

About the Story Elves

A NEW GENRE:

Long, Illustrated Stories
for an All-Ages Audience

Why long? Why illustrated?

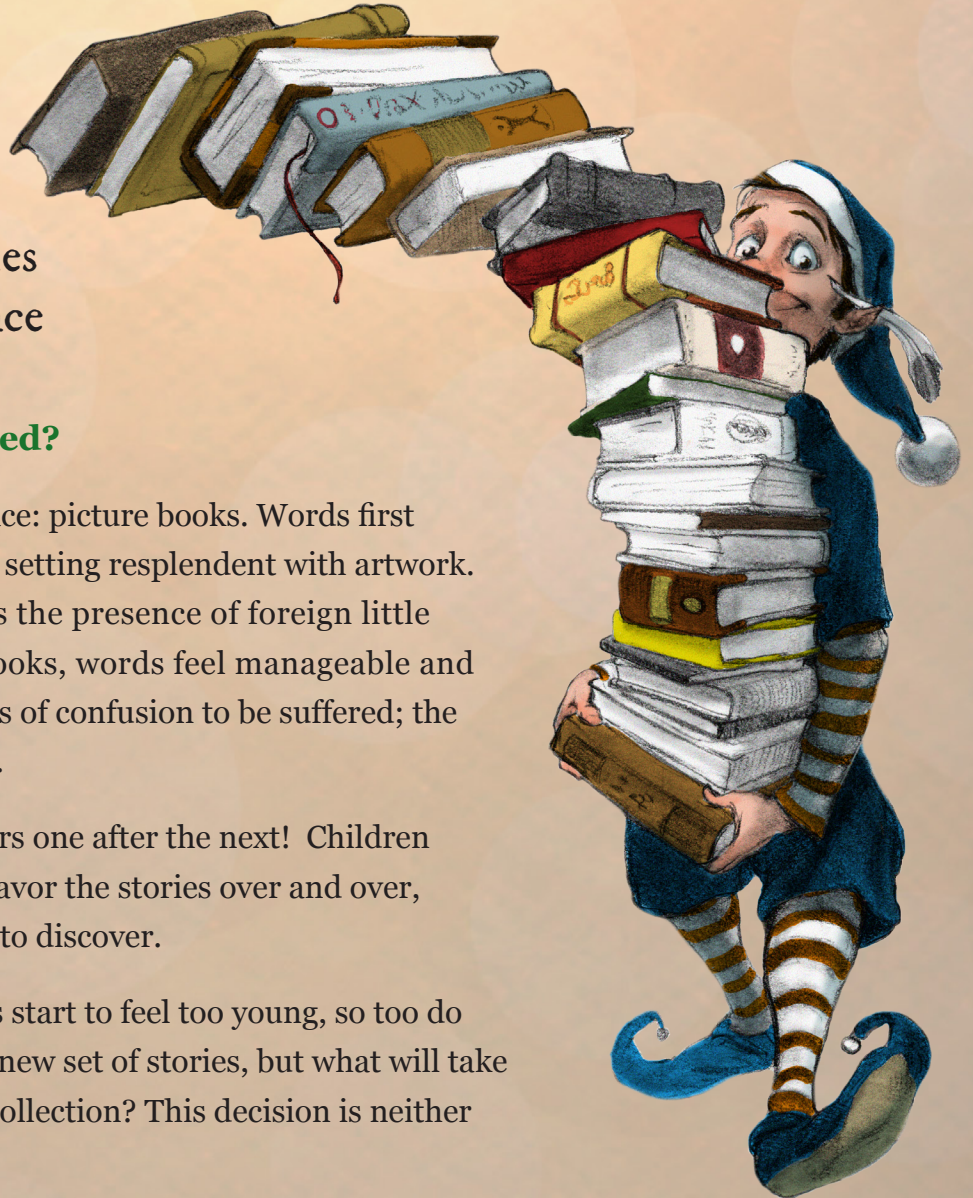
Reading begins in a perfect place: picture books. Words first appear in this vibrant, colorful setting resplendent with artwork. A young reader hardly notices the presence of foreign little hieroglyphs. Inside picture books, words feel manageable and inviting. There are no moments of confusion to be suffered; the art fills in every possible blank.

Picture books reel in newcomers one after the next! Children literally wear them out. They savor the stories over and over, even when there's nothing left to discover.

Yet, as certain pajama patterns start to feel too young, so too do picture books. Readers need a new set of stories, but what will take the place of the old treasured collection? This decision is neither obvious nor comfortable.

Is the child the reader now? Already? So soon? What new ratio is struck between words and artwork? What makes sense? Is it time to reach forward to chapter books, where the story is told in dense and dizzying blocks of text, and the art, once abundant and reassuring, is all but gone? This is a *crucial* moment, because the journey to becoming a reader is only just beginning.

*Some young readers stall out after picture books
with profound feelings of dismay.*



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There is, however, no good reason why picture books cannot grow right alongside the reader! The stories can become more sophisticated, the words more enticing and lyrical. As the number of words increase, so too can the number of illustrations and the depth of what the illustrations convey. The *unspoken contract* can be fully maintained: reading is going to be about words *and* art, until the art truly isn't needed. When words are second nature and not a slow, continuous struggle, readers will have the wherewithal to imagine the detailed appearance of characters, scenes and settings on their own. Until then, readers could *surely* use a rich and thoughtfully architected genre of long, highly illustrated stories.

Why all-ages?

An audience of all ages naturally demands stories chiseled with finer detail. Animated films are constructed expressly for an all-ages audience. Perhaps adults secretly yearn for more nuanced picture books, too! When children see parents, older siblings and grandparents maintaining a lively interest in books with pictures, there is no stigma or feeling of self-consciousness about wanting picture books on the nightstand a bit longer. At long last, we can create an *official*, secure and tantalizing stepping stone between short picture books and chapter books.

The Story Elves' very own Writer Elf has been busily conjuring up stories—*The Waking Prince*, *One-der*, *Slam*, *Nuts*, *Es*, *Cousin Atticus Comes to Town*, *Bird Without Wings*—to help establish this new, entertaining and useful genre.



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Creating eBooks for the 21st Century brain

There are many good reasons to create stories on devices like the iPad. You can give a story more surface area, thereby showering readers with even more art. You can introduce the art of reading aloud and the joy of live performances alongside the book itself. You can intertwine discussion of the *craft* of making stories with the story itself. (For more information, please see *The Waking Prince* Press Release.)

However, changing the look and feel of books on a broad scale might best be done slowly. Brains don't change as fast as technology and research tells us a fascinating story about the brain's *limited* capacity to process stimuli. There are ways to maximize sustained engagement and minimize distraction, and, as stories become increasingly technology-based, The Story Elves remain mindful of what is known about cognition. We are in lively conversation with the Distinguished Professor of Psychology and Cognitive Science, Dr. Hal Pashler of the Attention and Perception Laboratory at the University of California, San Diego. What you don't see in our elvish book apps is as carefully considered as what you do see.



Using stories to help readers become creative writers

Reading and writing are two sides of a coin, two strands in a DNA double helix. Where possible, they should be creatively linked by storytellers such as ourselves! It is possible to tell a story *and* the story of the story's making such that young readers will finish a book app as an *apprentice*. With insights into the inner workings of a story, the reader can make a much smoother transition to *becoming* the writer.

At the end of each app, after *The Story of the Story* has been thoughtfully and honestly told, we transport the reader to the candle-lit rooms of theStoryElves.com. Here, in this web-based workshop, visitors will find an abundance of story advice. (Please see theStoryElves.com Press Release.)



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A word about words: hearing words as music

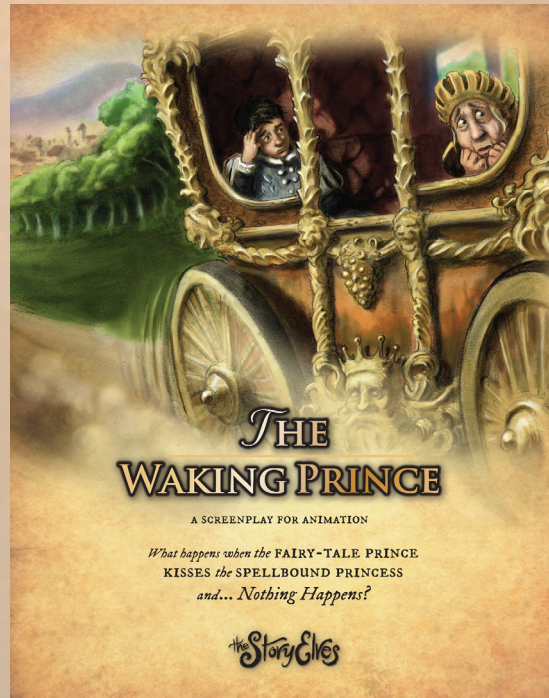
It is customary in the world of humans to divide words into age groups; the biggest words become known as the hardest words and are spirited away for *later*. However, this practice has an unfortunate consequence: children begin to *fear* long words. Why, many adults do, too! Yet, words with more letters have meanings no bigger than those with few letters. They are simply words with more *musical notes*. Young elves grow up hearing words as music, learning all kinds at all stages. The Story Elves delight in treating humans to the very same.

Books to big screen and back again

Some of our stories have grown beyond books into feature-length ideas. Furthermore, The Story Elves wish to explore how stories might meaningfully and creatively bridge platforms. For example, imagine that you are settled in a movie theater, the lights dim, and the story opens with a princess who is already spellbound. Perhaps, in the not too distant future, you could get to know her in an app before arriving.

Above all, The Story Elves are intent on giving humans an unforgettable experience of story. We want readers to see more with each visit to imagined places, until the places begin to feel real.

The Story Elves practice an active form of storytelling and listening. We welcome you to the experience.



A Screenplay for Animation



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