

All Mixed Up

Number of players: unlimited

Materials needed: comics or old story books, broken down into frames or pieces

Object of the game: to recreate or put the “story” back together again and then to tell the tale.

To play: The best way to describe All Mixed Up is like a “story jigsaw puzzle.” Put the pieces in an order to tell the story—note that there isn’t necessarily a “right way” or single order of the story—that depends on how and why the player chooses to order a frame in a particular way.

Have plenty of sets for players to choose from—some players will zip through the first set in a matter of seconds—but then on the second try can go for a more difficult puzzle—one with more pieces. Vary the comics and pieces—having some with as few as 3 cards, and others with as many as 8-10 cards—and some with words and some without. That way, there’s plenty of choice, and players can get through as few or as many of the games as they like.

All Mixed Up is a great way to encourage decoding skills with children of all ages. The trick is to be sure not to have too difficult a comic, story, or scene for kids to decipher. Encourage children to look for visual cues in the story, keywords in the text, or other signs to indicate where a piece may belong (for example, many comics have Title Frames as their first piece, and also include the date in the final frame).

Older kids will be attracted to comics, or may also be interested in storyboarding their own scene with wordless pictures (this is totally okay—a scene doesn’t have to “go back together” in a certain way if the player can make a logical story/sequence out of the pieces or set that he/she’s chosen. Encourage players to “tell you the story” after they’ve finished putting the pieces in order. Why does it make sense? How can the player tell that the pieces are in the right place? All of this is a great critical thinking and problem solving exercise (for players and leaders alike—as both must have a sense of what the story is trying to say.

Making the cards:

Second-hand “classic” tales such as *The Boy Who Cried Wolf*, *Little Red Riding Hood* or *Hansel and Gretel* work well, as they are stories that most players will be familiar with. Choose a smaller size version and trim away the text. Remember that only every second picture in the story will be available for use (as books are double-sided, but this game is not) so choose the pictures that define a particular moment in the story, and that will make sense when they are put together.

Adhere the pictures to Bristol board, box board, or another stiff background. That way, they will not bend, and the picture on the opposite side is also blocked out. Laminating the cards will also keep them clean and ready for long time use.

Why wordless?

With story books, because only half of the text will appear in the cards (because cards are only one sided) it is best to trim the words away. Very short stories—such as those found in beginning readers—with brief text can be included if all of the pages are being used.

Using comics: look for comics that are not part of a series (so that there is no confusion about what the story is trying to say) and that are suitable for readers of all ages. Easy favourites could include Garfield, Snoopy, Calvin and Hobbes, or even Archie.

If you are using the original comic, adhere the pieces to Bristol board or cardstock, so that the pieces will withstand continued play. If you are scanning or photocopying the images (remember to include copyright information) print them onto cardstock. Using different colours of cardstock (particularly if you are using black and white comics) make it easier for cleanup, as you can tell by sight which pieces belong to which puzzle.

Variation for a Group

To incorporate All Mixed Up into a group activity, give each player one of the frames. Instruct the group to work together to figure out the order, and then have them present the story or comic aloud, each telling or reading his/her frame. Encourage the players to plan on and agree on the story as a whole prior to presenting it.