



WriteShop®

StoryBuilders



SPIN-A-STORY

A large, colorful wheel divided into eight segments, alternating between blue, green, yellow, and orange. The wheel is positioned in the center of the page, with a red banner across its middle containing the title 'SPIN-A-STORY'. The wheel is surrounded by various travel-themed illustrations: a map of the world, a compass, a paperclip, a pencil, a pair of glasses, a passport, a hand holding the wheel, and a collection of world landmarks including the Statue of Liberty, Big Ben, the Taj Mahal, a lighthouse, a windmill, and a hot air balloon.

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Published by WriteShop® Inc.

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WriteShop Storybuilders Spin-a-Story

Layout and Design: Becky Thomson

Introduction & Instructions

Spin-a-Story

Break up your routine or add punch and variety to writing lessons with **Spin-a-Story**. Use them in addition to—or instead of—a daily writing assignment. Spinners may be used by students of various ages. Though they are designed for grades 3-8, younger children and even teens can enjoy them too.

Includes 4 spinners in both full color and grayscale options (8 spinners total)

- Exciting Adventures Spinner
- Animal Adventures Spinner
- Fantasy & Fairy Tales Spinner
- Historical Adventures Spinner

Overview

Similar to StoryBuilders, these **Spin-a-Story** spinners help jumpstart a creative writing project by providing children with the basic elements of a story—character, setting, and plot. A spin of the pointer determines the story elements and sets a foundation for a fun and creative writing experience. *Can the mouse find its way home from a strange planet? Will the princess discover the secret passageway through an enchanted forest? And what twists and turns appear in the character's path? A predator? A storm at sea? A locked room?*

Spin-a-Story gives children opportunities to

- Use their imaginations to create fictional stories
- Express themselves both verbally and in writing
- Practice writing stories that have a beginning, middle, and end
- Incorporate character qualities and emotions into their stories
- Describe a story's setting

Tip

Because story writing lends itself to dialogue, review the basics of writing dialogue with your students.

- WriteShop Junior Teacher's Guides offer helpful tips. See **Book D** (p. 85) or **Book E** (p. 67).
- **Fold-N-Go Grammar Pack Level 2** includes a Dialogue Fold-N-Go.
- A good English handbook can also help.

Prepare Spinners

Print

This set contains two (2) of each spinner, one in full color and one in grayscale. Choose the grayscale spinners if you don't have a color printer or you simply want to conserve ink.

When setting up your printer options, choose **"Fit"** or **"Fit to Page"** to ensure that a spinner doesn't get cut off at the edges.

Option 1: Print with Colored Ink

Print COLOR spinners on white cardstock or computer paper.

Option 2: Print with Black Ink

Print GRAYSCALE spinners on either white or colored cardstock or computer paper.

Laminate (optional)

If you print on computer paper, you will need to make the spinner durable. Either of these methods will work:

- Laminate spinners, or
- Glue each one inside a manila file folder. Label both the front of the folder and the tab with the name of the spinner.

Assemble

Create a spinner by poking a hole in the center with a pen and inserting a brad. Position a paperclip on the brad and spin it around in a circle. If the paperclip does not spin freely, spin the paperclip around the point of a pencil instead, as shown.



Write the Story

Choose Story Elements

For each story, children will spin the spinner three times.

First Time: Spin to choose a CHARACTER.

Second Time: Spin to choose a SETTING.

Third Time: Spin to choose a PROBLEM.

Example

Character: *Great leader or ruler*

Setting: *Medieval England*

Plot: *Must cross new or dangerous territory*

If the character, setting, or problem is not specified, the student gets to choose. For example, if the spinner lands on “boy,” she can decide whether the boy is going to be a real person such as her cousin, a *historical character*, or a *make-believe character*.

Develop the Story

Pick-a-Plot

Spin again if a problem doesn’t seem to fit the character and setting.

Get Moody

For an interesting twist, choose a mood/tone for the day’s Spin-a-Story activity *before* you spin. Decide ahead of time whether your story will be thrilling, funny, sad, mysterious, or scary.

Spin Again

If you want your story to take a different turn, spin again to add another character or introduce a twist to the plot.

Two Is Company

Spin to choose a main character. Then, spin again to select a second character to join the main character in the story or adventure you create.

Double the Fun!

Spin to choose two characters, two settings, and two problems. Challenge yourself to include all six elements in your story.

Master Mix-Up

To create even more interesting or outrageous stories, use two or more spinners to help you choose the elements of your tale. For example, spin a character from “Fantasy & Fairy Tales,” a setting from “Animal Adventures,” and a problem from “Historical Adventures”!

Plan it Out

Use a graphic organizer to plan the story before you write. Use (or reuse) one of your WriteShop graphic organizers. Alternatively, [Houghton Mifflin](#) offers free printables:

- [Story Map 1](#)
- [Story Map 2](#)
- [Story Map 3](#)

In the News

Newspaper articles tell the 5 Ws: *who, what, when, where, and why*. Imagine that you are a news reporter. Spin to pick three elements to start you off with who, what, and where. Then, when you write your news story, add your own information to give all the details, including when and why.

Poetry Fun

Instead of a story, write a short poem.

Dear Diary

Write a journal or diary entry using your 3 spins to guide you. First, spin for a character. Then, write in first person, pretending to be that character.

Or, have your character write a letter to a friend instead. Spin a second time to choose the identify of this friend.

Daily Timed Writing

1. Spin 3 times to choose the character, setting, and problem.
2. Set the timer for 5, 10, or 15 minutes.
3. Write until the timer goes off, even if it means stopping mid-sentence!
4. Write a little every day, adding details to your story. For extra fun, use the Spin Again activity on p. 3 to introduce new developments.
5. On the last day of the week, wrap up your tale with a conclusion.

Fairy Tale Fun

Do you know how to write a real fairy tale? There are certain basic elements that mark a story as a fairy tale. Use your “Fantasy & Fairy Tale” spinner to help you decide on the character, setting, and problem. Then, read all about [how to write a fairy tale](#). Once you understand the “fairy tale formula,” you’ll be ready to write your own!

Adventure Awaits!

[WriteShop Junior Books D, E, and F](#) all include lessons on how to write an adventure story. If you’re a WriteShop Junior student, the “Exciting Adventures” spinner can help you choose some of the elements for a thrilling adventure!

The Rest Is History

The “Historical Adventure” spinner invites you to create a historical fiction story that takes place in an earlier time and place. As a variation, spin for a character and problem, but do not spin for a setting. Instead, set your story during the time period you’re currently studying, whether it’s ancient Greece, medieval England, or another era that is not listed on the spinner.

If you’re using **WriteShop Junior Book D** or **Book F**, you’ll find a historical fiction writing lesson in each book. Think about using your “Historical Adventure” spinner to plan some of the story ingredients!

Round Robin

A “Round Robin” is a good activity for a group of students or siblings to practice narrative or imaginative story writing. Remind them that even though they can have lots of fun with a topic, they should keep their writing gracious. This means that stories may be humorous but not crude, realistic but not graphic.

Directions

1. Have each child spin 3 times (once for each category).
Children can all use the same spinner, or each child can start with a different spinner.
2. Instruct your kids to print or write neatly and legibly, since others will be reading their work. If younger and older students are writing together, have everyone print rather than use cursive.
3. Set the timer for 2-3 minutes and let them write.
4. When the bell rings, it’s pencils down. Students may finish the word but not the sentence.
5. Everyone passes their papers to the person on the left.
6. Set the timer again and tell the children to add to the story that’s in front of them.
7. They will continue exchanging papers every 2-3 minutes for as many rounds as you decide (4-6 rounds work well).
8. Before they begin the last round, announce that it’s time write a conclusion.

Tip

Consider increasing the time by 15-30 seconds each round. As the stories grow in length, children will need more time to read the story before they can add to it.

Ideas for Pre-writers

Let StoryBuilders inspire imaginative pre-writers by providing the main ingredients for their tales. The following activities are perfect for children who can’t write well (or at all).

Narration

Invite children to narrate their story to you.

1. Write it down as they dictate.
2. After every sentence or two, stop and read what you’ve written. Continually reviewing the story as you go helps children remember what they’ve already said, keeping them more focused.

Recording Device

Show children how to dictate into a voice recorder.

Comic Strip

Give kids a comic strip panel and let them sketch out a story based on the results of their spins. Find printable templates here:

- [Free Printable Comic Book Templates](#) | picklebums
- [Printable Comic Strip Layouts and Cartoon Panels](#) | DonnaYoung.org

Creativity in Action

Let pre-writers use mini figures or puppets to enact a story they create. They can either make up a story as they go, or they can enact one they already created.

Ideas for Oral Storytelling

Travel Game

Take your Spin-a-Story spinners on a road trip or vacation. Your family can make up stories orally, in Round Robin fashion (see p. 5).

Waiting Game

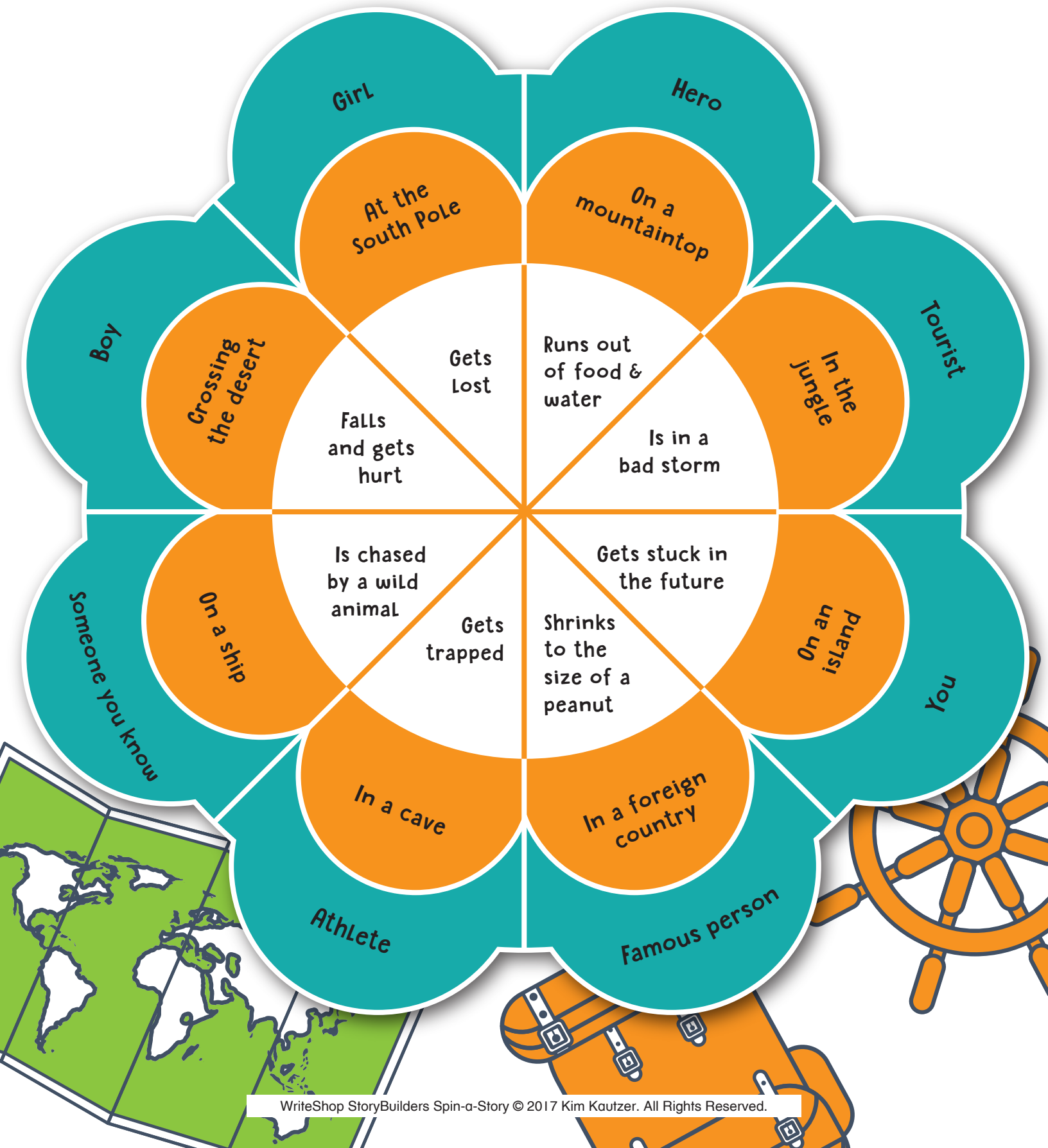
Keep laminated spinners in a tote bag for times when you need to keep the kids occupied or want to encourage conversation. Put away the digital devices and pull out the spinners while waiting at a restaurant, having the car repaired, or sitting in the doctor's waiting room.

Bedtime Stories

Kids love bedtime stories, but sometimes it's hard to get creative night after night! Choose one of the Spin-a-Story spinners and make up a bedtime story. Either the parent or the child can make up the story, or you can take turns adding details. Wrap up the story before lights out!

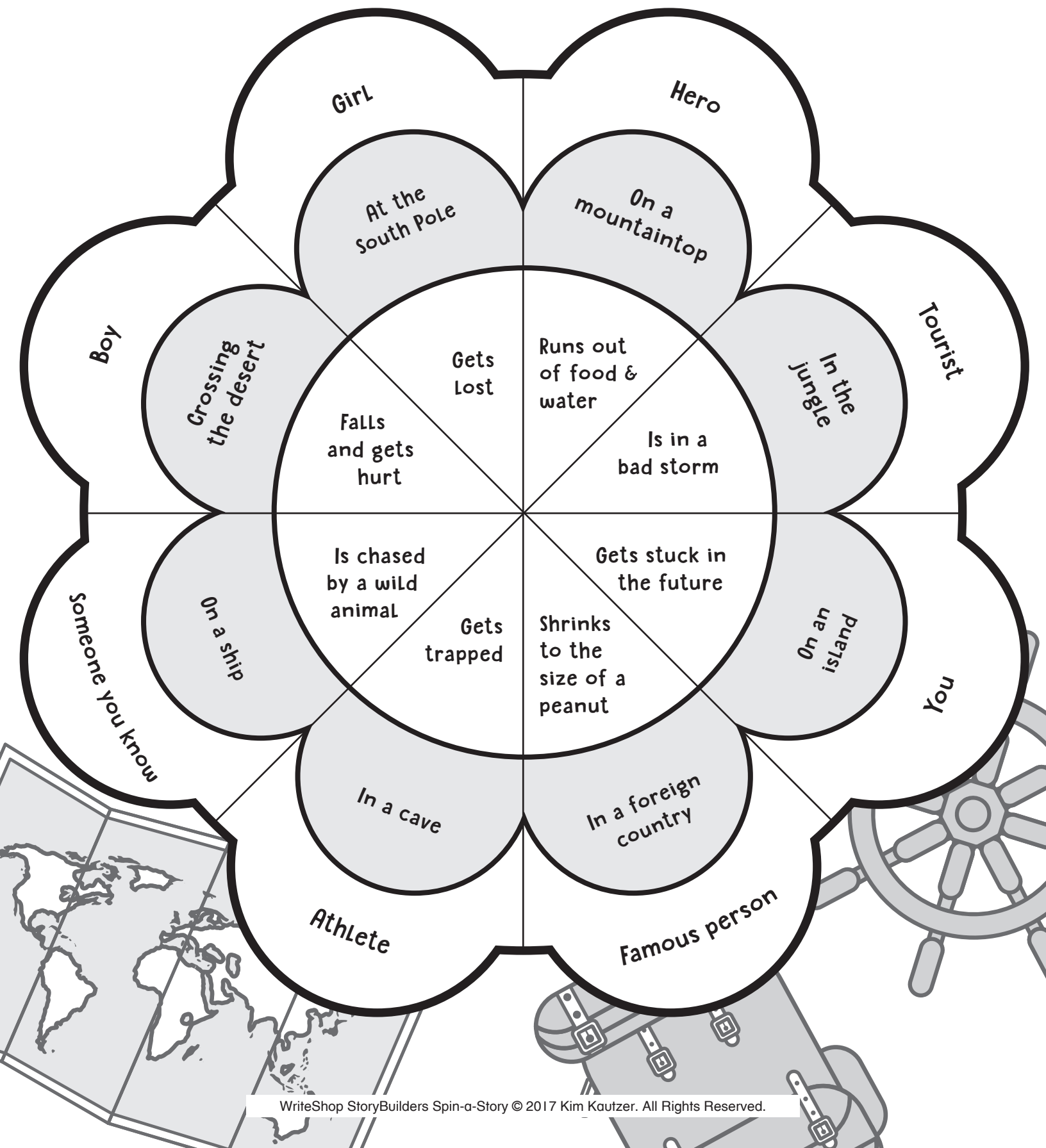
Spin-a-Story

EXCITING ADVENTURES!



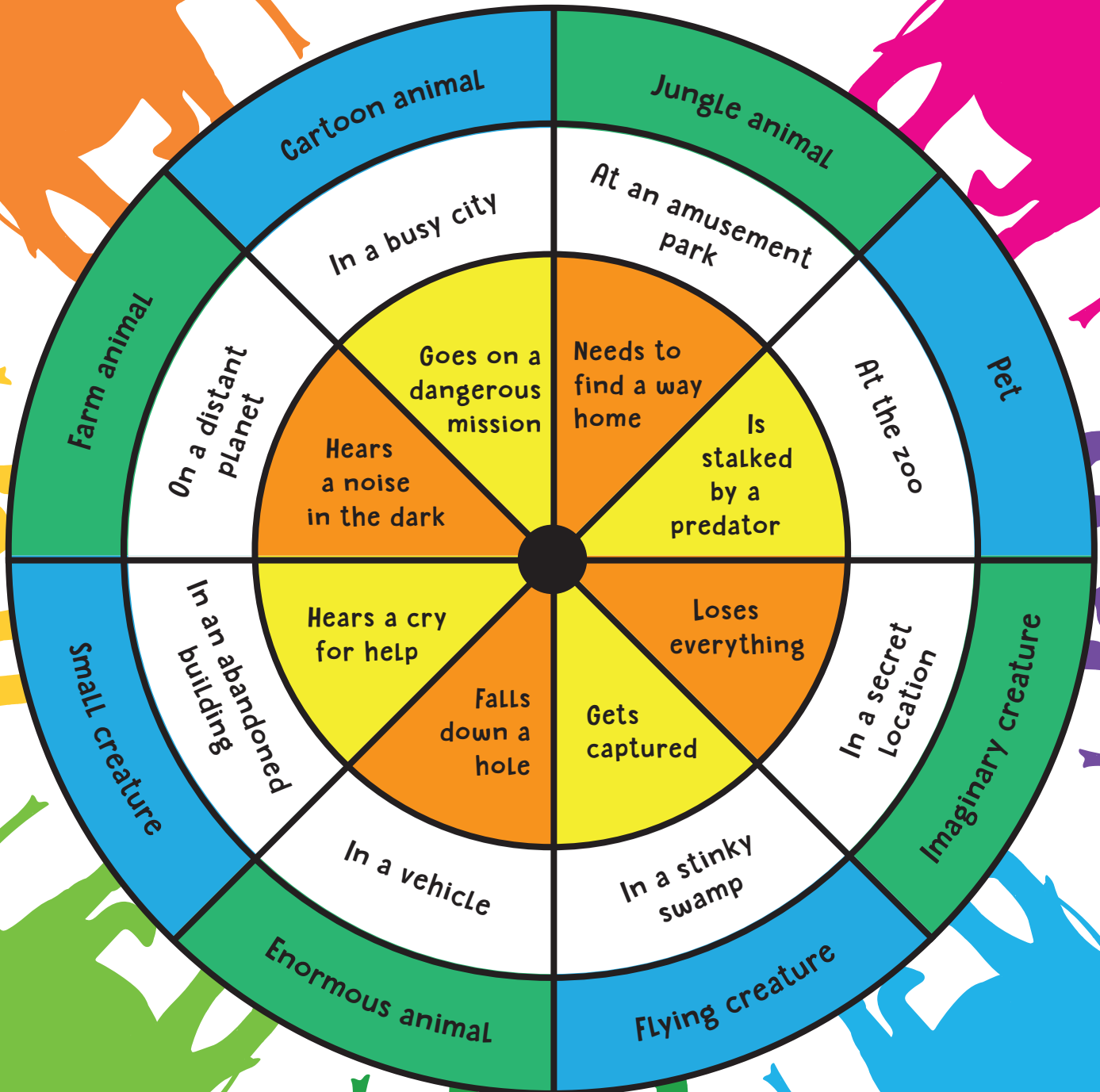
Spin-a-Story

EXCITING ADVENTURES!



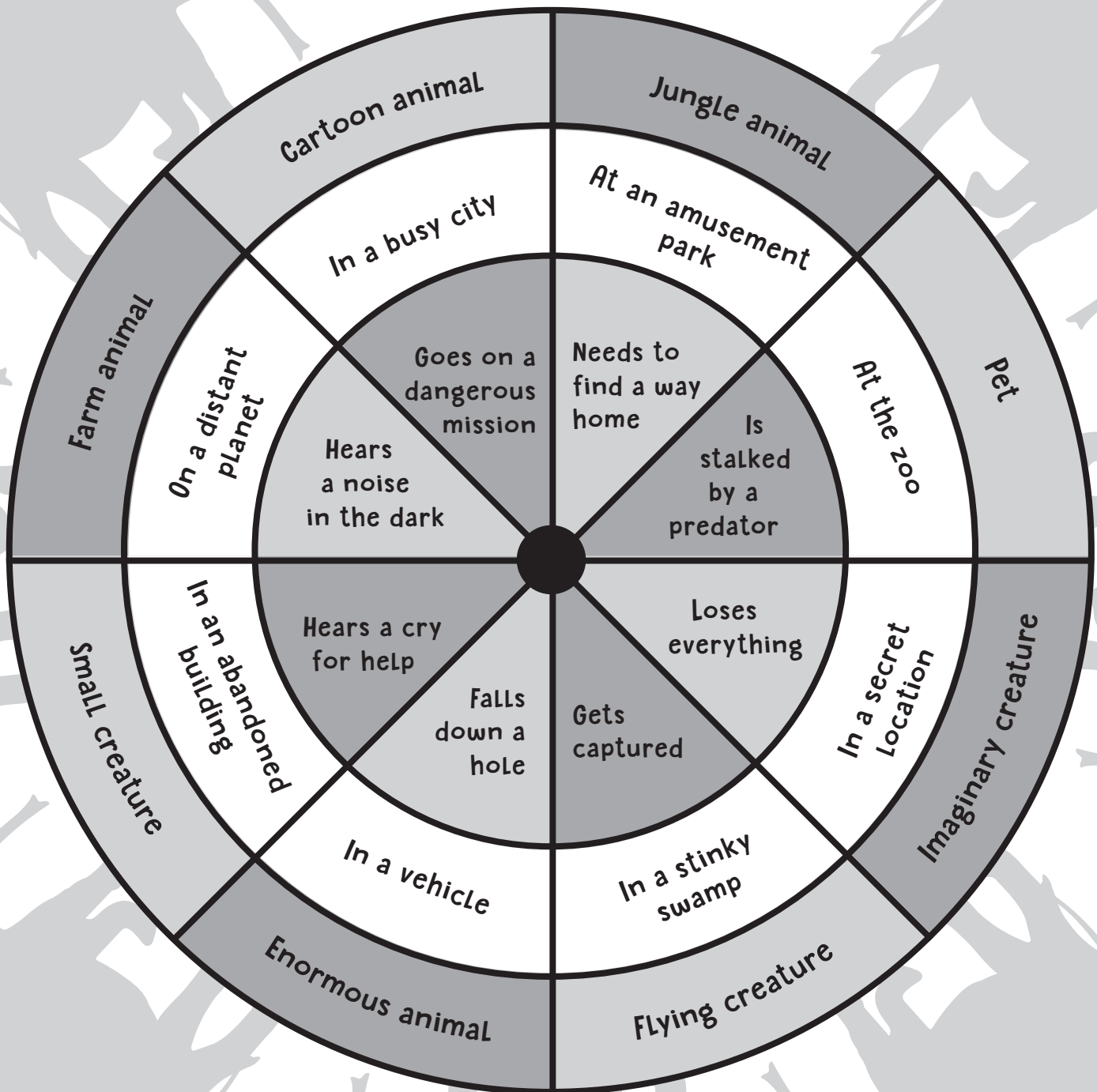
Spin-a-Story

ANIMAL ADVENTURES



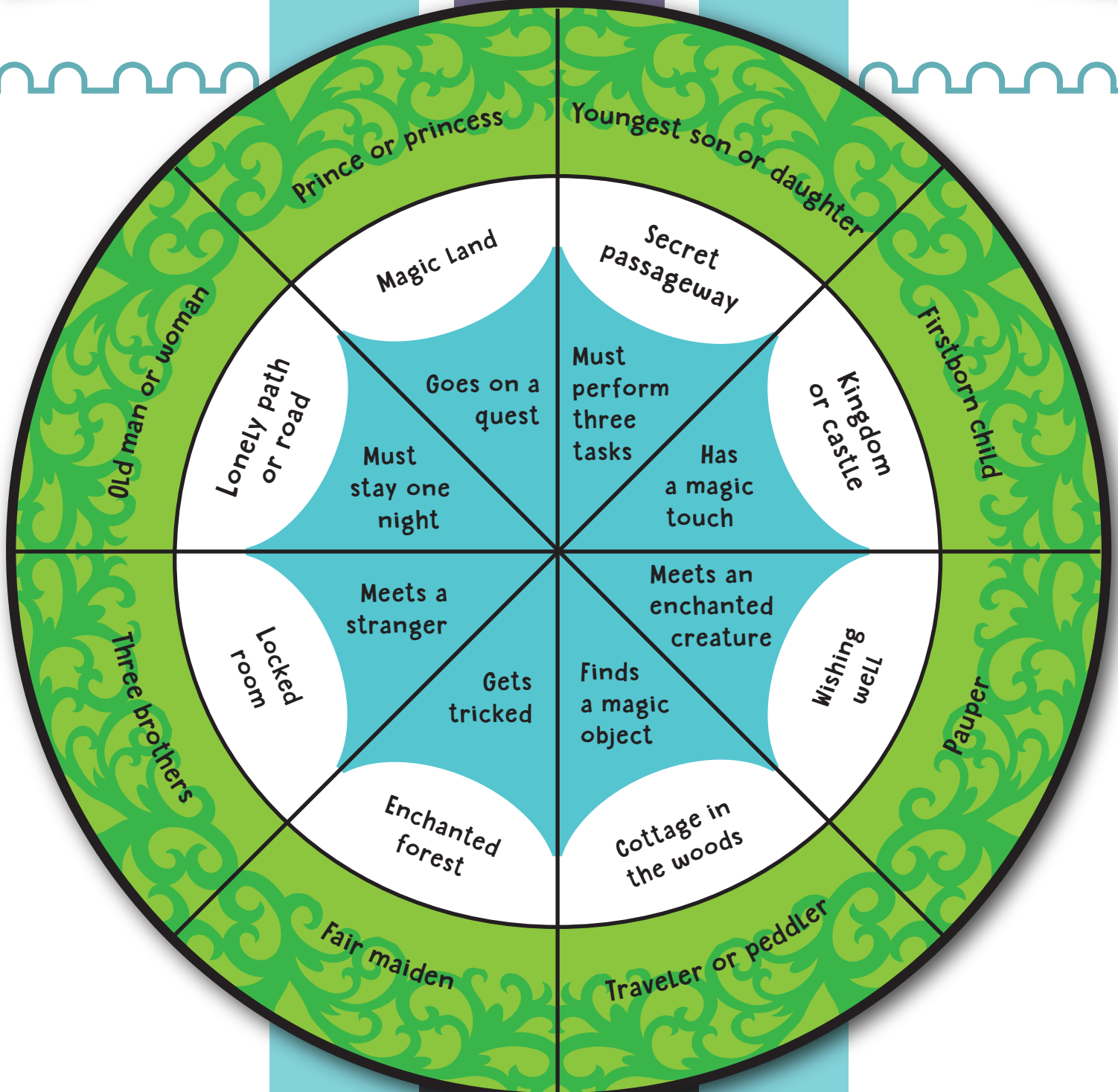
Spin-a-Story

ANIMAL ADVENTURES



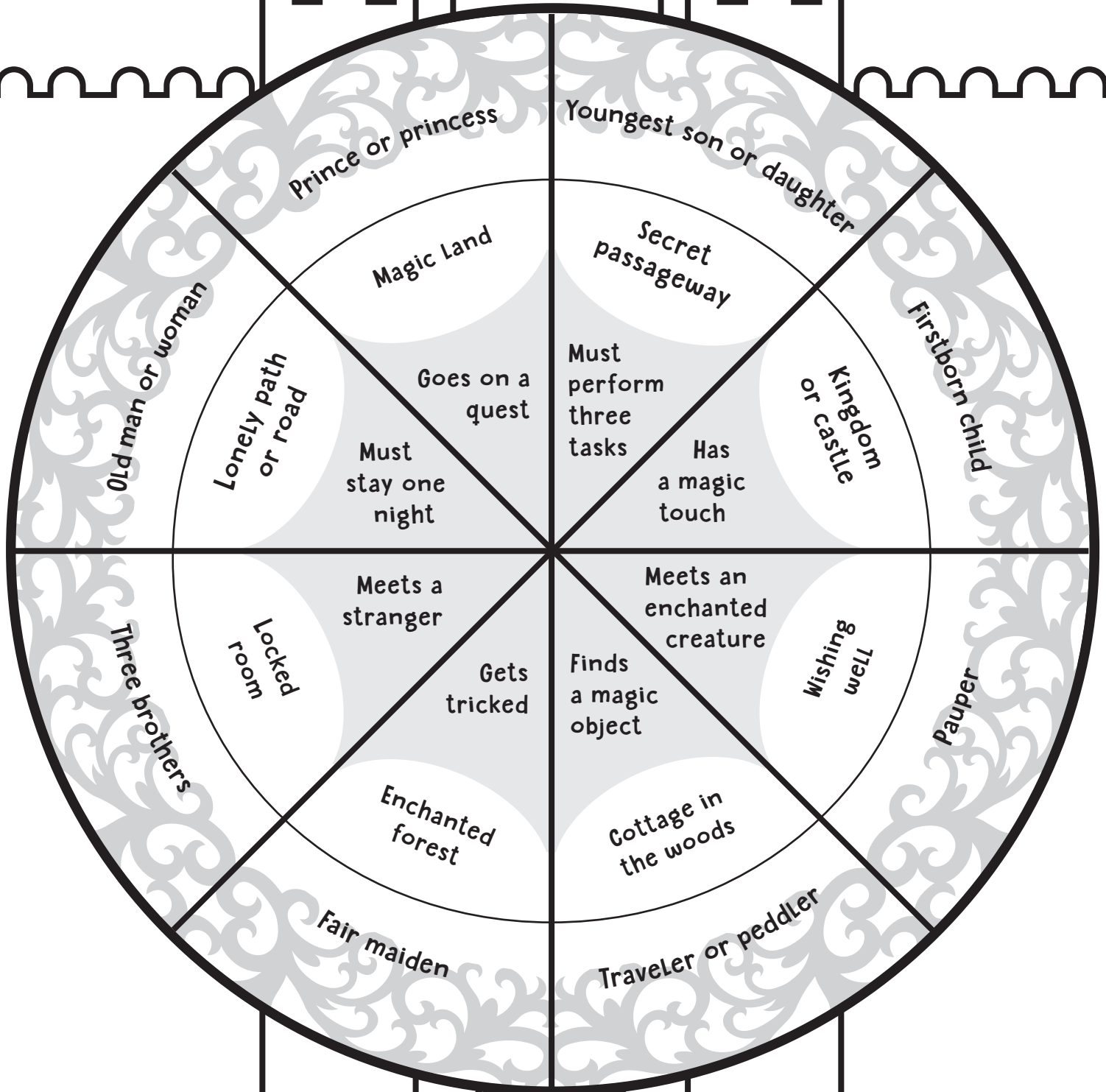
Spin-a-Story

FANTASY & FAIRY TALES



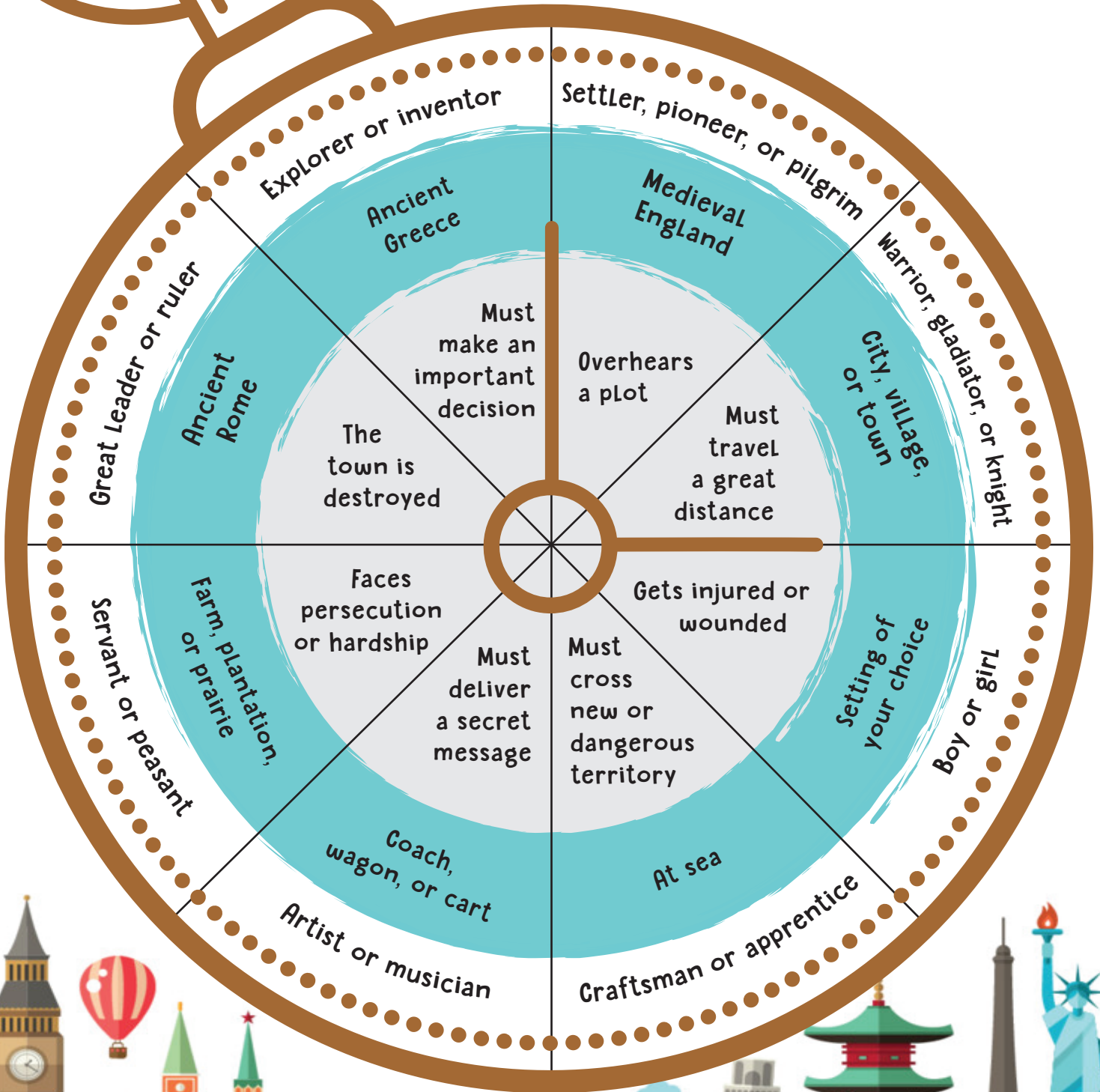
Spin-a-Story

FANTASY & FAIRY TALES



Spin-a-Story

HISTORICAL ADVENTURES



Spin-a-Story HISTORICAL ADVENTURES

