

Ideas for Promoting Storytelling in the Classroom

- Model storytelling with personal anecdotes and familiar folk tales. Stress that even when telling a simple anecdotal story, the tale should be shaped with a beginning, a middle, and an ending; embellished with as many details as possible; and have dialogue between characters included. Model how to maintain eye contact and how to pace and pause to give your audience time to listen and respond. Don't worry about whether you're an expert storyteller or not.
- Make storytelling an intrinsic part of your literacy workshop; for example, partners can respond to a read-aloud by retelling the story in tandem (taking turns) or telling a related story. Similarly, students can rehearse for writing by telling their stories first to a small group or a partner.
- Create a permanent storytelling centre. Stock it with a variety of short fables and folk tales and writing materials. After teaching students how to learn a story using the 10 steps, post the steps at the centre for small-group, partner, and independent work.
- From time to time, play games that promote storytelling. For example, in Liar's Contest, students sit in a circle (small or large group), counting off in beat to the rhyme. The last person the leader counts off in the rhyme (lid) is It. That student tells a personal story and the group votes on whether they think the story is true (fingers in a V) or false (fingers crossed). The teller's goal is to "fool" the listeners by making a true story seem implausible and a false story plausible.
- Co-construct a list of steps for learning to tell a story "by heart." (See the anchor chart below.) Tell students that they should focus on making the story their own, rather than on memorizing words.

Rhyme for Liar's Contest

As I **sat** beneath the **apple** tree

All the apples **fell** on me

Apple pudding, **apple** pie,

Did you ever **tell** a lie?

Yes, you did, you **know** you did,

You **broke** your mother's **teapot lid!**

— Traditional

"The tale is not beautiful if nothing is added. Folktales remain merely dumb until you realize that you are required to complete them yourself, to fill in your own participation."

— Italo Calvino

Ten Steps for Learning a Story: Terry Campbell

1. Choose a story you really like (read lots of them first!).
2. Read the story silently several times, **picturing** the story in your mind as you read.
3. Read the story out loud to your partner.
4. **Visualize**, or picture in your mind, all the details of the story and discuss these with your partner.
5. Create a storyboard, using at least three cartoon boxes, to show the main events of the story with pictures and captions. (You will be using this to help you learn to tell the story.)
6. Tell the story to a partner using your storyboard. Don't worry about using the exact words from the book.
7. Tell the story again, without the storyboard. Remember to visualize as you tell.
8. Reread the story from the book to check for missing parts, or special words and phrases you want to remember.
9. PRACTISE! PRACTISE! PRACTISE!
10. Trust the story and yourself. Tell it to your story circle.

Based on Parr & Campbell, 2007

A sampling of folk tales for telling

Something from Nothing by Phoebe Gilman
The Wolf of Gubbio by Michael Bedard
The Trial of the Stone by Richardo Keens-Douglas
The Name of the Tree by Celia Barker Lottridge
Knots on a Counting Rope by Bill Martin Jr. and John Archambault
The Bone Talker by Shelley A. Leedahl
The Rough-Face Girl by Rafe Martin
Yeh-Shen: A Cinderella Story from China retold by Ai-Ling Louie
Anansi and the Moss-Covered Rock by Eric A. Kimmel
The Three Billy Goats Gruff by P. C. Asbjornsen and J. E. Moe

Traditional literature anthologies for storytelling and drama

Canadian Fairy Tales edited by Eva Martin and Laszlo Gal
English Fairy Tales collected by Joseph Jacobs
Fables edited by Arnold Lobel
The Magic Orange Tree edited by Diane Wolkstein
Favorite Folktales from Around the World edited by Jane Yolen
Out of the Everywhere: New Tales for Canada edited by Jan Andrews and Simon Ng