car, carrot, coat, cookie, cracker, crayon, cup
3. L for light: ladder, lamb, ladybug, leaf, leg, lemon, lip, lion, lollipop, lunch
4. M for moon: mask, me, milk, mommy, monkey, mouse, mouth, music
5. S for song: skate, slide, sock, spoon, star, swing

(**Vocabulary, phonetic awareness, critical thinking, listening, attention focus**)

What if you were...Story Hunt

- ☐ star 
- ☐ cloud 
- ☐ tree 
- ☐ a light 
- ☐ shoe 
- ☐ kite 
- ☐ balloon 
- ☐ cheese 

...Story Hunt

