



STORYTELLING

The art of a good yarn

2nd Grade Lesson Plan: Storytelling: The art of a good yarn

Overview

This series of lessons was designed to meet the needs of gifted children for extension beyond the standard curriculum with the greatest ease of use for the educator. The lessons may be given to the students for individual self-guided work, or they may be taught in a classroom or a home-school setting. This particular lesson plan is primarily effective in a classroom setting. Assessment strategies and rubrics are included. The lessons were developed by Lisa Van Gemert, M.Ed.T., the Mensa Foundation's Gifted Children Specialist.

Introduction

Storytelling is an ancient and valuable art that extends around the globe. In this unit, students develop their own storytelling talents, apply the techniques of storytelling, create storytelling guides, and perform a story for an audience. This unit can be taught to an entire classroom or given as a self-directed extension activity. Each lesson is quite short, and they can easily be combined.

Guiding Questions

- Where did storytelling originate?
- What are the benefits of storytelling?
- What are the key features of a well-told story?
- How does a storyteller develop a story to prepare it for an audience?
- How can a storyteller develop and refine his/her storytelling ability?

Learning Objectives

After completing the lessons in this unit, students will be able to:

- Give the rationale for the telling of stories.
- Evaluate a story for its storytelling potential.
- Outline a story in preparation for storytelling.
- Present a story before an audience.

Preparation

- Read through each of the mini-lessons.
- Find the suggested materials you want to use.
- Make any copies needed and gather any materials you want to use.
- Choose appropriate extension activities.



Lesson 1: History of storytelling

As long as there have been people, there have been stories. From the stories told in paintings on the ancient caves at Lascaux (Google it!) to the bedtime stories told to young children, stories make up our history and guide our future.

You are surrounded by stories every day. The news on television, radio, and in the newspaper is nothing but stories. The Bible and other religious books are full of stories. The lessons teachers give in school are often stories. Songs tell stories. Pictures tell stories. Movies tell stories. Comedians make up their routines with stories. When you tell a friend about something that happened to you, you are telling a story. Can you think of the last story you heard? Think hard: it may be something you just heard a few minutes ago!

Some stories have lasted hundreds and even thousands of years and are still being told. Stories began with the oral tradition, meaning they were passed on by being heard and retold. Later, people began to write the stories down, but we still love to hear stories told out loud.

Stories are powerful. They can teach morals – the values that the author of the story thinks people should live by. They can teach history. They can entertain us. They can make us think about things in ways we've never thought of them before. They can make us laugh. They can make us cry. Telling stories is a large part of what makes people connected to each other.

Stories are a part of every culture. Stories about our country and its history help us feel proud of our nation. Stories about our ancestors teach us about where we came from and the things we have in common with other people around us.

You probably have favorite stories of your own. Maybe they're stories about your family that you hear from your grandparents. Maybe they're books you've read over and over. What is your favorite story?

A man named Robert Moss said that the Australian Aborigines think that the important stories are always seeking the right person to tell them, looking for the storyteller like an animal hunting its prey. Do you think there could be a story looking for you?





Lesson 2: Getting ready to tell a story

(The following games come from a book titled Children Tell Stories by Martha Hamilton and Mitch Weiss.)

Storytelling is more than just reading the words of a story out loud. It takes other skills as well. It is important to be able to use different tones in your voice when you are telling a story. If your voice stays at the same level, it is boring! You will want your voice to go higher and lower. You will want your voice to go louder and softer. You can practice this with games. These games will help you develop the skills you need to make yourself a good storyteller.

Counting from 1 to 10

First, read a paragraph of a story, any story. Keep your voice the same level. Don't go high or low or loud or soft. Just say it flat.

Now count from one to 10 (out loud!) in these different ways:

- As if you were an angry parent who said, "I am going to count to 10 and if you're not in the bedroom by the time I get to 10, you're in big trouble."
- As a very little child just learning to count
- As if you were very sad because you thought everyone had forgotten your birthday, but then you walked into your living room and saw 10 birthday presents sitting on the floor. How would you count them?
- As if you were a referee for a boxing match and you were counting someone out.
- As if you were telling someone a telephone number when the phone was not working right.
- As if you were counting pennies as you dropped them into a piggy bank.

Read the same paragraph again that you read before. This time, let your voice go loud and soft. Go high and low. Go fast and slow. Do you hear the difference? Which way sounds better?

Walk the Walk

Storytelling isn't just words; it's motion, too. You will have to move around while you tell your story. You will use your arms and legs. You will use your hands and face to tell the story. Practice storytelling motions with this game.

Walk across the room six times. Each time, pretend something different:

- You are coming home from school and you know you have a lot of chores to do when you get there.
- You are walking through a foot of snow.
- You are walking barefoot in a very sticky, squishy swamp.
- You are walking across a blistering hot desert.
- You are in a graveyard at night walking through the tombstones.
- Your right leg is in a cast.
- You are walking through honey.

Good job! Now you are ready to find a story to tell!



Lesson 4: Getting your story ready

Now you have a story and a story mountain, and you know your story very well. It is time to get your story ready for telling.

First, you need a written-down copy of your story. If you can print it on the computer, leave space to the side for notes, like the story on the next two pages. If your story is in your own book, use a pencil or sticky notes to write things down.

You may want to use props when you tell your story. Props can be small or large. You can wear a full costume or a hat or a cape. You may want to wear a specific hat every time you tell a story.

You may like to use puppets or a musical instrument such as a harmonica. You can use cut-out figures or stuffed animals. You may want to use a blanket or a towel.

Remember that you want to keep it interesting!

Don't forget that your body and your voice are important tools to help tell your story:

- Move your body in the storytelling "V." The storytelling "V" is when you shift where you're facing when different characters speak. This helps the audience know who is talking. Aim your body one direction when you are one character, and then aim it another direction when you are a different character. Remember which way you faced for each character!
- Use hand movements and face movements (called "expressions") to help tell the story.
- Use different voices for different characters.
- Speak faster and slower and higher and lower.
- Make sure you speak loudly enough so that everyone can hear you.
- Say the words clearly so that everyone can understand you.

When the story is over, make sure you end it; don't keep going or just trail off. Make it clear with your voice or movements or expression that you are done. Make the ending kind of fast. That leaves the audience feeling that the story was exciting.

We will use the story of *The Three Billy Goats Gruff* to show you how to plan your storytelling.

Once you have your plan ready, practice it at least three times!



THE THREE BILLY GOATS GRUFF

Once upon a time, back when animals could talk, there were three boy goats, called billy goats, who would walk from their house up the hill to eat the thick, green grass and get fat. Their last name was "Gruff."

To get to the hill, the three billy goats had to cross a bridge that went over a bubbling stream.

Under that wooden bridge lived a big, hairy, ugly troll. He had big eyes and long teeth and a pointed nose. And he ate billy goats like they were microwave popcorn.

One spring day, the youngest Billy Goat Gruff came to the bridge. As he walked across the bridge, his hooves made a clippity-clop sound.

"Trip, trap, trip, trap," said the bridge.

"Who's that stomping on my bridge?" yelled the troll.

"Oh, it is just me, the littlest Billy Goat Gruff. I am just going over to eat the green grass on the hill to make myself fat," said the youngest Billy Goat Gruff in his wee little voice.

"And I'm coming to gobble you up," said the troll.

"Oh, no! Please don't eat me! I'm so little, I'm just a snack," said the billy goat. "Wait a bit till the second Billy Goat Gruff comes. He's much bigger than I am."

"Well, okay, keep going," said the troll.

A little while later, the second Billy Goat Gruff came across the bridge.

Trip, trap, trip, trap, trip, trap, went the bridge.

"Who's that tripping over my bridge?" roared the troll.

"Oh, it's just me, the second Billy Goat Gruff. I am just going over to eat the green grass on the hill to make myself fat," said the billy goat.

"I'm going to eat you up," said the troll.

"Oh, no! Don't eat me. Wait until the big Billy Goat Gruff comes. He's a lot bigger meal than me."

"Well, okay. But hurry off my bridge," said the troll.

NOTES

- ◀ *Speak slowly here. Leave space between words.*
- ◀ *Use a hand motion to look like a stream.*
- ◀ *Use hands and make a face to describe the troll.*
- ◀ *Use hands on legs to make clippity-clop sound.*
- ◀ *Use a loud, deep voice.*
- ◀ *Use a high, squeaky voice.*
- ◀ *Say this deep and kind of fast.*
- ◀ *Use high, squeaky voice again.*
- ◀ *Say this deep and a little disappointed.*
- ◀ *Say this a little faster.*
- ◀ *Slap hands on legs to make trip, trap sounds.*
- ◀ *Loud and deep!*
- ◀ *Use a lower voice than the high, squeaky one.*
- ◀ *Deep voice. Say up louder and kind of fast.*
- ◀ *Say this in the lower voice, but say it like you're asking a favor.*
- ◀ *Deep voice. Sound disappointed.*

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Just then, here comes the big Billy Goat Gruff.

Trip, trap, trip, trap, trip, trap, went the bridge because the third billy goat was so heavy that the bridge groaned under him.

“Who’s that tramping over my bridge?” roared the troll.

“It is the big Billy Goat Gruff,” said the billy goat, whose voice was even louder and meaner than the troll’s voice.

“I’m coming to eat you up,” yelled the troll.

“You just try it,” said the big Billy Goat Gruff. “I’ll poke out your eyeballs and I’ll pull of your ears, and I’ll crush you to bits like smushed-up cereal at the bottom of the box!” said the big billy goat.

That was what he said!

* * *

And then he ran at the troll, and he poked at the troll’s eyes with his horns and pulled his ears and stepped on his feet.

The troll decided that maybe it was okay if the billy goats ate the grass on the hill after all.

* * *

So the Billy Goats Gruff came every day to eat the grass on the hill, and they got so fat that they could hardly fit across the bridge.

And if you go to this hillside, you will still see them there, fat and happy. And if you look closely, you might see the troll under the bridge.

But don’t worry – he won’t bother you.

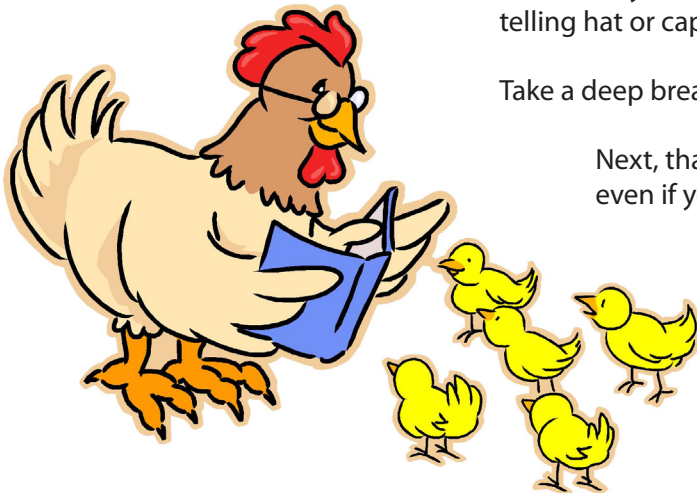


- ◀ *Slowly. Pause after “just then.” Say “big” louder.*
- ◀ *Slap hands on legs for trip-trap sound. Show “third” with 3 fingers. Say “so heavy” slowly.*
- ◀ *Loud and deep.*
- ◀ *Deep and mean. Say “big” really loudly.*
- ◀ *Deep and loud and fast!*
- ◀ *Deep and mean. Say “poke” and “pull” and “crush” loudly. Use hands to look like smashing cereal. Say “box” loudly.*
- ◀ *Say it fast and surprised.*
- ◀ *Say “poked” and “pulled” and “stepped” more slowly.*
- ◀ *Say it a little higher and with a little laugh in your voice.*
- ◀ *Say “so” really slowly, like “soooooo.”*
- ◀ *Say slower than rest. Put hand across eyebrows to show “look.”*
- ◀ *Sound happy with last line.*



Lesson 5: Presenting the story

Now you're ready to tell your story in front of people! Wow! You can practice on your family first to get ready for telling the story in front of strangers. Here's how to do it:



Make sure you have everything you need (props, your special story-telling hat or cape, etc.).

Take a deep breath in and try to relax.

Next, thank everyone for coming. Try not to sound nervous, even if you are!

Make sure everyone is quiet and ready to listen before you begin.

Tell them where you got your story. Did you get it from a book? Is it an old fairy tale or an old Indian legend? Tell them!

Look people in the eye while you're telling the story.

You can use the audience to help you tell the story. If there is something that repeats (like the trip, trap across the bridge of the billy goats), let your audience make the sounds with you. Invite them by saying something like, "Slap your hands on your legs with me!" You could also have the audience repeat lines with you, such as, "Not by the hair of my chinny, chin, chin!"

If the audience gets loud, pause. Wait for a second until they stop talking. Do not be mean to the audience or they won't like your story. Don't answer questions during the story. If someone is trying to ask a question, signal them to wait by holding up your pointer finger.

Begin and end your story in a good way. You can find suggestions for how to begin your story at folktale.net/openers.html. You can find suggestions for how to end your story at folktale.net/endings.html.

Make sure you practice and practice! You will make mistakes, and that's okay! Just pause and then go on. Don't say you're sorry for the mistake because that just draws more attention to it. Making mistakes is a part of making anything, so don't let it bother you.

Most importantly: try to have fun!



Extension

- Use your skills to serve others: tell stories in a classroom, a library, at a campfire, or while you are caring for younger children.
- Interview someone to find out a story from his or her own life. Record the story.
- Research the storytelling traditions of your ancestors.
- Research the development of Grimm's Fairy Tales.
- Listen to storytellers at storybee.org.
- Learn about World Storytelling Day and create your own event at freewebs.com/worldstorytellingday.
- Find terrific activities and lesson plans on storytelling at storyarts.org/lessonplans/index.html.
- Join the Kids' Storytelling Club at storycraft.com.
- Read these books about storytelling:
 - ▶ Hamilton, Martha and Mitch Weiss. *Children Tell Stories: Teaching and Using Storytelling in the Classroom* (Multimedia DVD included with the book)
 - ▶ Greene, Ellin. *Storytelling: Art and Technique*.
 - ▶ MacDonald, Margaret. *Storyteller's Start-Up Book*.



- Do a storytelling thinkquest at library.thinkquest.org/J001779/.
- Subscribe to Junior Storyteller. Storycraft Publishing, P.O. Box 205, Masonville, CO 80541. Print Version, \$15.95 Online Version, \$9.95. (More resources and an online link at storycraft.com.)
- Build a story collection. Get a notebook to keep stories in and organize them by length or by subject or by type (happy, sad, rescue).



Assessment

ORAL PREPARATION				
	Mastery	Intermediate	Beginner	Emerging
Voice: Easily heard; strong and effective tone inflection; clear enunciation				
Body language: Moves body and hands to improve telling of story				
Audience engagement: Makes eye contact with audience; holds attention; full concentration on audience				
Characters: Uses different voices for different characters; turns body to indicate different characters				
Pacing: Effective pacing; strong beginning and ending				

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STORY PREPARATION

	Mastery	Intermediate	Beginner	Emerging
Story selection: Chooses appropriate story for oral telling				
Plot: Correctly identifies plot sequence in Story Mountain				
Dynamics: Thoroughly notates story in preparation for telling				