Student storytelling: A strategy for developing oral literacy in the intermediate grades

Rita E. McCarthy

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STUDENT STORYTELLING: A STRATEGY FOR DEVELOPING ORAL LITERACY IN THE INTERMEDIATE GRADES

A Project
Presented to the
Faculty of
California State University,
San Bernardino

In Partial Fulfillment
of the Requirement for the Degree
Master of Arts
in
Education: Reading Option

by
Rita E. McCarthy

June 1995
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Abstract

This project promotes the use of student storytelling as a valuable educational tool to use in the development of listening and speaking skills in the intermediate grade. A teacher's handbook has been devised for the purpose of guiding students in storytelling. The handbook describes storytelling techniques, and the modeling of storytelling; offers teachers suggestions for helping students choose their stories; gives examples of story mapping and self-evaluation; and provides an annotated bibliography of sources for beginner storytellers.

The literature review details research which states that listening comprehension and oral language are the foundation for the development of literacy. As such, there is a need for including more oral language activities in the language arts curriculum, especially in the intermediate grades where the emphasis on reading and writing content overshadows oral language. The premise of this project is that storytelling is an effective strategy in the immediate grades for furthering the development of speaking and listening skills, thus strengthening students' reading and writing.

The storytelling handbook embraces the whole language perspective of learning. Student storytelling implements the philosophy that
instructional materials be relevant, authentic, and meaningful; that children actively participate in language learning; and that the modes of listening and speaking are integrated with the modes of reading and writing.
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INTRODUCTION

We live in a fast-paced technological space-aged society, one in which the advances of science have far outstripped the mental and social processes of humans. Educational priorities are for the technical subjects. We are obsessed with gadgetry; the computer reigns supreme and we scramble to keep up with the latest software improvements which "provide fast, shallow romps across the information landscape" (Gelernter, 1994, p. 136).

The concept of multimedia provides us with a combination of text, sound, and pictures. We no longer have to read a literary piece; we can watch actors perform it, and listen to music of the era depicted. The printed page seems boring by comparison, and imagination, in many respects, has become obsolete. If reading scores are low, we buy more software. If writing skills are weak, we have word processors which will even correct spelling errors. We have come to expect information disgorged immediately, and we tend to reject extensive thought and deliberation in favor of technological shortcuts.

While these technological advances have afforded us labor saving and life saving inventions, it would appear that our society could use a redefinition of purpose. We are trying to control our space age technology "with mental and social processes that have advanced only a little beyond the cave" (Livo & Rietz, 1986, p. 24). In the meantime, research indicates a decline in literacy in America. It is being reported that, academically, students from other countries
are outperforming ours. These statistics have resulted in growing concern for the state of education in our country and in increasing demands for reform.

The current reform movement in education gained momentum in 1983 with the publication of *A Nation at Risk* which reported that we are a nation that has fallen behind other countries in levels of skill and literacy required to compete in today's technological world. "Twenty-three million Americans are functionally illiterate by the simplest test of everyday reading, writing, and comprehension; half the population of gifted students do not match their tested ability with comparable achievement in school" (p. 8). The document also states that SAT verbal and math scores have declined; business and military leaders are spending huge sums of money for education training programs in the basic skills; and there has been a steady decline in science achievement and an increase in remedial mathematics courses.

Since 1983 public education has experienced considerable scrutiny and analysis with increasing demands, not only for reforms, but for a complete overhaul of our school structure. Research in the area of psycholinguistics and language acquisition has disclosed new theories about the learning and teaching of language. Becoming increasingly frustrated, teachers and administrators have seen the need for a change in literacy programs.

From this discontent and frustration has sprung the grass roots whole language literacy movement. Traditional methods of teaching literacy have
yielded to a new perspective on the teaching of reading and writing. These perspectives on reading instruction are detailed in the California English-Language Arts Framework (1987) which directs the revitalization of English language arts instruction through a literature-based curriculum.

Even with the emergence of the whole language literacy movement, educators continue to argue about the best way to teach reading and how to combat the temptations of modern technology. Maguire (1985) comments that “Children today are immersed in an overtly visual world of television, computers, and video arcades, which is having a disastrous effect on their abilities to listen, to think in words, and to exercise ‘the mind’s eye’ ” (p. 13). In The Struggle to Continue Patrick Shannon (1990) proposes that students and teachers need to escape the routines of “textbooks, tests, and management systems” and to find a way to resist “the unrelenting inversion of power between teachers and technology” (1990, p. ix).

M. Virginia Parker (1991), a third-grade teacher in New York City, voices a common concern:

What worries me are the trends, especially in technology that threaten active learning. While television and computers can and should be efficient and exciting tools to aid every child in his or her learning, the danger lies in their overwhelming ability to lure children into a state of passivity that is difficult to overcome (Parker, 1991, p. 81).

Though computers, television, videos, and other technological devices can be valuable and effective tools in the educative process, students must
become more actively involved in their own learning and be able to forge more meaningful connections in their reading. Once children have learned to read, there is a need for instilling in them a lifetime involvement in reading and an active involvement in learning. The 1993 “AFT/Chrysler Report on Kids, Parents, and Reading” states that “between the ages of 9 and 17, the percentage of children who dip into a book a few times a week drops by half” (Meredith Corporation, 1993, p. A2). It appears television, music videos, and computer games are interfering with students’ reading time and do not always influence their lives in a positive manner.

Thus schools and teachers are being challenged to provide language experiences that are integrated, whole, natural, functional, and, most importantly, meaningful in order to cope with this nation’s multicultural mosaic; to lower our illiteracy rate; and to keep students actively involved in learning. Clearly there is a need then for learning strategies which will guide students to utilize effectively the modes of reading, writing, speaking, and listening in order to prepare them to function in the workforce as well as to be “thinking, fulfilled individuals within our society” (English-Language Arts Framework, 1987, p. 4).
STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

No one can refute the crucial role reading plays in determining children's future success and the need for helping our children become better readers. One can find a wealth of information on the teaching of reading ranging from publishing companies' textbook kits to dozens of journal articles on how to teach reading and writing skills in a whole language classroom. In comparison, it seems, less attention has been focused on curriculum development for two of the basic skills with which reading and writing are to be integrated: speaking and listening.

Listening

A child first learns oral language by listening. Listening is the basis of all language learning. Children learn the meaning of words first by listening and then by using these words meaningfully in oral communication. In many ways, speaking and listening are inseparable; one is dependent upon the other. According to Williams and Brogan (1991), "Many children do not have a sense of connected oral language or story structure, such as character, plot, setting, and their attention span is limited" (p. 10). Therefore, children need to be taught good listening skills, as they move up through the grades and are exposed to a more complicated curriculum, especially in reading.
Speaking

Before reading, there is the spoken word. Speaking skills lie at the beginning of a child's development. "Speech is a uniquely active process" (Modaff & Hopper, 1984, p.37) and, being multi-sensory, it is especially suited to active learning. "Humans are active when they speak. Speaking children make the best learners" (p. 38).

Speech draws children into the language community by linking them to each other; it guides behavior, and therefore it advances socialization and implements behavior change. As an important ingredient in the teaching and learning processes, speech assists in literacy development.

However, Modaff and Hopper (1984) point out in "Why Speech Is Basic" that not enough attention has been given to the fact that "oracy is a necessary condition for literacy" (p. 40). Reading and writing skills are built upon oral communication skills. Goodman (1986) in What's Whole in Whole Language relates that a child's hearing and speaking experiences are the foundation for reading instruction. In "Oral Language: A place In the Curriculum," Stewig (1988) proposes that "Today a major challenge in the language arts curriculum is to include oral language activities amid requirements for more and more written-language activities" (p. 171).

Yet teachers experience less encouragement and freedom and have less time to involve children in the oral activities which are so important to language
development. Stewig (1988) comments that too few see a need for oral experience in the curriculum, the reason being perhaps that since everyone can talk, we assume that oral language is a natural ability. However, he points out that our more prevalent use of oral communication over written expression indicates a need for a greater focus on oral language experiences in our curricula.

Since reading and writing skills are built on oral communication abilities, it can be argued that when more speech is used in classrooms, reading and writing skills improve. Stewig contends that, although reading and writing programs do involve students in oral language activities, oracy is not the main focus. Also, less attention is paid to oral language in textbooks while there is a plethora of detailed reading material. Clearly a better balance is needed in the language arts curriculum by emphasizing the development of oral skills and listening skills along with reading and writing skills.

Studies regarding emergent literacy have indicated that "the development of vocabulary and syntactic complexity in oral language is enhanced in children who are frequently exposed to stories" (Strickland & Morrow, 1989, p. 260). If children attain language through active participation, then giving them the opportunity to tell stories aids in language development. Listening to stories also helps to develop receptive language skills and listening comprehension. Storytelling, reading stories, and hearing stories are emphasized in curricula for
kindergarten and the primary grades where children are learning to read. But what of those students in the intermediate grades who are "at-risk readers"? These are the students who are underachieving in schools, who are developmentally behind, who have emotional problems, or who may have a negative attitude toward reading because they lack the understanding of the reading process and possess a limited set of reading strategies. These are the children whom Mike Rose in *Lives on the Boundary* terms our "educational underclass" (1989).

While there are remedial reading programs such as Chapter I and early intervention programs for first graders, such as Reading Recovery, research indicates comparatively little is being done to help "at-risk readers" in the intermediate grades, other than typical remediation classes. In an article on literature for remedial readers, Shumaker and Shumaker report that "Middle grade poor readers who have spent many years in remediation classes no longer believe that more reading games, or isolated phonics work can do anything for them" (Williams & Brogan, 1991, p. 3).

In light of the reported ineffectiveness of remediation classes, oral language instruction becomes more significant. Just as oral literacy is an important factor in the development of literacy in the primary grades, it is equally important, if not more so, in the middle grades where, it seems, even less emphasis is placed on oral language activities; where storytelling and the
reading of stories are often neglected. There is a need for teachers to understand that oral work can make an important contribution to effective learning, not just in the early stages of elementary school, but in all grade levels across the curriculum. "Oral language development is linked to achievement levels in literacy work, in problem-solving, in social skills, and in the processes of learning and thinking themselves" (Corson, 1988, p. 28).

It is helpful for teachers to have an understanding of the processes of oral language development as they apply across age stages. The intermediate grades, especially, is a stage which is an appropriate time to focus on proficiency in oral language. Corson states:

The middle school years are a distinct language development stage. The process of intellectual development can be accelerated by oral language work. Children internalize the product of their dialogue and allow it to influence their thinking and future dialogues we have taken part in (1988, p. 90).

Corson speaks about purposeful talk as a tool through which intellectual development can be advanced. Through purposeful talk, students have something real to talk about; purposeful talk offers opportunities for conversation and dialogue, for role play, for improvisation, for the telling and retelling of stories. These oral language activities help students to make meaningful connections; they reinforce initial learning and lead to new learning; they enhance reading comprehension and written expression.
Conclusion

Listening and speaking are the foundation of all learning. Research indicates that oral language work can be an indispensable learning tool across the curriculum at all grade levels. The California English-Language Arts Framework (1987) calls for an oral language program and school activities which offer students opportunities to develop their speaking and listening skills. These skills are to be integrated with reading and writing within the whole language framework. Yet, research indicates that, as students advance to the intermediate grades, the requirements for more reading and written language activities preclude oral language activities in the language arts curriculum. Clearly there is a need, in the intermediate grades, for a greater focus on the development of speaking and listening skills in the promotion of language and oral literacy.
THEORETICAL FOUNDATION

This project is based on the theoretical foundation of whole language and focuses particularly on the two modes of speaking and listening which, in the whole language model on the reading continuum, are to be integrated with the modes of reading and writing.

A discussion of the theoretical aspects of whole language perhaps is best served through contrast—that is, by first relating the underlying principles of traditional literacy instruction: "Learning progresses from the concrete to the abstract, from the simple to the complex, from active manipulation to symbolic conceptualization" (Egan, 1989, p. 1). Teachers have been taught to list objectives, select contents and materials, choose appropriate methods, and then decide on evaluation procedures which have included standardized reading tests and other skills-oriented testing. "In the traditional model it is the teacher who directs the questioning, who chooses the books, who searches for activities and units that fit into the prescribed curriculum and carefully follows the steps suggested" (Watson, Burke, & Harste, 1989, p. 9).

Basal readers are organized around vocabulary lists and skills drills. Reading time doesn't necessarily mean a great deal of time is spent on actual reading, and, very often, little time is allotted to writing. The modes of speaking and listening are not necessarily integrated into the curriculum, or perhaps, not addressed at all.
In contrast, based on recent research in the last decade on sociopsycholinguistics, early literacy, and the entire reading process, the whole language philosophy proposes very different views on teaching, on learning, and on assessment procedures. By its very nature whole language is “functional, natural, genuine and authentic” (Pearson, 1989, p. 232). However, whole language cannot be packaged or found between the covers of a textbook. Whole language is created by teachers and students together. It proposes the view that children learn best in a print-rich environment and “become literate in a whole, real context” (Moyers, 1992, p. 48).

Pearson (1989) discusses the whole language literacy movement from three perspectives—philosophical, political, and curricular. From a philosophical perspective, he reflects that any comprehending is a form of interpretation and that in whole language, readers construct their own meaning of text. In the classroom, which is considered to be a community of learners, students, teachers, authors, administrators are all equal in the matter of creating meaning and sharing knowledge.

Pearson (1989) discusses the curricular perspective in terms of two key concepts: "integration and authenticity" (p. 233). He advocates more integrated curricula in which reading and writing are not divided into subskills. The language modes of speaking, listening, reading, and writing are integrated and interactive; the language arts curriculum itself is not separated from social studies, science, math, music, or art.

Authenticity means engaging in language activities with genuine communicative intent. Students read and discuss real literature; they learn to write by actually authoring journals and stories and by publishing their writing. The use of dittoed sheets and fill-in-the-blank workbooks is discouraged. Instead, a school task must fulfill a "real world" criterion (p. 234).

The main principles of whole language can be divided into two categories: (1) principles for reading and writing and (2) principles for teaching and learning.

Reading and writing principles include the following: readers predict, select, confirm, and self-correct as they try to make sense out of print; there are three language systems which interact in written language—the graphophonemic (sound and letter patterns), syntactic (sentence patterns), and the semantic (meanings). The goal of readers is always expression of meaning.

Goodman (1989) describes the principles of teaching and learning as follow: (1) "literacy develops from whole to part, from vague to precise, from gross to fine, from highly concrete and contextualized to more abstract, from
familiar contexts to unfamiliar” (p. 39); (2) the teacher is a facilitator who prepares the environment, collects materials, and invites students to participate and plan their learning activities; (3) motivation is intrinsic rather than extrinsic; and (4) instructional materials are authentic, relevant and meaningful.

Conclusion

Whole language is not a packaged set of materials, a method, or a technique. It is a philosophy, “a perspective on language and learning that leads to the acceptance of certain strategies, methods, materials, and techniques. . . .” (Watson, 1989, p. 134). Whole language is an enthusiasm for teaching and learning which advocates the development of authentic and natural curriculum in the classroom and the integration of listening, speaking, reading, and writing.

In light of these beliefs, this project is designed as a handbook to help teachers invite students to be storytellers. As storytellers, students become active participants in learning language. By listening to and telling stories, they learn both critical listening skills and effective oral expression. In developing a sense of story structure, they improve their comprehending. They then progress naturally to written composition, thus integrating all four modes of language development in an authentic, meaningful setting.
LITERATURE REVIEW

California’s English-Language Arts Framework (1987) clearly mandates a literature-based language arts curriculum and cites the importance of literature to stimulate students’ minds and hearts. “With a rich and diverse background in literature, students can begin to discover both the remarkable wholeness in the intricately woven tapestry of American society and the unique variety brought by many cultures to that intriguing fabric” (p.7).

The whole language philosophy advocates that children experience printed language in interesting and meaningful ways. Frank Smith (1985) states the basic rule for reading instruction: “Make learning to read easy—which means making reading a meaningful, enjoyable, useful, and frequent experience for children” (p. 133). Students are to be provided with opportunities to hear and to read authentic stories.

The integration of reading, writing, speaking, and listening is one of the cardinal precepts of the whole language perspective; much has been written about strategies for developing children’s reading and writing skills. However, the state framework also directs that “teaching strategies must integrate instruction in verbal skills and the language arts rather than fragment and isolate conventions and mechanics from meaning” (p. 18). Children learn the meaning of language by the development of speaking and listening skills through role playing, creative drama, readers’ theatre, informal discussions and formal
speech making. Chambers (1970 reflects that there has been a concern for the quality of children’s literature centered on the printed page, but public education has neglected the aspect of children’s literature in the oral tradition. Storytelling, often regarded as entertainment rather than an educational tool, is an oral language activity neglected in the language arts curriculum.

In many public school classrooms today, stories are being told by invited performers largely for the sake of entertainment. Technical knowledge also has produced a wealth of electronic storytellers available to teachers. Hamilton and Weiss (1990) note that in our society today it is difficult for children to use their imaginations because they are continually bombarded by the images of others—in movies, and videos, on T.V., and in picture books. Many folktales and stories have been produced by record and film companies with professional actors as storytellers. But these productions miss the essence of storytelling—"that of personally relating a good story to a group of listeners at a given time in a given place" (Chambers, 1970, p. 10).

Listening to and telling stories can help the development of imagination. Without imagination children are restricted to a narrow environment defined by that which they can see and touch. Colwell (1980) points out that through listening to stories, the child becomes aware of the magic and music of words. At a time in our society when the emphasis is on receiving information visually through television and videos, and when movie heroes often replace the
characters of fairy tales and mythology, a child is less willing or able to listen
without the help of visual images. "Storytelling helps to restore the importance of
the spoken word" (p. 5).

Reflecting on the importance of the imagination as a foundation for
learning and as an integral ingredient in the reading process, Egan (1989)
advocates the revision of teaching methods to consider the child not only as a
"logico-mathematical thinker" (p. 17), but also as an imaginative one.
"Imagination has been pushed to the 'sidelines,' to the 'frills' of art, music and so
on, from which it can less easily be displaced" (p. 18). Egan advocates
storytelling and even expounds on the features of stories that can become
models for teaching in general. He relates how this kind of teaching uses
children's conceptual abilities by drawing on and engaging the communicative
powers of story form.

Even in the early twentieth century, Katherine Dunlap Cather (1919)
noted that storytelling was considered to be of value in kindergarten and in the
primary grades, but needed to be included in the curriculum for the older child
and its value in the classroom recognized by teachers of all grades. Wells
(1986) suggests that stories have a role in education beyond their contribution to
the acquisition of literacy. "Constructing stories in the mind—or storying as it
has been called—is one of the most fundamental means of making meaning; as
such, it is an activity that pervades all aspects of learning" (p. 194).
Corson (1988) states that "the role of the middle years of schooling, then, is the vital one for promoting oral language development in children" (p. 61). During this period, children begin to think more about the words they choose and about their meanings. Corson advocates storytelling as one of the oral language approaches to use across the middle school curriculum.

Williams and Brogan (1991) report that listening to stories gives at-risk readers a sense of connected oral language or story structure. "Listening comprehension is a prerequisite to all other language learning. Understanding words helps children to use them meaningfully in oral and written communication" (p. 9). Clearly, then, in providing more meaningful literacy experiences for oral language development, it is beneficial for both teachers and students to listen to and tell stories rather than hear them from professional guests, whether human or electronic.

HISTORY

Storytelling is the oldest of arts not restricted by a specific culture or civilization. In earliest civilization, people sat around fires at night and shared experiences. At first, when the spoken word was in its infancy, feelings were expressed in rhythms or monotonous sing song. Even when language became highly developed, the pleasure of rhythmic repetition continued.

Baker and Greene (1987) describe the first written report of an action resembling storytelling in an Egyptian papyrus known as "Westcar Papyrus" which relates how the sons of Cheops, the pyramid builder, entertained their father with stories, recorded between 2000 and 1300 B.C. (p. 2). In the Bible in the book of "Judges," there is a description of storytelling when Jotham tells a
tale to the people of Sechem (cited in Pellowski, 1977, p. 4). Sanskrit scripture contains examples of storytelling for religious and secular purposes. The teachings of Buddhism, Confucianism, and Taoism all used storytelling devices to spread or to reinforce a belief.

The earliest known heroic epic "Gilgamesh" was first told by Sumerians who invented the written word. Such epics as "Beowulf" and the Finnish "Kalevala" were told for centuries before they were written down (Baker & Greene, 1987, p. 2). Greek myths were told by storytellers to explain creation and the forces of nature. Storytelling is found in the Pre-Christian Latin literature of Cicero and Homer (Pellowski, 1977, p. 7). Authors generally agree on the basic social and individual needs fulfilled by storytelling: satisfying a curiosity about the past and an understanding about man's origins, fulfilling a need to keep alive a heroic past, and providing entertainment (Baker & Greene, 1987). Pellowski (1977) states it also "evolved from the human need to communicate experience to other humans" and "fulfilled an aesthetic need for beauty, regularity, and form through expressive language and music" (p. 10).

With the increase of trade and travel, people began to hear stories once confined within a specific area. Stories passed into China and East Asia; into Europe through Russia; and through the Arabs in North Africa and Spain. Europe was also enriched by the exploration and colonization of the Americas.
The early storyteller was the bringer of news, a historian, a sustainer of religion and morals, a disperser of culture, as well as an entertainer. In Africa resident storytellers and traveling storytellers related their tales, fables, and anecdotes. In Europe there were the Anglo-Saxon "gleemen" and, later, Norman minstrels who traveled over England and the continent, all the while learning new tales and passing them along in song, dance, and story. Similarly, there were the "minnesingers" in Germany, and the "ollams" in Ireland (Baker & Greene, 1987, p. 2).

With the invention of printing in 1450, the minstrel tradition waned as scholars began to write down stories. Folklorists began to collect and preserve tales, resulting in the written anthologies of the Brothers Grimm, Joseph Jacobs, Peter Asbjørnsen, Jeremiah Curtin, Joseph Campbell and others (Baker & Greene, 1987).

Through the years the interaction of oral and written literature has continued. Parents, grandparents, nannies, and child caregivers have always told stories. The first organized programs of storytelling appeared in kindergartens. Friedrich Froebel, who founded the kindergarten movement in 1837, made storytelling an important part of the curriculum. German emigrants to America brought with them the concept of kindergarten which was first incorporated into the public school system in 1873 (Baker & Greene, 1987, p. 3). Instruction in storytelling was also given in training schools for kindergarten.
In 1905 Sara Cone Bryant, a kindergarten teacher, wrote *How to Tell Stories to Children*, the first storytelling text to be published in the United States (cited in Baker & Greene, 1987, p. 3). The playground movement and growth of settlement houses also encouraged storytelling to children as well as story hours in libraries.

The exact date of the first library story hour is uncertain, but as early as 1899, storytelling was tried experimentally in the Carnegie Library of Pittsburgh around the time the first department for work with children was organized, and Frances Jenkins Olcott, director of children's work, incorporated the story hour as a regular part of the program (Baker & Greene, 1987).

In 1890 Marie Shedlock became a professional storyteller in London. Her lectures to teachers on storytelling served as the basis for the now classic, *The Art of Storytelling* (cited in Baker & Greene, 1987, p. 4). Miss Shedlock lectured in France and England and toured the United States most successfully. She was a true artist, and as she traveled throughout the United States telling stories and giving lectures, she was the first to promote the concept of storytelling as a true art. In 1902 after her visit, regular story hours were established in Boston. In Pittsburgh, librarians began to take storytelling to the playgrounds and to hold weekly story hours at their branches.

In succeeding years, a number of individuals such as Edna Whiteman, Anna Cogswell, Mary Gould Davis, and Ruth Sawyer made significant
contributions to the field of storytelling through their collecting of stories, their writings, their lectures, and their work in establishing storytelling programs in the new York, Cleveland, and Chicago Public Libraries.

In 1888 Gudrun Thorne-Thomsen came to Chicago for teacher training at Cook County Normal School. She was strongly influenced by Francis W. Parker, "the father of progressive education." In 1893 her husband joined the staff of Parker's new school, which at the invitation of the president of the University of Chicago, joined the university as part of the newly formed School of Education. Gudrun's husband, Georg, was appointed director of the Laboratory Elementary School, which being Froebel inspired, included storytelling in its curriculum.

In 1901 Gudrun Thorne-Thomsen was appointed critic teacher of the third grade and instructor in the School of Education (Baker & Greene, 1987, p. 14). She firmly believed that listening to oral literature prepared children for reading, and she recommended that teachers use storytelling when children had difficulty in decoding.

DEFINING STORYTELLING

Storytelling is not reading a story aloud; it is not creative drama; it is not readers' theatre; it is not the presentation of a memorized script; and, according to purists, it does not involve the use of props such as puppets, felt boards, or costumes. True storytelling involves only three basic elements: the story, the
storyteller, and the audience (Colwell, 1980). Without a book or props, “storytellers are free to use gestures or movements to enhance their telling” (Hamilton & Weiss, 1990, p. 11). The listeners become involved in creating “story” and the entire process becomes a shared experience. The interaction between teller and the listener is direct. “The eye contact, the body language, the whole range of emotional response, of paralinguistic cues and cue giving serve to create an act of communication that is intimate, personal, and mutual” (Trousdale, 1990, p. 170).

Storytelling is a unique and distinct way of storying as oral literature can only be preserved through the transmission of oral language.

‘Story’ is a mystery that has the power to reach within each of us, to command emotion, to compel involvement, and to transport us into timelessness. ‘Story’ is a structural abstraction perhaps built into human memory, a way of thinking, a primary organizer of information and ideas, the soul of a culture, and the mythic and metaphoric consciousness of a people. It is a prehistoric and historic thread of human awareness, a way in which we can know, remember, and understand (Livo & Rietz, 1986, p. 2)

Lucille and Bren Breneman define storytelling as “an interpretive art falling under the area of aesthetic communication, more often called oral interpretation. . . . The storyteller’s material is restricted to the narrative form—to the recounting of real or imaginary events” (1983, p. 7).

Storytelling is oral literature and provides “an opportunity for children to experience living language, language that communicates at a level above and
valuable tool in the language arts program in the intermediate grades. It gives students a real purpose for learning to speak clearly and expressively and to interpret and evaluate various kinds of communication that accompany speaking. Listening to, talking about, and telling stories can stir students’ imaginations, build their oral communication skills, and establish language experiences as a foundation to draw on later.

VALUE OF STORYTELLING

Children learn language in social contexts by interacting with other children and adults. “Studies illustrate that development of vocabulary and syntactic complexity in oral language is enhanced in children who are frequently exposed to stories” (Strickland & Morrow, 1989, p. 260). Additional research indicates that storytelling promotes academic skills, builds mental imagery, and, in general, gives our lives meaning. According to Livo & Rietz (1986), for the student storyteller, storytelling generates an awareness of and sensitivity to the thoughts and feelings of the listeners, not to mention the development of poise. It also improves students’ discrimination in choices of books and stories and increases their knowledge of literature.

Frank Smith (1985) in Reading Without Nonsense enumerates ways in which children in school can experience printed language that has both interest and meaning for them. One of those strategies is for teachers to ensure that children have an opportunity to read or to hear stories with intrinsic appeal.
Chambers (1970) speaks of written stories, born in the oral tradition, which still contain "imaginative magic" but have remained static, unable to change with the times because they were forced to fit the new tradition, literature in print. "They are impaled on the written page waiting to come alive again as they were created. They do come alive again for the storyteller still works, and magic is still there" (p. 9).

Research supports the view that storytelling can be a valuable whole language strategy for providing children with an interesting, meaningful literature experience and for developing the modes of listening and speaking as well as the modes of reading and writing. "By daily reading and telling stories to students, teachers make a declaration—story, along with students, is at the heart of the curriculum" (Watson, 1989, p. 134).

Listening

"Listening comprehension is a prerequisite to all other language learning" (Williams & Brogan, 1991, p. 9). Children initially learn language from adult models, and through exploration and use of language, they search for patterns that connect and make sense. Therefore it is beneficial for children to be provided with opportunities for hearing different patterns of language. These patterns are acquired, in part, through listening to stories and through story discussion (Kies, Rodriguez, Granato, 1993, p. 44). "By listening to a variety of tellers, students learn to discriminate and evaluate storytelling styles, story
genres, and the strengths and weaknesses of both" (Peck, 1989, p. 139). They also learn to listen for details about characters, plot, and setting, thus developing a story sense.

The role of the listener is to participate in the creation of an imagined world. Hearing stories stimulates the imagination which, prior to the age of technology, was the mind's creative tool. In our society many children are deprived of the opportunity to create their own mental images because television, videos, and even picture books, provide these images for them. Hearing stories also helps to inculcate a love of language, and to provide the opportunity of experiencing the joy of words “rolling off their tongues” (Hamilton & Weiss, 1990, p. 4), which is a special bonus for at-risk readers who can then forget the mechanics of decoding and just enjoy the language. Word Weaving.

A Teaching Sourcebook best summarizes the listening value of storytelling:

The ultimate effectiveness of storytelling in the classroom, however, is that it begins at the first step in the language arts skill-building process—it's a listening activity. It is immediate and speaks directly to the listener with continuous eye contact, full body gestures, changing voices, facial expression, descriptive language and extemporaneous details that are created freshly each time the story is told” (Farrell, 1984, p. 34).

Speaking

We learn to story by storying. Barton and Booth propose that children need to engage in narrative more, “in practicing the art of storying, in developing their ‘story sense’ “ (1990, p. 17). It is narrative which provides the foundation
for reading in the curriculum. Harste, Woodward, & Burke propose that "Oral language is a strong factor in the development of literacy" (cited in Peck, 1989, p. 140).

Barton and Booth (1990) describe eight story response modes, some of which directly involve speaking. There is "Story Talk," which involves gossiping and commenting about stories, literature circles, sharing discoveries, etc. There is also the "Telling and Retelling of Stories" which includes students telling their own anecdotes and stories or retelling a story they have read in their own words. A third story response mode involving speaking is "Reading Stories Aloud" which might include reading selected pieces from a book, reading a book to a younger child, reading the dialogue as a script, or taping the story (pp. 114 & 115).

Whether telling an original story or retelling a story they’ve read, children benefit through the improvement of expressive language skills and in the increase of self-esteem through building poise and self-confidence when speaking before a group (Hamilton & Weiss, 1990, p. 12). Students learn to participate productively and cooperatively in various size groups; they learn to accommodate words and strategies to various audiences; and they learn about various levels of communication including facial expressions, body language, and intonation (Livo & Rietz, 1986, p. 345).

Storytelling then provides students with the opportunity to use and develop their oral language skills which are a tool for intellectual advancement.
"Talk becomes a means for absorbing patterns of thinking" (Corson, 1988, p. 3). Storying, the art of narrative, is a fundamental way of making meaning.

Reading

Essentially, storytelling is an invitation to read. Many students will ask to read a particular story after hearing it told. They learn that reading can provide pleasure as well as knowledge and, through their reading, "they learn to judge literature critically, both on personal taste and literary merit; they compare and contrast stories. They are assuredly reading for meaning" (cited in Peck, 1989, pp. 139 & 140).

Hamilton and Weiss point out that making stories is basic to making meaning and "pervades all aspects of learning" (1990, p. 1). Story is a pattern for organizing information. Stories such as folktales and myths give models for behavior, and insight into human relationships. Most importantly, stories stir the imagination and promote visualization.

Egan (1989) believes the use of imagination, or "ecstasy" as he terms it, is what is lacking in today's reading curriculum. Rather than viewing reading as a complex technical task, we should concentrate on providing children reasons for expending the effort in learning to read through stimulating the imagination. "The story is not just some casual entertainment; it reflects a basic and powerful form in which we make sense of the world and experiences" (p. 2).
Given that philosophy, Egan proposes the development of teaching units across the curriculum according to the power of the story form.

The value of storytelling in the development of reading skills is best summarized by Catharine Farrell (1991), "Students exposed to storytelling can more easily read with a 'sense of story,' a knowledge of story syntax, language character types, and probable outcomes" (p. 14). Storytelling is a way of providing children with real, meaningful language experiences. The ability to comprehend improves through the acquisition of story form.

Writing

It is natural to progress from hearing, telling, and reading stories to writing original stories. These original stories may be patterned after literary forms students have been exposed to. Writing their own stories involves "learning ways to generate ideas for writing, to select and arrange them, to find appropriate modes for expressing them, and to evaluate and revise what they have written" (Livo & Rietz, 1986, p. 347). After the story is written, a child can then share it by reading it to others.

Research indicates that oral language serves as a catalyst for written language learning (Houston, Goolrick, & Tate, 1991). Storytelling as an oral strategy for writing has proven successful even for students with learning exceptionalities because it provides a learning experience which builds self-esteem and which is enjoyable. Written stories are translated from
contemporary oral folklore, such as myths, tall tales, folktales, and family stories.

Telling and writing folklore and family stories offer the added bonus of improving multicultural communication.

Children, through having heard stories, are inspired to tell and write their own stories. Hamilton & Weiss (1990) report that in the writing of these stories, children will have a greater tendency to use regular story components such as a beginning and end, characters, plot, setting, and theme. In other words, storytelling is the catalyst for giving children a sense of what story really is.

RECENT RESEARCH

Studies indicate a resurgence in the art of storytelling since the 1970s. This renewed interest coincides with several language studies on the teaching roles of stories for children. In Language and Learning, British educator, James Britton, describes the two ways we use language: as a participant, which involves the exchange of objective information and as a spectator, which involves interpreting and representing life experiences (cited in Farrell and Nessel, 1984). “The child’s ‘sense of story,’ or how the child structures and interprets the events of his world through storytelling is an example of the spectator role in language use” (Farrell & Nessel, 1984, pp. 6 & 7).

Arthur Applebee, in a 1978 study in which he examined children’s stories, concluded “that a child’s ‘sense of story’ was a way of structuring the everyday world” (cited in Farrell and Nessel, 1984, p. 7). Another study by Garth Brown in
1977 found there was "a direct correlation between sense of story, reading comprehension, and writing ability" (cited in Farrell & Nessel, 1984, p. 7).

In 1979 the Zellerbach Family Fund financed a three-year grant for an experimental storytelling program called Word Weaving. This program was intended for the primary grades with the purpose of teaching storytelling to teachers who would then utilize this strategy in their classrooms. A workbook *Word Weaving, A Storytelling Workbook* was compiled and field tested in two San Francisco public schools.

Until this time little research existed on how storytelling actually affects students. Word Weaving programs had indicated that storytelling aided oral language development, increased the use of imagination, and improved memory. To investigate and document the effects of a Word Weaving program for kindergarten and first-grade students, the Pittsburg study was implemented in 1981 in Pittsburg, California. During the year-long study, each teacher participant employed the traditional way of storytelling—simply telling stories to the class without a book or props but using only the human voice and eye contact with the audience.

The results of the data indicated that Word Weaving had a positive effect on children's ability to generate new stories based on stories they had heard. The Word Weaving students also told longer stories than the control group, and were able to add new imaginative ideas to their stories. Teachers reported that
storytelling in students' oral language development, comprehension, and basic understanding of story.

A more recent study detailed in Analyzing Storytelling Skills: Theory to Practice (Hedberg & Westby, 1993) analyzes the role of narratives in language and learning. "Narratives serve as a bridge to literacy. Narratives are the first extended type of discourse that children engage in.... Storytelling is an extended discourse that transcends all cultures. Stories are central to the school curriculum because, through stories, children vicariously extend the range of their experience beyond the limits of their immediate surroundings" (p. 9).

Hedburg and Westby's manual also presents guidelines for collecting stories; provides developmental information on narrative story discourse and guidelines for assessment; and explains the relationship of narrative discourse to literacy.

STORYTELLING TODAY

Storytelling is an art form that appears to be in the midst of an extraordinary revival, so much so that it is affecting many aspects of our society from education to business and corporate management to health and social services. During the folk movement of the 60s and early 70s, a renewed interest in oral tradition surfaced, resulting in the first National Storytelling Festival in Jonesborough, Tennessee. Two years later in 1975, the National Association
for the Preservation and Perpetuation of Storytelling (NAPPS) was founded. This organization sponsors the national festival, an annual conference, and an annual fund-raiser entitled "Tellabration" (Anderson, 1993). NAPPS, which comprises 6000 members, also publishes the National Directory of Storytelling, the "Yarnspinner" newsletter, and the Storytelling magazine. "In its directory, NAPPS lists 350 storytelling organizations, 64 periodicals and newsletters, and close to 500 events" (Anderson, 1993, p. 30).

People everywhere are becoming involved with storytelling: lawyers, managers of business firms, social workers, volunteers in nursing homes, museum program directors, and, of course, teachers. The power of story is its ability to establish a bond between teller and audience and to create visual images which spark imagination. Storytelling draws people together and empowers them.

The resurgence in storytelling and subsequent growth has created new challenges. Issues about storytelling rights and permissions have arisen. Members of NAPPS express a need for closer relations between storytellers and book publishers. There is an increasing demand for audio and video cassettes and book versions of myths and folktales, such as Native American stories which fulfill the need to respect people of other cultures. Publishers are also developing books and tapes about family stories and childhood memories. "Although books and cassettes can't reproduce the kinetic energy between teller
and listener, they do celebrate storytelling and enable tellers to reach a wider audience" (Anderson, 1993, p. 31). Though committing stories to paper defies the oral tradition of storytelling, many feel compelled to write their stories down in order to pass them on to others rather than have them vanish forever.

CONCLUSION

Storytelling captivates children and adults alike. It allows people to experience connections in their lives; it serves as a stimulator of imagination, a cultivator of creativity, a preserver of cultural traditions, and an entertainer; it helps children to recognize language patterns and to learn the elements of a story; it improves their oral skills, their listening skills, and their interpersonal communication. “If one of the main goals of language experience is to extend and refine children’s oral skills and to use them whenever possible as a basis for developing complimentary power in reading and writing, then storytelling certainly serves that purpose” (Nelson, 1989, p. 386).

Recent studies on the effects and importance of storytelling imply, at least, that further research is indicated on the use of storytelling as a viable educational tool. At best, these studies indicate that storytelling can be an effective strategy for improving comprehending, for promoting children’s excitement about literature, for introducing students to other cultures, and for providing a stepping stone to original story writing. But most important, storytelling enhances oral literacy which is the basis for reading and writing.
GOALS

This project addresses the improvement of speaking and listening skills to further language and literacy development within a whole language framework in the intermediate grades. Its primary purpose is the formulation of a handbook for the teacher to use in implementing student storytelling. The focus of this handbook will be to demonstrate how storytelling can be an effective strategy in promoting oral language development in grades four to six. Noted reading authority Kenneth Goodman (1986) points out that “a child’s speaking/hearing experiences are the basis for reading instruction. A child must build reading and writing skills on a foundation of oral communication abilities” (cited in Modaff & Hopper, 1984, p. 40).

To effect the continued improvement of oral literacy in the intermediate grades, this handbook will incorporate the following objectives:

1. Foster the art of listening and improve concentration.
2. Develop oral language skills and stimulate creativity.
3. Introduce students to patterns of language and build vocabulary.
4. Encourage creative writing by learning the story components of beginning, middle, end, characters, setting, and plot.
5. Provide practice in visualization and fantasizing which is the basis of creative imagination.
6. Create an awareness of and appreciation of other ethnic cultures.
7. Help students to become aware of the magic of words and to view books as a source of pleasure in life.

8. Develop a frame of reference for future literary encounters and foster discrimination in the choice of books and stories.


10. Add new dimensions to other curricular areas such as social studies, math, and science.
LIMITATIONS

The following limitations need to be addressed in this project:

1. The activities presented are geared to the intermediate grades.

2. Older students may feel more reluctant than primary students to engage in storytelling.

3. Teachers in the intermediate grades, where content is emphasized more, may feel pressured and thus reluctant to devote the time to storytelling projects.

4. The techniques presented for student storytelling will adhere to the traditional view of storytelling, which means the use of props, puppets, felt boards, or costumes will not be advocated.

5. It is difficult to dispel the numerous misperceptions of storytelling and to convince educators of its value as an educational tool, thus a handbook may not be enough to convince them.

Conclusion

In spite of the limitations cited above, it is this writer's belief that the implementation of storytelling can further the development of listening and speaking skills needed in the intermediate grades to provide a better balance with the present focus on reading and writing content. Storytelling, or oral literature, is basic to a whole language classroom. Many whole language precepts promote the development of oral literacy. We use language to reflect
on our personal experiences, and through oral and written language, we share these experiences with others. If students are to become members of a literate society, it is essential to develop connections among a child’s experiences, imagination, and the curriculum. Storytelling is the perfect vehicle for forging these connections.
References


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Heinemann Educational Books.


APPENDIX A:

STUDENT STORYTELLING: A STRATEGY FOR DEVELOPING

ORAL LITERACY IN THE INTERMEDIATE GRADES
"Once a story is absorbed into a book, it is divorced from its teller and it becomes like the scenario of a film, a mere outline of the real thing, neither bones nor flesh" (Millman, 1977, p. 125).

"It is only when our old songs and old tales are passing from one human being to another, by word of mouth, that they can attain their full fascination. No printed page can create this spell. It is the living word—the sung ballad and the told tale—that holds our attention and reaches our heart" (Chase, 1943, p. xi).
INTRODUCTION

The whole language philosophy advocates the integration of listening, speaking, reading, and writing skills and proposes that language should be meaningful and relevant to the learner. Research indicates that listening and speaking are precursors to reading and writing. Long before children read, they begin to understand language through the spoken word. Oracy is a necessary ingredient for literacy. Many educators agree that oral language activities are critical to children’s language development. This is especially true of the intermediate grades where there is a need for a better balance between the modes of reading and writing and those of listening and speaking.

The purpose of this project is to promote this development of listening and speaking skills by providing you, the teacher, with a handbook for guiding children in the telling of stories and for integrating storytelling into the curriculum of the intermediate grades, four to six. Through the strategy of storytelling, you can help your students improve their oral language in a meaningful contextual setting, thereby solidifying the foundation for reading and writing.

According to Watson (1989), “Story, along with the students, is at the heart of the curriculum” (p. 134). Not only telling stories, but listening to stories is basic to students’ development as readers and authors. By listening to stories, your students can improve self-understanding. Storytelling promotes
“bonding” as a community of learners; it can be a vehicle for “connecting with disconnected students” (Farrell, 1991, p. 10); and it encourages visual thinking.

This handbook will discuss storytelling techniques, the modeling of storytelling, and how to guide students in choosing stories, learning them and telling them effectively. It will also include suggested evaluation procedures and an annotated bibliography of stories appropriate for students in grades four to six.

There are no definitive lesson plans prescribed here. Storytelling is magical; it is exciting, and stimulating—a personal communication that bonds the teller and the listener. Do not relegate storytelling to the didactic confines of a written lesson plan, but rather use the general guidelines and information presented here as the basis for a teaching unit which flows with the responses and needs of your students.

Please remember, also, that storytelling is not the same as reading aloud, though both share similar benefits. Listening noticeably improves when you set the book aside and tell a story directly. The listeners become more actively involved in the story. The process of listening becomes a shared experience, encouraging active involvement and promoting bonding within the group.

Finally, storytelling in this handbook is storytelling which involves only the story, the storyteller, and the audience. According to Livo & Rietz (1986),

*The discriminating features of storytelling have to do with the relationship
between the story, the teller, and the audience during the telling" (p. 19). The story is the focus and is not found in the manipulation of props, scenery, or costumes which tend to distract the listener from becoming immersed in the story.

I invite you to venture into the pages of this handbook and let your students experience the storytelling adventure!

MODELING STORYTELLING

In order to teach children storytelling, one must provide a model for what storytelling is. You may feel you must hire a professional storyteller for your class or show a video of a professional storytelling performance. “Don’t, however, be intimidated by the virtuoso performances of professional storytellers who sing, dance, play the guitar and mime their stories. Some of them are wonderful, some are not” (larusso, 1985, p. 40). You do not have to be a professional storyteller to offer children an opportunity to hear stories and to be stimulated and inspired. The magic generated from the direct intimacy between storyteller and audience can be powerful and challenging.

You may feel uncomfortable telling stories or think that it is too time-consuming to learn them, but with comparatively little effort, you can make literature and other areas of curriculum come alive for your students. It is better to begin with simpler stories that students are familiar with. The object at first is simply having the children enjoy listening to a story.
Step 1-Story Selection

Select a story you really like and want to share with others. Folktales or fairy tales are good to start with because they contain relatively little description and consist mostly of plot. Pick a favorite fairy tale, for example, one with a relatively simple plot such as "The Elves and the Shoemaker." Or "Strega Nona."

Step 2-Reread

In your preparation for telling the story, reread it several times. Never memorize the story but try to visualize the characters and the action. Determine the story's structure and plot it out, whether by a diagram, a story map, or a simple outline.

Step 3-Practice

Practice by telling the story in front of a mirror, by recording it and listening to the playback, by taping it with a video camera, or even by practicing in front of family members or friends. Now you are ready to tell your story to your students as soon as you establish a mood.

Step 4-Establish Mood

Before you tell your story, it is important to take a little time to establish a receptive emotional climate for your listeners. You and your students will enjoy storytime more if it is a relaxed, informal occasion—an uplifting time for beauty and mutual creation. Following are some suggestions to help create that special mood: (1) Begin with a well-ventilated room; (2) take care to have some enticing
books on display, and perhaps, some fresh flowers; (3) arrange for comfortable seating; some storytellers prefer to have their listeners seated in a semicircle, often on the floor rather than on chairs.

**Step 5—Ritual Beginnings and Endings**

**Beginnings**

In establishing that special atmosphere for storytelling, it is fun to experiment with ritual beginnings and endings. There are certain behaviors or rituals which signal to an audience that you are now leaving the world of reality and entering the world of fantasy. Some ritual beginnings involve audience response, and they vary according to different cultures. Children, especially, respond enthusiastically to these rituals. Here are some suggestions for ritual beginnings to help you get started. After you have tried some of these, you and students will likely want to adapt your favorites or create your own!

1. In some cultures, the storyteller lights a special candle as a signal that storytelling is about to begin. The storyteller announces that, once the candle is lit, no one is to speak but the storyteller. At the end of the story hour, the listeners make silent wishes before blowing out the candle.

2. In other cultures, the story storyteller wears a special story hat, shawl, story vest, or apron. Pockets in the apron contain objects, phrases or titles. The students’ choice of pocket determines the story to be told (Mason & Watson, 1991).
3. Many classrooms have a special storytelling rug or a storytelling stool which is labeled as such.

4. If you sing or play an instrument, choose a theme song to begin and end each storytelling session. Have fun!! Be inventive! Let your students contribute ideas of their own for a special song or rhyme to use as a ritual beginning.

5. If nothing else works for you, there are always those ritual words such as, “Once upon a time...”, “Now it came to pass,” or “Long ago, in a kingdom far away” (Mason & Watson, p. 22). You can also use the opening, “A story, a story. Let it come. Let it go.” The storyteller chants: “A story, a story.” The audience replies: “Let it come. Let it go” (Livo & Rietz, p. 187).

Ritual Endings

Once the story has ended, there are ritual endings to signal the end of your imaginary journey and your return to the real world. Examples are:

(1) “This was given to me by my teacher and I give it to you.” (2) “And that’s the end of that!” (3) “If they haven’t moved, they live there still” (Mason & Watson, p. 22). (4) “And they lived happily ever after” or “Snip, snap, snout! And now the tale is out!” (Livo & Rietz, pp. 191 & 193).

Whatever beginning and ending rituals are used, it is the storyteller’s responsibility to establish an atmosphere of anticipation for that special magic to take place.
Step 6 - Eye Contact

Once you have created a listening mood, be sure to maintain eye contact with your students throughout your telling of the story. Keep looking into their eyes and speak slowly and loudly enough to be heard in the back of the room. Only use gestures if they suit the story and if you feel comfortable using them. Rely on your own personality and immerse yourself in the story.

As you gain experience in telling stories, you will not only learn the subtler techniques of the art of storytelling, but you will be revitalized by the delight and involvement of your students in story. Telling stories is a process for the teacher as well as the student: both share in the exploration of language.

Student Participation

After the telling of your first story, tell your students additional stories in which you increase the class participation whether by having the class repeat a specific phrase, by incorporating riddles and jokes into the story, or by having students supply sound effects at various places during the telling of the story. These sound effects might include slapping hands on knees for footsteps, squeaking like a mouse, or blowing like the wind. Students can then try retelling the story orally or in writing. Part of the retelling can be a drawing of the students' favorite part of the story or telling the story from another character's point of view.
Additional Suggestions

Additional group activities which are useful in preparing students for storytelling are to provide a storyline and ask the students for descriptions of the characters. The next step would be to provide the characters, theme and setting and give students more responsibility for establishing a plot: in other words, for creating some type of conflict and resolution.

STUDENT INITIATION TO STORYTELLING

After you have modeled storytelling for your students, the next step is to acquaint them with the idea of storytelling. "We must help children to find the voice of a story and explore ways to help that voice speak aloud" (Barton & Booth, 1990, p. 32). There are numerous ways to initiate students, painlessly and informally, into the world of storytelling.

1. Telling Jokes and Riddles/Reciting Poems. These afford the student a relatively short time to make a brief oral presentation in front of their classmates. Even your shy, reluctant students can enjoy this activity.

2. Family/Personal Experience Stories. All children love to tell their personal experiences. In Children Tell Stories, Hamilton and Weiss (1990) relate a professional storyteller's suggestion for a game to begin the personal experience storytelling activity. The teacher tells two stories of supposed personal childhood experiences. The
students must decide which story is true and which is made up. The students then have the opportunity to stymie their classmates by telling something that happened to them or by fabricating a story and having their classmates decide which story is true. Students can also gather stories from older family members for telling and transcribing into journals or scrapbooks.

3. **Retelling Stories.** This retelling activity should begin with relatively short, simple stories which can be understood easily. After reading or telling the children a story, review the plot by helping them to chart a brief outline on the board. Then have the students retell the story either to a partner or in small groups. Another alternative is to have all students sit in a circle and have each student take a turn in telling part of the story before passing it on to the next person in the circle.

4. **Written Retelling.** Read a story or have your students read a story. Then have them set the book aside and retell it in their own words by writing it from memory. This is an especially effective activity for older students in the teaching of writing skills.

5. **Visuals.** Students can respond to a story through the art media: constructing bulletin boards, making posters or book covers, mapping, graphing, or designing displays.
STORYTELLING TECHNIQUES

Now that your students have been experimenting with listening and speaking through the previously listed activities, it is time to organize a mini-workshop in which you familiarize them with the techniques of storytelling. The basic techniques of storytelling are eye contact, voice, tempo, pitch, facial expression, and gestures and movements.

Eye Contact

Eye contact is one of the most important elements of storytelling. Since storytelling is a participatory art form, eye contact is necessary for the close bond that exists between teller and listeners. Good eye contact can emphasize and enhance the personal aspect of a storytelling experience.

One way to practice eye contact is to have students face their classmates, taking time to look at each person, and slowly introduce themselves and the name of the story they are going to tell. Maintaining eye contact is difficult to do, not only for children, but for adults as well. Hamilton and Weiss (1990, p. 80) have a game suggestion which offers students practice in maintaining eye contact.

The students stand in a circle. Tell them you will trade places with someone in the circle without talking, but just by making eye contact. You must maintain that eye contact while trading places. The person you traded places with becomes “it” and chooses the next person to trade places strictly by eye
contact. Keep on going until everyone has had a turn. The idea is to illustrate the power of eye contact.

Voice and Pitch

Encourage your students to use expression in their voice when speaking. Discuss the difference between monotone and voice variation. Many exercises for expression, word emphasis, and feeling and mood are detailed in *Children Tell Stories* by Martha Hamilton and Mitch Weiss (1990).

Pitch can also convey various emotions and characters. For example, a high pitch might indicate fright or diminutive size, while a low pitch would indicate sadness, or a threat of some kind. Students can practice expression and pitch by repeating the same sentence to indicate various emotions. For instance, have your students recite a line from a well-known fairy tale to convey surprise, fright, anger, or excitement.

Volume

It is important that a storyteller project loudly enough to be heard even in the back of the room. A discussion of diaphragmatic breathing (breathing just below your waist instead of from the chest) would be helpful here. Explain to your students that their diaphragm is a big dome-shaped muscle attached to the breast bone in front and circling around and under the ribs to the twelfth rib in the back. Have your students lie on their backs and place a hand lightly on the area between the abdomen and the chest. Ask them to pant like a puppy. Their
hand should move up and down with the muscular motions of the diaphragm.

Point out to your students that this is where the sound must come from in order to achieve volume.

**Tempo**

The rate of speech should vary during the telling of a story in order to convey various moods or emotions such as joy or sadness, excitement or dread, anger, fear, etc. You can demonstrate rate of speech through your own telling of a story, or through various exercises in which the students repeat the same sentence, and experiment with pausing before or after certain words in order to convey different meanings.

**Facial Expression**

Appropriate facial expressions usually accompany voice expressions. Students can practice happy, sad, and angry facial expressions with each other and in front of a mirror at home, or in the classroom. Again, Hamilton and Weiss (1990, p. 70) suggest a game where the children sit in a circle and one individual makes a face, shows it to everyone, changes to a different expression, and passes it to the next person, who mimics that expression and then creates a different expression to be mimicked by the next person in the circle.

**Gestures and Movements**

There are varying opinions on the use of gestures and movements in storytelling, especially for beginners. It is advisable to tell students at first to
keep their movements simple and natural. Gestures should really not be attempted until your students are comfortable with eye contact, voice, and facial expressions.

When gestures and movement are addressed, exercises in pantomime are helpful vehicles to encourage the development of imagination and emotional communication. Many helpful activities can also be found in *Storytelling Art and Technique* by Augusta Baker and Ellen Greene and in Jack Maguire’s *Creative Storytelling*.

All of the above storytelling techniques can be presented in a 90-minute workshop, a week-long unit, or a six-week unit, depending on your time and the age level and maturity of your students. However, regardless of techniques and exercises, communicating the meaning of a story is the main ingredient of storytelling. The most important thing to remember with beginner storytellers is to advise them to choose a story to tell which they really like and want to share with someone else. The next most helpful suggestion you can offer your students is to slow down and enunciate carefully. Avoid becoming so immersed in correct storytelling techniques, that you forget that storytelling is an enjoyable continuing process, as is all learning. DON’T DESTROY THE MAGIC!

**STORY GENRES**

Now that you have tailored a workshop in storytelling techniques to meet the needs and grade level of your students, you are ready to explore with your
students the differences between folktales, fables, myths, and legends. These will be the base from which students can choose a story of their own to learn and tell. Children between the ages of eight and ten are ready to listen to tales of adventure, romance, and intrigue. Folktales, particularly those which relate to other ethnic or cultural backgrounds, appeal to this age group. Children in the intermediate grades look up to heroes whose attributes they can admire and emulate as their role models. Maguire points out that children from eight to twelve are also developing reason and judgment skills. "The modern lack of a mythology to which they can refer for symbolic guidance and against which they can imaginatively measure their achievements makes storytelling at this age a crucial developmental need" (1985, p. 93). Thus, folktales, fables, myths, and legends have special meaning for students in the intermediate grades.

To acquaint students with these story genres, tell or read your students examples and discuss with them the following characteristics of each type of story:

**Folktales**—A folktale is a story handed down by word-of-mouth from one generation to another and represents a specific culture. Folktales rely almost entirely on plot and contain stereotyped characters and universal themes. Examples of folktales are the Br'er Rabbit tales and the African folktales about Anansi the spider. Folktales provide strong reading and listening materials for children. The context of ‘long ago’ enables children to explore all the universal
problems and concerns that have troubled humanity forever, but in a safe,
nonthreatening framework” (Barton & Booth, 1990, pp. 69-70).

**Myth**—A myth is a story that attempts to explain a phenomenon of nature or a
specific religious belief or practice of a particular culture. Examples are Roman
and Greek myths depicting the adventures of God-like beings.

**Fable**—A fable is a story which always teaches a moral, clearly stated at the
end. The characters in fables are usually animals who behave like people. An
example is *Aesop's Fables*.

**Legend**—A legend is a story based on historical fact, but because the stories
have been retold so often, incidents have been so exaggerated that it is difficult
to prove they really happened. Characters such as Davy Crockett, Robin Hood,
and John Henry are all part of legend.

There are other types of stories which appeal to this intermediate grade
level such as science fiction, tall tales, and story poems. It has been suggested
that when you are first experimenting with storytelling, folktales, fables, myths,
and legends are easier to use because of their simpler plots and clearly defined
characters. However, the key here is to choose a story to tell that one truly likes
and wishes to share. If some students are particularly excited about science
fiction or a story poem, then these are the stories they should use in their
storytelling projects.
Basic story Parts

In the process of exploring these different story genres, discuss with students the three basic parts to every story:

1. Introduction of characters, their location, and initial action
2. Conflicts or problems
3. Resolution or solution to these conflicts or problems

Description and characterization flesh out this basic story framework. Descriptive language helps the reader or listener create a mental image of people and places in a story. Characterization involves such traits as motives, attitudes, behavior, and dialog of the story characters.

As students read or listen to examples of myths, legends, and folktales, guide them in outlining the three main parts of a story and in discussing description and characterization. After they have practiced analyzing story basics, in groups or with partners, the next step toward their own storytelling is to guide them in story preparation.

PREPARATION OF STORY

Choosing a Story

After the students have had an opportunity to explore story genres, they are ready to select a story they want to learn and tell.

1. Provide your students with a list of appropriate stories, relatively short for beginners. Students may choose four or five stories from the suggested list
to read and to discuss with a partner. If you divide the class into smaller groups according to interest in folktales, fables, myths, or legends, students in each group can share their findings on the stories they chose to read with others in their group. Or they can try reading a variety of stories in each group and share their discussion of each story with the entire class.

2. It is important that students at first have an opportunity to engage in story talk. Discussing the stories they have read, or engaging in storytalk, is invaluable in promoting listening and speaking skills. Students listen to each other, and, in sharing their responses and feelings, build upon each others' answers. It is also helpful for you, as a teacher, to talk about personal reading which you have enjoyed. “The goal of storying together is making meaning” (Barton & Booth, 1990, p. 92). After engaging in story talk, students can then discuss the three basic elements of the stories they have read.

3. At this point, instruct your students to choose the story they like best as the one which they plan to learn for telling. To help them in their final choice, they could read the story they're considering aloud to a partner to test if they are comfortable with it and to obtain their partner's reaction. The main ingredient to success here is that students choose a story that really appeals to them even if it is only a few sentences long or if it is not even on the suggested list you have provided. A story should never be assigned. Try to encourage each student to
choose a different story to tell, thus avoiding boredom during practice time by not having to listen to the same story repeated over and over.

4. It helps, of course, if the story each student selects meets with your approval. Remember to ensure your students’ success by urging them to keep the story length short the first time around. This is particularly important for those shy individuals who are reluctant to speak in front of a group.

Learning the Story

Now that your students have chosen their stories, emphasize that they are to learn their story, not memorize it word for word. Encourage them to tell the story in their own words. Help them to understand that no two people will tell the same story in exactly the same way and explain that in the past, stories were never written down but passed on through generations by word-of-mouth.

Steps in Learning Story

1. The first step in learning a story is to have students understand story structure. Review with them again the three basic elements of a story and have them identify these basic parts of their chosen story. Guide them in charting the plot line and sequence of action in their stories. One way to chart sequence of action is by drawing a cartoon-like pictorial order of events in a story (Hamilton & Weiss, 1990, pp. 51-54). Emphasize the fact that they do not need great artistic ability to do this—simple stick figures will do. Dialogue can be written, cartoon-like, in balloons floating from the characters’ mouths.
Story mapping, as shown in two different examples in figures 1 and 2, is another suggestion for helping your students remember the basic elements of their chosen story in preparation for telling. Remind them that the beginning of a story relates who, when, and where. The middle of a story describes a problem the characters have. The ending of a story relates how the problem is solved.

2. Once story structure has been determined, encourage your students to read their stories again and again. During these rereadings, students should try to visualize the characters in their story and imagine how these characters would look, speak, and act. The more familiar the characters and sequence of events become, the more comfortable students will feel when telling their stories. Remind them also of the storytelling techniques of eye contact, facial expression, voice, volume, tempo, and gestures and to utilize these techniques as they practice telling their stories.

3. The final step is to practice telling their stories at home with a tape recorder, with a family member, or in front of a mirror. They should then be comfortable enough to attempt telling their story to a partner in class or to a small group of classmates. Constructive feedback from classmates can be helpful at this point.

4. The finale, of course, is the telling of their stories to the entire class, to the younger children, or at a special storytelling festival to which parents have been invited.
STORY MAP *

BEGINNING

The Setting  Characters:  

Place:  

Time:  

MIDDLE

The Problem  

Event 1  

Event 2  

Event 3  

Event 4  

ENDING

The Resolution  

figure 1

* adapted from Worlds Beyond Workbook (1989).

Needham, MA: Silver Burdett & Ginn.
figure 2

**Telling the Story**

Each storyteller will also be one of a group of listeners. Therefore, this is a good time to discuss the importance of listening during the telling of a story. Our technological world of television, videos, and movies has not helped the development of effective listening skills which are needed to interact with a real "live" storyteller.

Explain to your students that storytelling time is a time when it is important to have quiet and good listening in order to turn on their imaginations. Only then can the magic work! Storytelling develops concentration and good listening habits in a pleasurable way.

Before your students begin to take turns at telling their stories, give them some guidelines for introducing their stories. The introductions need not be long—for example, just the student’s name and title of the story. A longer introduction might include the name of the story’s author and why the teller chose it.

Last, but not least, it is helpful to reassure your student storytellers that it is natural to feel nervous; it is also perfectly acceptable to make a mistake. If students know they will have a sympathetic audience, they will be more relaxed and less likely to suffer from stage fright. Hopefully they will come to realize that through storytelling they become members of the story community. Listener and storyteller become connected in the shared experience of creating meaning.
Other Storytelling Possibilities

Once your students have experienced the telling of stories, arrange to have them tell stories to the younger children. The benefits are mutual. Younger children enjoy hearing stories; their listening skills and vocabulary are strengthened, as well as their awareness of story sense. Older children gain more poise and self-confidence in speaking before a group, and they increase their ability to express thoughts clearly.

Another suggestion is to culminate your storytelling unit with a daytime storytelling festival attended by several other classes in your school or with an evening program for parents. Both events could be the perfect vehicle for promoting the reading of new stories and the writing of stories among other students besides those in your class. Equally important, both would showcase storytelling as a strategy for providing children and adults alike an opportunity to experience the joy of oral language. When a story is told aloud, it is freed from the printed page and is infused with life. The sounds of language appeal to the imagination which provides the key to understanding.
EVALUATION OF STORYTELLING

The critiquing of storytellers can be a sensitive matter because storytelling is an art form which involves personal expression. At best, evaluation of storytelling should be an ongoing process, since the procedure of storytelling is educationally more important than the final product of telling. Learning is internalized through listening to stories, selecting a story to tell, practicing the telling, and developing confidence in the telling. This process is ongoing with linguistic abilities and literary experiences improving as students continue to experiment with storytelling. Therefore, encourage your students to participate in ongoing evaluations of storytelling.

With your guidance, develop a mutually agreed upon checklist, similar to figure 3, for them to use in evaluating each other as storytellers. If you have access to a videocamera, videotape each storyteller. Then, not only the other students in the class, but each storyteller can evaluate his or her own performance at the same time.

Be sure to allow time for the students to discuss their findings on the checklist. In your role as teacher, be careful to offer constructive criticism, giving positive feedback first. Storytelling is not easy, at first, especially for shy students. They will need all your encouragement and support.
SELF EVALUATION CHECKLIST

TITLE OF STORY: _____________________________________________

NAME: ___________________ DATE: ________________

Rating Scale: (1) Good (2) Satisfactory (3) Needs Improvement

1. Introduction ___________________

2. Good eye contact _______________

3. Tempo _______________________

4. Volume _______________________

5. Clear enunciation _______________

6. Voice (Good expression/Changes in pitch) _______________

7. Facial Expression _______________

8. Body language _________________

9. Did I know my story well? ____________

10. Did I show enthusiasm for my story? ____________

Overall rating of this performance (circle one):

Excellent Good Poor

EVALUATOR: ________________________________
FOLLOW-UP ACTIVITIES

Barton and Booth in *Stories In The Classroom* suggest that many educators do not believe in directed activities after a story because such activities can damage or destroy the story experience. Nevertheless, there are valuable learning opportunities provided by follow-up activities which you might wish to present as a list of choices. Students can select an activity and thus have more control over their learning. Suggested activities include the following:

- Drawing pictures to illustrate a story students have told
- Making posters or bookcovers for the story
- Students’ dictation of their version of a story to smaller groups within the class
- Open-ended discussion questions after a storytelling to encourage individual interpretation and response. Examples: Which part of the story did you like best and why? Which part of the story do you envision best? Which character did you like the best or the least and why? When you think about the story, what do you see (visualize)?
- Shared group writing of personal experience stories
- Inventing stories patterned after the original
- Reading stories by the same author or in the same anthology
- Creative dramatics. Students can, in small groups, take turns acting out a story with a minimum of practice.
• Readers' Theatre. Using the story as a basis for a script.

Remember, the first experimentation with storytelling should involve the use of short stories with relatively simple plots. This ensures your students success in storytelling. Even students to whom English is new or who are at-risk readers can find understanding in the context of a story.

As your students develop a better understanding of story structure and as they gain self-confidence and poise, their enthusiasm for storytelling will grow. Then you and your students will hopefully wish to explore storytelling in greater depths, using longer stories with more complicated plots and creating original stories of their own. More important, once you realize the significance of stories as a fundamental way of making meaning, storying can play a major role in other curricular areas.
STORYTELLING ACROSS THE CURRICULUM

Introduction

Storytelling can fulfill a need in the language arts curriculum in the intermediate grades. It improves listening skills, fosters oral communication, develops an appreciation for literature, nurtures the desire to read, and exposes children to their cultural heritage and other cultures as well. These are all good reasons for connecting storytelling to a reading or writing lesson. However, storytelling can be utilized to enrich and fortify other curricular areas as well. Egan (1989) suggests that teachers consider how elements of the story form could help in formulating lessons and units. The story structure of theme, climax, and resolution becomes the model for developing course units and is flexible enough for application in any of the curricular areas. If this approach were used, possibly teachers would eventually regard lessons and units as stories to be told rather than as a set of objectives to be achieved.

Thinking of teaching with a storytelling approach can be an effective tool in developing a curriculum which is alive and challenging for students. Storytelling offers both students and teachers first-hand experience in understanding themselves and the world. During a pilot storytelling project in Edgerton Elementary School in Connecticut (Reed, 1987), teachers were impressed with the way storytelling improved their students' general learning skills, social skills, and emotional maturity. They also came to realize that
storytelling provided them with different teaching approaches and new ways of viewing their students. Clearly there is a benefit to be gained from teachers' and students' involvement in storytelling, not from the standpoint of an outside storyteller's visit as an occasional treat for students, but from the stance that storytelling can and should be related to education in general. Following are some general suggestions for integrating storytelling into other curricular areas.

**Social Studies**

There are a wealth of stories ranging from tales about the early native Americans and the American frontier to those about Latin America, Africa, Europe, and the Middle East. A helpful source for finding stories on a given subject, tales from an ethnic or geographic area, or variants of a specific tale is Margaret MacDonald's *The Storyteller's Sourcebook*. This reference tool organizes variants of folktales from children's collections according to subject, title, or motif, and gives brief descriptions of each tale.

These folktales, myths and legends can provide students with a better understanding of various societies and their cultures. Stories of famous figures in history such as George Washington, Betsy Ross, Geronimo—even Jesse James—can be sources of exciting adventure and new insights into human character, thus giving an extra dimension not presented in conventional textbooks.
Through story, students can experience vicariously a ride in a covered wagon, the fall of the Alamo, life in an ancient Chinese dynasty, the folklore of the African people, or the mysteries of an ancient Mayan civilization. Through the personal involvement provided in storying, historical and geographical facts take on new meaning and vitality by the connection of imagination and memory. Again, that meaning is more significant and satisfying if storytelling is practiced by teachers and the students themselves.

Suggested Sources:


Science

As in social studies, the science curriculum can be enhanced by storytelling. Teachers and students can tell stories about the lives of famous scientists and their discoveries. Also, they can learn and tell legends and myths of other cultures to explain certain natural phenomena such as the weather, earthquakes, the changing of the seasons, or the characteristics of certain plant and animal life.

Suggested Sources:


Math

Students can learn and tell stories about the lives of well-known mathematicians. They can also create stories to illustrate math problems. Very often some of the simple folktales or legends can be extended into a basic math lesson such as Tomie de Paola's "Strega Nona" or in the tale of "Jack and the Beanstalk." In the following collections, there are tales and contemporary children's literature involving math concepts which could be integrated into a math lesson.

Suggested Sources:


Music

Students can listen to folk songs and ballads, and by learning and singing the lyrics, retell the story depicted in the song. Certain classical musical pieces easily evoke mental imagery which would inspire drawing pictures and writing stories.

Students can also tell stories about the great composers such as Mozart and Beethoven, or about modern songwriters such as Woody Guthrie, Scott Joplin, or George Gershwin.

Suggested Sources:


Spaeth, S. (1937). *Stories behind the world's great music.*
Garden City, New York: Garden City Publishing.

**Cassette Recordings**

Cassette Recording No. 4201). Toronto, Ontario, Canada: Classical Kids.

Toronto, Ontario, Canada: Classical Kids.

Toronto, Ontario, Canada: Classical Kids.

**Compact Discs**


**Art**

Students can tell stories about the lives of famous artists and their work.

After viewing certain works of art, they can write stories based on a particular painting or piece of sculpture, or they can create a mural using chalk or paint.

Students can also illustrate a story with computer graphics.

Illustrations in picture books can be used for beginning projects before moving on to the art works of the masters as motivators for writing. Suggested
picture book illustrators are: Tomie de Paola, Maurice Sendak, Eric Carle, Leo Leonini, and Gerald McDermott. Suggested fine art prints are: Henri Rousseau’s “The Sleeping Gypsy,” Vincent van Gogh’s “The Road Menders,” Winslow Homer’s “Breezing up,” or Emanuel Leutze’s “Washington Crossing the Delaware.”

Suggested Sources:


Writing

Writing original stories progresses naturally from hearing, reading, and telling stories. Students will begin to use in their writing the literary patterns they have been exposed to in storytelling. Even kindergartners can write and draw their stories using invented spelling.

Again, fables, folktales, myths and legends are good sources which students can use as models for their own creative writing. Or students can choose a story from their family or community, learn it for oral sharing with an audience, and then write and polish it into a story.

In translating stories from oral to written language, it is advisable to de-emphasize the mechanics of spelling and punctuation, so students can feel free to compose their stories. Mechanics can be corrected later in the editing period.

After students write their stories, they will want to read them to their parents, a friend, or a teacher. Listening to their written story and the stories of others begins the storytelling cycle of reading, listening, speaking, and writing all over again.

Suggested Sources:


CURRICULUM CONNECTIONS

An Example

As you can see, with forethought and a little planning, storytelling can be integrated into all curricular areas, thus not only building listening and oral language skills, but sparking students' imaginations and helping them make meaningful connections. For example, let's consider the topic of Egypt in the study of ancient history which is included in the California Social Studies Framework for the sixth grade. Here are some folklore suggestions for your student storytellers. These can be the springboard for lessons in history and geography, science, math, writing, art, or music.

Story Suggestions:


This tale is based on an account by Greek geographer, Strabo, and relates how a Greek slave girl became the pharaoh's queen.


Explains origins of the Egyptian gods and includes examples of folklore relating to these deities.

Includes stories about animals and the ancient pharaohs.


A story about a servant girl of ancient Egypt who travels with a priest through the twelve gates of the Netherworld. Deals with Egyptian beliefs about death.


Mutemwia proves her love for Pharaoh Senefru and obtains her freedom. Based on a legend from a papyrus scroll.


This tale is based on a true story about a stone carver and his son who were commissioned to create the Great Sphinx.

Once the students have read and told one of their favorite stories from Egyptian folklore, they can begin to develop meaningful connections in other curricular areas. Here are some possible activities to start you on your way in history and geography.

**History and Geography**

- Study the history of the Nubians and their ancient civilization along the Nile.
  
  Give a written or an oral report to the rest of the class.

- Study the pyramids—how they were built and why. This could be a cooperative learning project.
• Investigate the discovery of the Rosetta Stone and how its message was finally deciphered. Share your findings in an oral report with visual aids.

• Create a time line of the dynasties in the history of ancient Egypt. Again, this could be a group project.

• With maps and charts, compare ancient Egypt to modern day Egypt. A project for the entire class.

• Examine the lives of famous pharaohs such as Ramses III and Tutankhamen or of Egyptian queens such as Nefertiti and Cleopatra. This information can be shared either in written or in oral reports.

• Investigate the Egyptian gods and goddesses: for instance, a study of Bastet, the Cat Goddess might yield some fascinating tales as Egyptians considered cats sacred.

Language Arts

Activities in history and geography integrate easily with writing and reading activities in the language arts curriculum. Your students will think of many possibilities, but here are a few to whet your appetite.

• Write a different ending for one of the Egyptian folklore stories.

• Compare, in a written report, Egypt's geographical importance in ancient times with its importance in modern times.

• Give examples of “cat expressions” and their origins. It would be fun to have students share this information orally.
• Write about other cultures which worship a particular type of animal.

• Listen to a recording of William Shakespeare's play, "Antony and Cleopatra", or read the play to the class. In a class discussion compare the facts in the play with the actual historical facts.

• Write an original story about an Egyptian slave or about an Egyptian king or queen.

• Keep a list of unfamiliar terms associated with pyramids, Egyptian religious customs, hieroglyphic texts, etc.

• Write and recite an original poem about the pyramids or other facets of ancient Egyptian life.

• Write your name or a secret message in hieroglyphics.

Science and Math

A study of the building of the pyramids and the Egyptian practice of mummification can be catalysts for math activities and scientific investigation.

Some suggested activities are:

• In science, study limestone and granite, two kinds of rocks used most in the construction of the pyramids.

• In math, compare and contrast the height of a typical pyramid, the Great Pyramid at Giza at 480 feet, with the height of the Eiffel Tower, the Statue of Liberty, Big Ben, or the Leaning Tower of Pisa.
• In science, conduct an experiment to find out why burial in hot sand would preserve a body. What could you bury in hot sand for purposes of this experiment?

• In science, investigate how the Egyptians made the foundations of the pyramids level? How did they make corners absolutely square?

• In math, try to figure out how the Egyptians found north, south, east, and west without a compass.

• Use your math skills to build a scale model of a pyramid.

• In science, discuss the process of mummification. Investigate the salt compound called “natron.”

• In math, investigate how the ancient Egyptians measured length, area, and capacity. Practice linear and area measurement by using the “cubit.”

• Study and discuss the history of the sundial which dates back to the eighth century B.C. in Egypt. Investigate the Egyptians’ knowledge of astronomy and how they devised their calendar.

• Investigate the Egyptians’ knowledge of anatomy, drugs, and surgery.

**Art and Music**

Even the curricular areas of art and music can be integrated into a study of ancient Egypt.

• Create a model of a pyramid.
• Draw Cleopatra on her barge. Observe in an art history book how artists have illustrated the famous meeting of Antony and Cleopatra.

• Make a collage of scenes from Cleopatra's life.

• Create a mural of the pyramids or a diagram of the inside of a tomb.

• Illustrate an Egyptian myth.

• Design some Egyptian jewelry based on research of Egyptian amulets or good luck charms such as the scarab beetle.

• Study the hieroglyph alphabet chart, and using The Fun With Hieroglyphics stamp kit, design a greeting card.

• In music, read or tell Leontyne Price's (1990) version of the love story of the Egyptian princess Aida and Radames, an Egyptian soldier.

• Listen to an audio cassette recording of "Aida." Conjure up visions of the Egyptian army parading in victory in the "Triumphant March" scene.

• Watch the opera "Aida" on video and note the full effect of costumes and staging. Please don't play the video, however, until your students have had the opportunity to create their own mental images of the scenes and characters in this powerful love story.

Resources:


Branfield, Connecticut: Milbrook.


Gives instructions on making hieroglyphs, papyrus scrolls, frieze paintings, jewelry, and models of pyramids.


This kit includes an alphabet chart, 24 corresponding rubber stamps, ink pad, and paperback book explaining the hieroglyphic writing system.
CONCLUSION

In this handbook I have presented general guidelines for you to use in encouraging your students to become storytellers. I have also endeavored to show how storytelling can be the vehicle for making meaningful connections to other curricular areas. Once you have tried storytelling with your students and feel more comfortable with it, I am confident you will realize its educational value. The possibilities for storytelling are really as endless as the source of stories!

Storytelling is an ancient art form which can transform everyday reading and language activities into stimulating, meaningful experiences. It stimulates imagination; it promotes the development of vocabulary; it increases comprehension and interrelates all curricular areas; it promotes the development
of vocabulary; it instructs students about other cultures; it builds confidence and self-esteem. For student storytellers, it especially provides opportunities for the improvement of oral and written expression. And the foundation for all these positive accomplishments is the development and expansion of listening skills.

According to Bill Martin, Jr. in *Sounds of The Storyteller*, "As one learns to listen, he is learning to speak; as one learns to speak, he is learning to read; as one learns to read, he is learning to write; as one learns to write, he is learning to listen" (1966. P. TE 17). This corroborates the premise of this handbook: that listening and speaking skills do influence reading development, and, as such, are a necessary foundation in a language arts curriculum. Storytelling is a worthwhile vehicle for improving those listening and speaking skills at all grade levels, but especially in the intermediate grades where it can be advantageous to catch those faltering readers and all others whose motivation for reading needs to be refocused and stimulated.

What a marvelous opportunity for using your students' personal experiences to impart deeper meaning, to sow the seeds of creative writing, to be able to inspire excitement about literature and to encourage the shared experience of oral communication! You don't need computers, the most sophisticated software, or those enticing but expensive CD ROM'S. You only need a list of stories, a storyteller, and an audience!
So, instead of pushing “ENTER’ on the computer keyboard, free your students from the confinement of the narrow world of what can be seen and touched. Sit down with your students, light the ritual wishing candle, and fly away on the magic carpet of your imaginations to another land and another time, or to that safe place where you can explore experiences and feelings of the characters you meet and thus come to understand someone else’s life. You tell stories! Encourage your students to tell stories! Experience the power of story and what a difference it can make in your teaching, in your life, and in the lives of your students!
References


Though the following list of titles may be enjoyed by children of all ages, grade levels have been suggested as a general guide for beginning storytellers. Younger students can benefit from listening to a more sophisticated story line and text, while older children often enjoy listening to basic story plots or even the simpler texts in picture books. Remember to insure success for your students by beginning their storytelling adventure with stories of shorter length and simple plots.

FABLES


A fox tricks a crow by using flattery.
Moral: Flatterers are not to be trusted. Grade 4.


Father frog tries to blow himself up to be as big as an ox and bursts.


A wolf, even though he is half-starved, decides a life of freedom is preferable to that of a house dog who is chained during the day.
Moral: Lean freedom is better than fat slavery. Grade 4.


A Chinese fable. The message is “You can move to the East or to the West; you can move to the North or to the South; but you can never move away from yourself.” Grade 4.

Moral: "Pride goeth before the fall." Grades 4 & 5.


The lesson here is "Better beans and bacon in peace than cakes and ale in fear." Grades 4 & 5.


Moral: It is the high and mighty who have the longest to fall. Grades 4 & 5.


Moral: When the need is strong, there are those who will believe anything. Grades 4 & 5.


The slave Androcles helps an injured lion. Later, when both are captured by the Romans, and Androcles is thrown to the lions in the arena, his lion friend remembers Androcle's kindness and refuses to attack him.


Ant works all summer storing food for winter while grasshopper plays and sings.
Moral: Prepare today for the needs of tomorrow. Grades 4 & 5.
FOLKTALES


Ah Shung and Yu Lang are chastised by their grandmother because of their quarreling. She tells them the tale of Chang Kung, the God of the Kitchen, whose family lived together peacefully without quarreling. The Emperor visits him to find out his secret for such peace and order. Grade 6.


A tale about Setta-Yuk the hunter and the golden mare whose ancestors are the horses in Ainu Land. Grade 6.


Mustmag, the youngest of three sisters, is treated badly by her mother and older sisters. But the plot is different from the Cinderella plot. An amusing story. Grades 5 & 6.


A folktale of Carolina mountain people. About an old woman, an old man, a little girl, a little boy, a big old bear, and some sody sallyratus. A fun story easily divided into episodes and easily remembered for storytelling. Grades 4 & 5.


An English folktale about a giant in Wales who wished to drown the people of Shrewsbury and how a simple cobbler saves the day. Grades 4 & 5.

A perfect tale for beginning storytellers—short and simple to map out. Explains why Anansi, the spider, is thin in the middle. Grades 4 & 5.


Big Anthony doesn’t follow directions and touches the magic pasta. Big trouble results.


A story about what happens to all little children who don’t mind. A moral tale told to children so they will be good. Grade 6.


A Danish folktale about a magic iron pot a peasant farmer trades for a cow. Simple story, easy to sequence. Grades 4 & 5.


An Armenian folktale about an old woman who chops off a fox’s tail and won’t return it until the fox replaces the milk he drank. This folktale, with its cumulative structure and sequence of humorous events, can be adapted for every age level. Grades 4 - 6.


A Chinese folktale that explains why we have oxen on earth and why we eat three meals a day. Grades 4 & 5.


A folktale from Tibet about men called Lepchas who decide to build a tower to reach to Heaven. Easy story to sequence. Grades 4 & 5.


A name-guessing story which is an example of the superstition that
to know a man's name gives you power over him. Parallels Grimm's “Rumpelstiltschen.” Grade 6.


An Afro-American folktale about how Brer Rabbit captures Brer Lion and ties him to a tree. Grades 5 & 6.


An Afro-American folktale about Brer Rabbit's use of trickery to escape from Brer Fox's Tar Baby trap.


An Indian version of the well-known “Cinderella” story.


A boy finds a toe and takes it home for his mother to make soup. He is awakened at night by a voice calling “Where is my to-o-oe?” The voice gets closer and closer until . . . . . . ?? This story is in a collection of stories from American folklore. Grades 5 & 6.


A Haitian folktale which explains why there are many pigeons in New York, but Turtle is still in Haiti. Grades 4 & 5.


A Ukrainian folktale in which a woodcutter's mitten, dropped in the snow, becomes a home for several cold animals. Each animal's name is repeated in sequence throughout the story. Grade 4.
FOLKTALE COLLECTIONS


Folktales from the mountain country of North Carolina and Virginia where they are told to grownups and children alike.


An anthology of folktales and stories from the United Nations.


A basic collection of the folk tales of America: Indian legends, Afro-American stories, Louisiana folktales, Paul Bunyan stories, and southern mountain stories.


A collection of African American folktales based on ancient oral traditions. Provides wonderful opportunities for students to practice storytelling.


A collection of the folklore and fairy tales of European countries.


A collection of twenty folktales from around the world that are easy to learn and perfect for audience participation. Suggested for 4th grade or any beginner storytellers.

LEGENDS


A legend told by Arizona Indian children about how Coyote tricks
some American prospectors into trading their horses, mules, and other belongings for a precious money tree. Grades 4 & 5.


A Celtic legend of the marriage and parting of a seal maiden and her mortal husband.


An Italian Christmas story about Befana who flies through the sky on January sixth, searching for the child in Bethlehem and leaving the children gifts from her basket. This is only one of many stories about Old Befana. Grades 5 & 6.


A story about a young Comanche girl who sacrifices a valued possession to save her people from famine. Grades 4-6.


A Native American boy searches for the colors of the sunset. This story is more appropriate for sixth graders or fifth graders who have had some experience with storytelling.


The story of John Henry, the legendary steel-driving man, who was born and who died with a hammer in his hand. Grade 6.


A Norse legend about Loki's promise to bring Eagle Iduna's wondrous apples of youth. Grades 4 & 5.

A legend of the Indians of our Northwest about Amala, the youngest son of a Chief, and how he becomes Strong Man and leader of his village. Grades 5 & 6.


Robin is bested in a fight with a seven-foot-tall stranger. However, Robin wins a shooting match, and the stranger, John Little, is accepted into his band of merry men and is christened Little John. Grades 5 & 6.


A legend about a young Blackfoot Indian boy with a scar on his face who proposes to a beautiful young maiden who is promised to the Sun. Scarface must find the Sun and persuade Him to release the maiden from her promise. Grades 5 & 6.


A Native American legend about a young mouse who wishes to journey to the far-off land. Along the way he is helped by several animals, and, in turn, gives of himself to others. Grades 4 - 6.

MYTHS


A short story which invites audience participation. Grades 4 & 5.


The story of why the moon and the stars are in the sky. An African myth with a simple plot. Grades 4 & 5.

A myth about Orion, a Greek giant and son of Poseidon, who was also a great hunter. He was killed by a scorpion. To save him from being with the souls of ordinary mortals in the Underworld, the gods raised him to the sky where he can be seen to this day holding his shield with his dog, Sirius, at his heel. Grade 6.


The story of Jason and his search for the Golden Fleece so that he may reclaim the throne stolen from his father by Pelaas. In this edition the illustrations and simple language make it easy to learn for storytelling. Grades 5 & 6.


The peasant girl Arachne wins a weaving contest with the goddess Minerva. The jealous goddess changes Arachne into the first spider on earth. Grades 4 - 6.


The story of Romulus and Remus, twin brothers whose father was the the god Mars. Romulus was the founder of Rome. Grade 6.


The story of beautiful Pandora and what happens when she opens the lovely golden box given her by Zeus. Explains why there is good and bad in the world. Grades 5 & 6.


The story of Daedalus and his son Icarus. About the Greek passion
for punishing pride. Wonderful illustrations by Dennis Nolan. Grade 6

MYTH COLLECTIONS


A collection of myth selections from Bulfinch's Age of Fable. Grade 6.


A collection of the stories of mythology. Its purpose is to provide a source of amusement and also to impart knowledge of an important branch of education. Without a knowledge of mythology, one cannot understand or appreciate much of the literature of the English language. Grades 6 & up.


LEGENDS


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**STORY POEMS**


Robin Hood and his men disguise themselves as shepherds and capture the Bishop of Hereford. This collection includes other story poems such as “The Walrus and the Carpenter” and “Casey Jones.” Grades 5 & 6.


Owl sets out to woo Pussycat in a boat laden with fruit and a guitar to serenade her. They sail off across the sea “to the land where the bong-tree grows.” Grades 4 - 6.


About a boy with long hair who flew away. This is a collection of entertaining short poems and story poems with wonderful use of language. For all ages.


CONTEMPORARY CHILDREN'S LITERATURE


A simple plot with a cumulative sequence. Good for beginners in storytelling. Grade 4.


Ferdinand the bull would rather sit and smell the flowers. An easy story for beginner storytellers. Grade 4.


Lily dresses like a bear every day because she wants to be big and brave. Good for storyteller beginners because of its clear plot and simple language. Grade 4.


A delightful imaginative story about how corn fairies help the corn to grow. This volume contains the *Rootabaga Stories* and other prose and poetry for young people. Grades 5 & 6.


A different version of this well-known story told from the wolf's point of view. Grade 4.


A Chinese version of the well-known tale, "Little Red Riding Hood." In this story, three sisters show their cleverness by defeating the wolf with their trickery. Grade 4.