

Although they can be fun to do with any audience, stories like those below are particularly suited to young children. The very clear structure, highly participative nature and frequent repeats are ideal for working with children under 6 years.

If the story calls for particular actions/noises, it might be worth explaining/demonstrating these first, and having a bit of a practice, before you launch into the story.

As with all stories, it's not the precise words that matter, but the structure of the story, so change things around and experiment - have fun with them !

### Insomnia - a Radical Cure. (or 'The Noisy House', if you prefer)

Once...and only once upon a time, there was this old woman. She had a real problem, because she couldn't get to sleep at night. Every night, as she settled down to sleep in her bed, the kettle went : *(sound effect)* and the springs of the bed went : *(sound effect)* and the trees against the window went : *(you get the idea.....)* And it was so noisy, she couldn't get to sleep.

She went round to see her next-door neighbour, who said 'What's the matter ? You look awful, like you haven't slept for days' the old woman told her what the problem was. She said, every night, when I try to go to sleep *(repeat sequence)*

'Aha !', said her neighbour, 'what you need is something warm and furry to stroke, to make you feel sleepy. Why don't you get a pet cat ?'

So that's just what the old woman did. She went down to the pet shop and brought a lovely, fat, friendly Tabby Cat.

That night, when she tried to go to sleep...*repeat original sequence + and the cat went :*

and the old woman didn't get any sleep at all. So the next morning, she went back to the pet shop and brought a dog.

That night when she tried to get to sleep...*repeat, plus cat + and the dog went :*

And she got even less sleep than the night before. She was very tired by now, and beginning to get a bit ratty, but she was determined to keep up with the cure, so this time, she got a very small creature. *(you could ask what's the smallest creature they can think of...someone usually says mouse...if not, go with the flow..I once got everyone making like a praying mantis !)*

That night when she tried to get to sleep...*sequence, plus and the mouse/fly/mantis went :*

In the morning she could hardly keep her eyes open, but she determined to have one last try. Think Big ! she Told herself, and went down to the Zoo, to see the elephant keeper. She asked the keeper if she could borrow the elephant, to help her to get to sleep. The keeper couldn't believe his ears, but he leant her the elephant anyway.

So...that night, when she tried to get to sleep.. *sequence plus, and the elephant went : (sundry raucous trumpeting noises)*

and the old woman had to stuff pillows in her ears to keep out the noise, but it didn't work.

The next morning, the old woman had had enough. Of not getting to sleep, and animals, both. She opened the back door, and the dog chased the cat down the path and she never saw them again. She showed the mouse to the elephant, who screamed, leapt on a chair, crushed it, then thundered all the way back to the zoo. The mouse made a nest at the bottom of her garden, and the old woman went back inside to get something for her headache.

That night, when she settled down in bed, the kettle went *(quiet noise)*, the springs of the bed went *(quiet noise)* and the trees against the window went *(quiet noise)*

'It's so peaceful in here', said the old woman, and she closed her eyes, snuggled down and fell fast asleep

*(snores.....)*

Source : Morwenna Rowe, Traditional English. There are many variants of this - I came across a Jewish version a while back with exactly the same structure, but the setting was a man having to put up all of his family in a very small room.

## The Little Old Lady Not Afraid of Anything.

A Little Old Lady is not afraid of anything, not even the odd creature she meets on her way home one late night.

Characters:

Narrator

The Little Old Lady

Two Shoes

One Pair of Trousers

One Shirt

Two White Gloves & One Tall Black Hat

One Scary, Orange Pumpkin Head

One day a little old lady went into the forest to look for herbs. She came across Two shoes that go *CLOMP, CLOMP*.

She said "I'm not afraid of you 2 shoes." But behind her she could hear 2 shoes go *Clomp, Clomp*.

Continues down the path. Next she comes across a pair of trousers that go *WIGGLE, WIGGLE*.

She said "I'm not afraid of you 2 shoes. But behind her she could hear the 2 shoes go *Clomp, Clomp*; the pants go *Wiggle, Wiggle*.

Continue this sequence & add the following:

The shirt goes *SHAKE, SHAKE*

Continue this sequence & add the following:

Two white gloves go *CLAP, CLAP*

One tall black hat goes *NOD NOD*

Continue this sequence & add the following:

And one scary pumpkin head goes *BOO, BOO!*

When the Little Old Lady encounters the Pumpkin Head she runs all the way home. Just as she has begun to relax., there is a knock at the door. Who do you think it is?

Two shoes go *CLOMP, CLOMP*.

Pair of pants goes *WIGGLE, WIGGLE*.

The shirt goes *SHAKE, SHAKE*.

Two white gloves go *CLAP, CLAP*.

One tall black hat goes *NOD NOD*.

And one scary pumpkin head goes *BOO, BOO!*

She says: What do you want?

Pumpkin head: We are here to scare you.

She said: I'm not afraid of anything!

Pumpkin head: What is to become of us?

She whispers in the ear of the pumpkin head. The next morning she wakes up, looks outside, and what do you think she sees. She sees

Two shoes go *CLOMP, CLOMP*.

Pair of pants goes *WIGGLE, WIGGLE*.

The shirt goes *SHAKE, SHAKE*.

Two white gloves go *CLAP, CLAP*.

One tall black hat goes *NOD NOD*.

And one scary pumpkin head goes *BOO, BOO!*

And scare all the crows away!

NB - You might want to change the Pumpkin Head for a Turnip Head.....or you might not !

Source :Written by Linda Williams, emailed to me from America by Sharon Johnson. This is a good example of taking a modern story off the page and making it work orally. If you find a story you like, why not give it a go ?

# The Old Woman and the Pig

Once, and only once, upon a time..... there was this old woman, and she had all sorts of things, because she just liked to collect things. All sorts of things.

*{I usually ask the audience for suggestions of what sorts of things she might have had}*

One day, she woke up and suddenly realised that there was one thing that she didn't have, one animal missing from her collection

*[what could that be ?]*

She didn't have a pig. I don't know why, but she was completely pig-less. So she got up, and went down to the market. She soon found a farmer with pigs to sell, and looked over them all carefully, then pointing to the very last pig in the line. 'How much for that pig', she asked the farmer.

The farmer was secretly delighted, because this pig was the most stubborn pig in the world, but he and the woman had a good haggle over the price. At last, they agreed, the old woman paid the farmer, and the farmer threw in a bit of rope, to make a lead for the pig.

The old woman set off for home, with the pig kind of slouching along behind her. Now, it just so happened that the old woman had to climb over a stile on her way home. She hopped over, quick as you like, then pulled on the rope, to get the pig to climb over the stile.

But the pig just sat there, in the middle of the path.

The old woman climbed back over the stile, and tried to push the pig over, but the pig wouldn't budge. It just sat there. Then the old woman tried to pick the pig up, but it was a biiiig pig, and she couldn't lift it

*{Have you ever tried to carry a big pig ?}*

The pig just sat there.

The old woman looked around, and saw a dog, so she said to the dog,

'Dog, bite the pig, so the pig will jump over the stile, and I can get home for my tea'

But the dog said.....'No'

There was a stick propped against the stile, so the old woman said to the stick

'Stick, beat the dog, so the dog will bite the pig, the pig will jump over the stile, and I can get home for me tea'

and the stick said...'not a chance, missus...'

The old woman looked around, and saw a fire by the side of the path...which she hadn't noticed before..

'Fire burn the stick, so the stick will beat the dog...etc etc'

and the fire hissed .....'No way'

There was a stream running nearby, so the old woman stuck her head in it, and bubbled...

'Stream, put the fire out, so the fire will etc etc etc...'

and the stream said.....'Not on your life...'

The old woman was starting to get a bit cross, but she saw a horse, grazing in the next field..

'Horse, drink the stream, so the stream will etc etc etc'

And the horse said...*{ask for answers}*...no, the horse said 'Neigh, Neigh', which is horse for 'in your dreams...'

The horses owner, another farmer came up just then , so the old woman said to him,

'Farmer, saddle the horse, so the horse will etc etc etc..'

But the farmer said...'Nope'

The old woman was getting a bit red by now, She saw that the farmer had a length of rope hanging from his belt, so she grabbed one end of the rope and said

'Look here, rope, I want you to beat the farmer, so the farmer will etc etc etc'

The rope bristled, and replied ...'get knotted' (sorry.....I can never resist it !)

The old woman took a deep breath, counted to ten twice, then a rat ran over her left foot.

'Rat, what you need to do is to gnaw that rope, so the rope will etc etc etc...'

but the rat shrugged, and said...'sorry, not me...'

By this time, there was steam coming out of the old woman's ears, she was so angry, and her face went purple, then white...then a cat padded out of the bushes...

'Cat..I want you to..' she yelled...but the cat said, 'Stop. I know exactly what you want me to do, because I've been watching. But first, I want you to do something for me...I think I'd like a nice bowl of milk'.

As luck would have it, the old woman had some milk and rather a nice bowl, with ducks on it, in her amongst her shopping. She filled the bowl with the milk, and set it down in front of the cat.

The cat lapped up the milk, cleaned its whiskers.....then....

The cat chased the rat, the rat gnawed the rope, the rope whipped the farmer, the farmer saddled the horse, the horse drank the stream, the stream quenched the fire, the fire burnt the stick, the stick beat the dog, the dog gave the pig a big bite on the bum.....

and the pig leapt over the stile and ran off, and I've NO idea what happened to it.....

but the old woman did get home for her tea.....

*(collapse of storyteller in breathless heap....)*

In contrast to the two previous examples, this is simply a very highly structured story, with a repeating 'run' that gets longer and longer, then finally 'unravels' at the end of the story. The tactic here is to encourage the audience to chant the run along with you, as you go - see how fast you can get it !

Source :Traditional English.