



St. Louis Storytelling Festival Study Guide

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PROGRAM DESCRIPTION

Stories brought vibrantly to life with voices, sound effects, action, and audience participation invite listeners to enter joyfully into the world of language and literature. The important lesson—that books and reading are FUN—is experienced with each story. Done with the whole learner in mind, storytelling engages linguistic, logical, musical, spatial, interpersonal, intra-personal, and kinesthetic learners alike, at the same time strengthening essential foundation skills such as listening, visualization, vocabulary acquisition, and comprehension. Storytelling is a Power Tool for Literacy!

WHAT IS STORYTELLING?

Storytelling is the art of using words, gestures, facial expression, and body language to bring a story to life in the listener's imagination. From the beginning of time, storytelling has been the way cultures have preserved and celebrated their memories, passed on their values and belief systems, entertained, instructed, and reported. Today, storytelling is recognized as one of the most effective brain-compatible teaching strategies, accessible for children with diverse abilities and disabilities, and applicable to all "ways of knowing." Storytelling continues to invite us all to "Enter the Theater of the Mind—the Imagination!"

STORYTELLING AND LITERACY

"The classroom is a place of discovery, celebration and of growth. The story in all its richness is the heart of a larger learning experience." —Rives Collins

Here are some of the riches of storytelling:

1. Storytelling relaxes the listener. When a story is told the listeners breathe deeply, open their minds and hearts, and are ready to learn.
2. Storytelling promotes problem solving and "insights." Each story that is read or told is about characters experiencing adventures, making choices, and living with the consequences of those decisions.
3. Storytelling opens the imagination. The stories give the children "images" for their masterpieces created at the easels, "story plots" for creative drama, "ideas" for

- building amazing structures out of blocks, and deep thoughts for the Zen-like water play.
4. Storytelling transmits information. The listeners learn about new places, ideas, experiences, and concepts.
5. Storytelling encourages spontaneous play, self-expression, and self-esteem. Storytelling is a joyful language experience.
6. In storytelling, children experience interactive and cooperative learning. The listeners bond together in a shared experience, and the story becomes part of the classroom culture.
7. Storytelling explores other cultures. Through personal stories and folklore of countries other than our own, children can peek into other cultures from the inside.
8. Storytelling nurtures listening skills, concentration, and focus.
9. Storytelling encourages empathy and caring about feelings of others.
10. Storytelling is a springboard for reading. Telling stories increases the ability to recall information, to sequence the events of the story, to understand the parts of the story such as a beginning, a middle, and an end. Stories introduce children to point of view.

PRE/POST ACTIVITIES

Prepare (Pre- or pre-performance)

Teachers, please read this to your students.

At the Festival today, we're going to participate in storytelling performance by _____. "Participate" means that you'll be part of the program—as good listeners, using your imagination to "see" the characters, setting, and action. Sometimes, you may be invited to use your brains, voice, and hands to help bring a story to life. Storytelling is the *most fun* when the storyteller and the listeners work together to create the story—so let's make this a fun experience for everyone!

Warm-Up Questions to Set the Stage for Engaging Students

Ask students to listen carefully to the tale so that afterwards they can answer simple, factual, non-subjective questions such as *who, what, where, or when*.

- What are the parts of a story? (characters, setting, problem solution, beginning, middle, end)
- What do you use when you listen to a story? (ears, eyes, brain, imagination)

- As you listen, use your imagination to make a “video” of the story in your mind. Will all of you have the same video? Why or why not?
- As you listen to the stories today, listen and watch to see if you can find patterns in the words or the actions. Why are patterns important in the stories?
- Try to predict what’s going to happen next in the stories, but don’t yell it out! Just listen and think and see if you’re right!

Missouri Show-Me Standards for Communication Arts Addressed

Students in Missouri public schools will acquire a solid foundation which includes knowledge of and proficiency in (5.) comprehending and evaluating the content and artistic aspects of oral and visual presentations (such as storytelling, debates, lectures, multi-media productions).

Illinois Learning Standards for Language Arts Addressed

State Goal 4: Listen and speak effectively in a variety of situations.

Reflect (Post- or post-performance)

Quick Draws/Writes: Take 5 minutes to write or draw about the story that was most memorable to you. What made it memorable?

Connections: Choose one story you heard today and discuss with a partner how it relates to *your own experiences*, how it relates to *something you have read or watched on TV or the movies*, and how it relates to *the school, community, or the world*.

Additional Activities and Assessment

(adaptable to all age groups)

Here are some suggestions that will enhance the storytelling experience, if teachers can implement one or two of them.

Learning the Story

- Make flipbooks for sequencing events.
- Sequence the scenes: Fold a sheet of paper in half lengthwise, then fold it into thirds, and then unfold it to make six panels. Number them 1–6 and draw pictures in each cube from the scenes in the story.
- Create a timeline of the plot. Investigate structures in the plot: equations or balancing elements, cause-and-effect situations, sequences, prediction, etc.
- Make a book from the story: Write on the chalkboard all the scenes from a folktale. Give one scene to each child (or two). Have the children draw the scene using thin black markers and write a few sentences about what has happened. Reproduce each page so each child will have a book. They can color it when they get it back and add a title cover of their own making.

Performance

- Make a play, a narrative play, a puppet show, or a readers’ theatre from the folktale. Review the stories, and choose one to dramatize with the group. Start by brainstorming and listing on the board all of the important scenes. Put them scenes in order; divide the class into the same number of groups as scenes; and assign each group a scene. Give each group a large piece of paper and drawing implements; ask them to draw their scene for a storyboard.
- Assemble the storyboard in a prominent place. Let groups discuss and rehearse how they are going to portray their scene (each with a speaking part; one narrating and others acting the parts; one narrator, some kids—the shyer ones—as scenery or sound effects, others acting, etc.) Then put on the play. Performances will allow you to assess which students are internalizing the sequence (*and have the storyboard for easy reference just in case*), interpreting the text, creating dialogue by inferring information about characters’ motivations and personality. Ask them to evaluate what they experienced, solve any problems they identified, and do it again! The higher-order thinking skills will be engaged and working overtime!
- Change one of the characters (or give a character a different attitude), and see how the story plays out and changes.
- Have a radio interview with one of the characters from the story.

Art

- Draw your favorite part of the story.
- Make masks to represent the different characters in the story.
- Draw a map of the setting.
- Draw a family portrait of the characters.
- Cartooning: Draw a picture that includes at least two of the characters in the story. Then draw word bubbles above their heads and write a conversation between them.

Creative Writing

- Retell the story from a different character’s point of view.
- Expand the story beyond its known beginning or ending.
- Take a character and create a new story for him or her.
- Create dialog for the characters in the story.
- Retell the story as a diary entry, a newspaper column, or a letter to a friend.
- Write a letter to one of the characters; the letter can either praise, criticize, or give advice to the character.
- Make a mad-lib for the folktale asking for nouns, actions words, adjectives, etc.

Social Studies/Science/Math

- Learn about the geography, customs, music, history, and people behind different folktales.
- Study the plants, animals, weather, or astronomical conditions mentioned in different folktales.
- Research foods or recreate recipes and crafts described in different folktales.
- Explore the scientific validity of the plants and animals in the folktales.
- Explore the mathematical validity of happenings in the folktales.
- Learn games, songs, dances, and arts from the original culture of the folktales.
- Compare two versions of the story's plot as told by different authors or by two or more cultures. Notice similarities and differences.

Movement

- Use movements and gestures instead of words to tell parts of the story.
- Pick out a movement in the story and do it four times; pick out another movement and do it four times. Repeat the first. Keep adding more. Possibly add music and do the movement to the time of the music.

Extended Activities

- Retell a story to family members, school staff, younger students, residents in nursing homes, or nearby preschools.
- Form a storytelling club at school, and produce a storytelling newsletter.

VOCABULARY

Characters: The people or animals in a story.

Genre: Type of story. Genres include:

Folktale: A story from the oral tradition, with no known author.

Literary story: A story that can be attributed to a specific author or authors.

A **fairy tale** can be either a folktale or a literary tale, and will include elements of fantasy or magic.

Traditional tales: Folktales told in the traditional manner of the culture from which they come, as close to the oral source as possible.

Fables can be from either the literary or the folk tradition. Fables have morals—either explicit or implied.

A **regional story** is specific to a particular region, such as South Georgia or the Everglades.

Personal tales are just that—personal stories from the teller's own life or experiences.

Historical tales are based on an actual historical event, such as the Johnstown Flood, and accurately bring that event to life.

Biographical tales tell about the life—or specific events in the life—of a real person. Often, these tales are told first-person.

Motivation: Why characters do what they do.

Plot: What happens in a story.

Setting: Where the story takes place.

Storyboard: Develop a set of pictures that tells the story, like a comic strip, with one picture for each major thing that happens.

Visualize: In your mind's eye, “see” the characters, setting, and action.

SPECIFIC STUDY GUIDES

Storytellers at the St. Louis Storytelling Festival have developed study guides to go with specific stories or story programs that they told at the Festival. Information about more study guides may be added to the Festival's Web site in the future.

1. [The Piasa Study Guide: The Legend of the Piasa](http://www.marilynkinsella.org/Study_Guides_and_info/piasa_study_sheets.htm) is a famous story from the bluffs of Illinois. (URLs: www.marilynkinsella.org/Study_Guides_and_info/piasa_study_sheets.htm and www.marilynkinsella.org/The_Piasa.htm)
2. [Br'er Possum and Br'er Snake Study Guide:](http://www.marilynkinsella.org/Study_Guides_and_info/study_guide_for_Br'er_Possum_and_Br'er_Snake.htm) Also known as *Br'er Possum's Dilemma*. (URL: www.marilynkinsella.org/Study_Guides_and_info/study_guide_for_Br'er_Possum_and_Br'er_Snake.htm)
3. [Ishi, the Last of the Stone Age Super Heroes:](http://www.marilynkinsella.org/Study_Guides_and_info/Ishi_stories_and_study_guide.html) Besides the study guide, the site includes the following stories: a short bio on Ishi, “Coyote Brings the Fire,” and “Rabbit the Arrow Maker.” (URL: www.marilynkinsella.org/Study_Guides_and_info/Ishi_stories_and_study_guide.html)
4. [Rumpelstiltskin:](http://www.marilynkinsella.org/Study_Guides_and_info/Study_Guide_for_Rumpelstiltskin.htm) A folktale from Germany. (URL: www.marilynkinsella.org/Study_Guides_and_info/Study_Guide_for_Rumpelstiltskin.htm)
5. [How the Animals Got Their Coats:](http://www.marilynkinsella.org/Study_Guides_and_info/how_the_animals_got_their_coats.htm) A Native American story. (URL: www.marilynkinsella.org/Study_Guides_and_info/how_the_animals_got_their_coats.htm)

RESOURCES FOR TEACHERS AND STUDENTS

Brand, Susan Trostle and Jeanne M. Donato. *Storytelling in Emergent Literacy: Fostering Multiple Intelligences*. Delmar, 2001.

Changer, Jerilynn and Annette Harrison. *Storytelling Activities Kit: Ready-to-Use Techniques, Lessons & Listening Cassettes for Early Childhood*. The Center for Applied Research in Education, 1992.

Cooper, Patsy. *When Stories Come to School: Telling, Writing and Performing Stories in the Early Childhood Classroom*. Teachers & Writers Collaborative, 1993.

Davis, Donald. *Writing as a Second Language: From Experience to Story to Prose*. August House, 2000.

Egan, Kieran. *Teaching as Story Telling: An Alternative Approach to Teaching and Curriculum in the Elementary School*. University of Chicago Press, 1986.

Gillard, Marni. *Story Teller, Story Teacher: Discovering the Power of Storytelling for Teaching and Living*. Stenhouse Publishers, 1996.

Hamilton, Martha and Mitch Weiss. *Children Tell Stories: A Teaching Guide*. Richard C. Owen, 1990.

Harrison, Annette. *Easy To Tell Stories for Young Children*, National Storytelling Network, 1992.

Haven, Kendall. *Super Simple Storytelling: A Can-Do Guide for Every Classroom, Every Day*. Englewood, CO: Teacher Ideas Press, 2000.

MacDonald, Margaret Read. *The Storyteller's Start-Up Book: Finding, Learning, Performing, and Using Folktales*. Little Rock: August House, 1993

National Storytelling Association, *Tales As Tools*, The National Storytelling Press, 1994

Norfolk, Bobby & Sherry. *The Moral of the Story: Folktales for Character Development*. August House, 1999.

Norfolk, Sherry and Jane Stenson, Diane Williams. *The Storytelling Classroom: Applications Across the Curriculum*. Teachers' Ideas Press, 2006.

Rubright, Lynn. *Beyond the Beanstalk: Interdisciplinary Learning through Storytelling*. Heinemann, 1996.

Schank, Roger C. *Tell Me A Story: Narrative and Intelligence*. Northwestern University Press, 1990.

Sima, Judy and Kevin Cordi *Raising Voices: Creating Youth Storytelling Groups and Troupes* Libraries Unlimited 2003.

STORYTELLERS' WEB SITES WITH USEFUL TEACHER INFORMATION

Angela Davis
www.yarnspin.com/resources.php

August House Learning Center
www.augusthouse.com/learning_center/lesson_plans

Brian Fox Ellis
www.foxtalesint.com

Dianne De LasCasas
www.storyconnection.net/?content=classroom

Heather Forest
www.storyarts.com

Jack Tales
www.ferrum.edu/applit/studyg/JackTaleAct.htm#Gam

Jim Cogan
www.ptgo.org/pdfs/cogan.pdf

K. Sean Buvala
www.storyteller.net

Karen Chace
www.storybug.net/teachers.htm

Linda King Pruitt
lkpstoryteller.com/teachers.htm
 Marilyn Kinsella
www.marilynkinsella.org (See [Teacher/Teller Pages](#).)

Milbre Burch
www.kindcrone.com/tsw_study_guide.html#cc

Pro Teacher Archive
www.proteacher.com/070163.shtml

Tales and Scales
www.talesandscales.org/ansg7-12.doc

The Educator's Reference Desk
www.eduref.org/cgi-bin/lessons.cgi/Language_Arts/Story_Telling

STORYTELLING ORGANIZATIONS

St. Louis Gateway Storytellers
www.stlouisgatewaystorytellers.org
 Information on the group and individual tellers around St. Louis

Missouri Storytellers (MO-TELL)
www.motell.org
 A statewide organization committed to spreading the joy of storytelling around Missouri.

Riverwind Storytellers
www.marilynkinsella.org/Riverwind_Business/Riverwind_Home_Page.htm
 The Riverwind Storytellers meet in Illinois around the Metro-St. Louis Area. Yearly workshop.

National Storytelling Network
www.storynet.org
 Information on storytellers, the National Storytelling Conference, National Storytelling Festival, Calendar of Storytelling Events, and Tellabration! A Worldwide Storytelling Event.