

Institut Pendidikan Guru Kampus Dato' Razali Ismail

# Storytelling in the Classroom

*A 2-hour Workshop for IPG Lecturers, Teachers and Trainee Teachers*



Ruth Wickham, Brighton Education Training Fellow, IPGKDRI

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**Facilitator's Manual**

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# Storytelling in the Classroom

## **Acknowledgements**

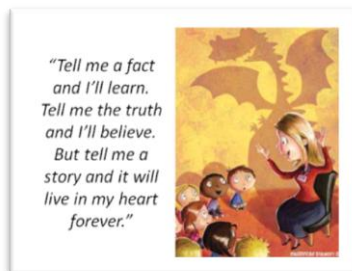
This workshop was written for a group of 85 participants consisting of IPG Lecturers, PISMP students, and Primary School Teachers at IPGKDRI on 31<sup>st</sup> July, 2012.

The workshop was organised and arranged by Pn Azlinda bt Abd Aziz and presented by Mrs Ruth Wickham.



**NOTE: Thumbnails of PowerPoint slides are shown in facilitator's manual.**

## **Introduction**



Courses in Storytelling to children are generally a minor elective subject in Teacher Training, and yet for those who master this craft it quickly becomes their most valuable and well-used skill.

As an old Indian proverb says:

*"Tell me a fact and I'll learn. Tell me the truth and I'll believe. But tell me a story and it will live in my heart forever."*

Some of the advantages of using stories in any part of the curriculum are that

- stories create interest and fuel curiosity,
  - stories provide a structure for remembering course material more so than isolated concepts,
  - stories are a familiar and accessible form of sharing information than abstract concepts,
  - telling a story from experience can create a more personal student-teacher connection.
- (Green, 2003)

## Objectives:

Participants will:

- Understand and appreciate the importance and value of storytelling as an essential teaching/learning tool.
- Discover new stories and ideas for creating new stories.
- Practise preparing for a storytelling presentation that will engage their students and remain in their memories.
- Develop skills for presenting stories to any age group.

## Materials:

Facilitator needs:

- Facilitator's notes
- PowerPoint presentation
- Storytelling skills

Participants need:

- Notebook and writing materials
- Participant's Notes and Worksheets

## Timetable:

As the workshop includes group-based activities and discussions, the time needed to complete the workshop will depend on the number and maturity of participants. Initially it was designed for a 2-3 hour workshop session.

## Topics:

1. What is so great about storytelling anyway? (10 mins)
2. Choosing a story. (20 Mins)
3. Creating a story. (30 mins)
4. Preparing to present a story: (30 mins)
  - a. Learning the sequence
  - b. Movement and mime
  - c. Sound effects
  - d. Words
5. Telling the story: (30 mins)
  - a. Character Voices, Faces and Placement
  - b. Eye contact
  - c. Five senses
6. Project (own time – homework)

## Procedures:

Participants should be seated in groups.

## What is so great about storytelling anyway?



Encourage participants to reminisce about storytelling experiences in their past (not necessarily stories told in English).

- Did you have a parent / grandparent who told you bedtime stories?
- Did you have a teacher who told you stories?
- Have you ever observed a professional storyteller (maybe on TV)?
- What do you remember about those stories?
- Have you ever been a storyteller yourself (not necessarily in English)?
- Have you ever observed young children listening to a story?
- What do you think about the value of storytelling?
- Are there any negative aspects to storytelling?
- Would you feel nervous telling a story to a group of adults? Children?
- Would children enjoy stories in English if their English is not very good?

Participants fill in the questionnaire worksheet, and then discuss in groups and as a class.

Note: This is a brief, introductory activity.

*(Participant's worksheet is below .Page 3 in participant's notes.)*

## Worksheet 1:

Did you have a parent / grandparent / other relative who told you bedtime stories? .....

.....

Did you have a teacher who told your class stories? .....

.....

Have you ever observed a professional storyteller (maybe on TV)? .....

.....

What do you remember about any stories you were told as a child? .....

.....

Have you ever been a storyteller yourself? (not necessarily in English) .....

.....

Have you ever observed young children listening to a story? .....

.....

What do you think about the value of storytelling? .....

.....

What are the negative aspects to storytelling? .....

.....

Would you feel nervous about telling a story in a lively manner to a group of adults? .....

Children? .....

.....

Do you think that children would enjoy listening to stories in English, even if their English is not very good? .....

.....

***Discuss your answers with the group.***

## A. Choosing a Story to Tell



There are a great many different types of stories, and people have various ways of classifying them.

This article from “Australian Storytelling” is one list of most of the different types.

### **TYPES OF STORY** - by Helen McKay and Berice Dudley

The most important consideration when choosing a tale to tell is **whether you like it enough to tell it with enthusiasm**. Stories should communicate to you a need to be told. Some of the different categories of stories available to storytellers are: --

**Fable** - a short moral story not based on fact, using animals as characters such as Aesop's Fables.

**Fairy-tale** - Tales about imaginary folk, such as elves, giants, witches, gnomes, and fairies.

**Folk tale** - a traditional story, in which ordinary people gain special insight, transforming them and enabling them to overcome extraordinary obstacles.

**Legend** - a story based on the life of a real person in which events are depicted larger than life, for example, The Stories of Robin Hood, or King Arthur and the Knights of the Round Table.

**Myth** - a story about gods and heroes, explaining the workings of nature and human nature.

**Parable** - a fictitious story told to point to a moral, for example, The Sower and the Seed from the New Testament of the Bible.

**Personal story** - a life story from your own or your family's experience.

**Religious story** - an historical and philosophical story based on a particular culture and religious persuasion.

**Tall tale** - an exaggerated story, often humorous.

**Traditional tale** - a story handed down orally from generation to generation.

(McKay & Dudley, Types of Story, 1996)

Note: This activity should take no more than 20 minutes.

(Worksheet is below. Page 4 in Participant's notes.)

## Worksheet 2:

### How do you choose a story to tell?

What does it say in the article about choosing a story to tell? .....

.....

.....

What would be your favourite type of story:

- for reading in a book? .....
- for listening to someone tell a story? .....
- for watching a story on TV? .....
- for reading aloud to children? .....
- for telling/performing a story? .....
- for making up / writing a story? .....

Are there any types of stories you do not like? (why?) .....

.....

Do you have a favourite story from childhood (or later!)? (Why?) .....

.....

.....

Could a story fit into more than one type, or be told in more than one style? (Example?) .....

.....

.....

Are there any types of stories missing from the list? .....

.....



## B. Creating a Story



The “Types of Stories” just mentioned, other than maybe “Personal Stories”, are stories that you could RE-tell, with you own creative touch.

Creating your very own original story is another matter.

***What should be considered when creating a story especially to be told to children, (as in performed aloud in front of a group)?***

Of course, it’s not just about the story itself – any story can be retold many different ways. The storyteller needs to practise adapting stories to his/her own style of telling.

*(In the next topic we will be looking at what can be added to a story in the telling of it.)*

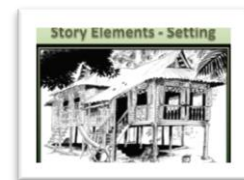
*(Page 5 in participant’s notes.)*

### **Worksheet 3: Elements of a Story:**

*Jot down some story ideas for each of these.*

#### **1. Setting**

You need to be able to firstly imagine and then describe the important aspects of the setting in a way that your listeners can imagine it. Where does your story take place?



**Geographical location** (which country, city, town ...) .....

**Environmental location** (mountains, lake, sea, river, plains, cityscape ...) .....

.....

**Climate / weather** .....

**Social** (family, school, workplace, friends ...) .....

.....

**Other factors** .....

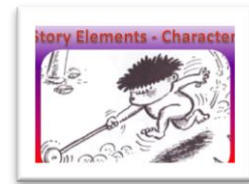
**5 senses** – sights/sounds/smells/tastes/feelings that should or could be mentioned .....

.....

.....

## 2. Character

It's good if your listeners can identify with the main character at least in some aspect. This character could be slightly larger than life – stronger, smarter, bigger/smaller.



Character's Name: .....

Age ..... Gender ..... Occupation .....

What does your character want? .....

.....

Why does he/she want this? .....

.....

What's standing in his/her way? .....

.....

What are the consequences of your character getting (or not getting) what he/she wants?

.....

## 3. Plot

What event (problem) propels your main character's life from ordinary to extraordinary and shakes up their everyday existence. It could be:



- a goal he/she will work to achieve
- a problem or conflict he/she has to resolve
- an obstacle to his/her goal

.....

What steps take him/her from the Problem (above) to the Resolution?

- .....
- .....
- .....

The Resolution (what you and/or the character wants to happen in the end) .....

.....

### **Make it Interesting - Add Obstacles**

Here are some ways to add excitement:

- Weather.
- Deadline.
- Your character's worst fear.
- Give your character what he wants, and then take it away again.
- Turn a friend into an enemy or just a nuisance.
- Add random incidents that are out of character's control.

### **Don't forget to think about "Point of View"**

*Choose one of three points of view from which to tell your story.*



- First Person – uses the 'I' voice, from the main character's point of view.
- Third Person Limited – uses 'he' or 'she' to follow the character through the story, telling only from their point of view.
- Omniscient Point of View – allows the author to be in several places at once and know what everyone is thinking.

## Stories from Personal Experiences

(Page 7 in participant's notes.)



Telling a story that is created from a personal experience can be very engaging for the listeners and even therapeutic for the teller. Of course the story still needs to have all the elements of a good story. In thinking of something personal to tell a story about, these questions from "Storytelling Tools for the Classroom" (Gere, 2012) provide a useful start.

- Have you ever been badly hurt?
- Have you ever been scared?
- Have you ever laughed so hard that you fell out of your chair?
- How did you learn to swim, or some other difficult skill?
- Did you ever play a practical joke? Have you ever had one played on you?
- Have you ever done something you are proud of, something heroic, something brave?
- Have you ever been to a dangerous area?
- What did you do when you were a kid? Where?
- Where did you hang out?
- When were you in a lot of trouble?
- Do you have stories about your brothers, sisters, weirdest relatives, or neighbours?
- Who are your best teachers, worst teachers, and best friends?
- Who do you think of when I say, "That person just drives me *nuts!*" Why?

### Worksheet 4:

Which of these sparks a story for you? Briefly, what happened?

.....

.....

.....

.....

.....

.....

Can you think of any other good questions?

.....

.....

.....

**Discuss.**

## 1. Preparing to Present a Story



Some people can feel quite nervous before storytelling for the first time, even to children. Naturally they want to do a really good job and leave an ongoing good impression!

Here are some steps to walk through before making that first presentation.

*Credit is given to Jeff Gere and his “Tell Well” system in for some of the steps provided here. (Gere, Storytelling Tools for the Classroom, 2012)*

### a) Getting Started – Visualisation

First we need to choose a story – as has been discussed in previous sections. We could think of a well-known folk-tale, or a story we have heard. We could choose a story we have read in a book. We could make up a story or tell a personal experience.

We need to KNOW the story really well. That does NOT mean memorise it as such. Only memorise the **sequence of events**.



And we need to be able to **visualise** it – the scenes, the characters, the actions. Visualise and be able to describe how each character moves and talks.

We need to use **imagination** to make the story real and complete.

*(Page 8 in participant’s notes.)*

## b) Mime



Most people find mime a little awkward and even difficult. But *this is a very important step* in preparing the story for telling. As Gere says: "Bad storytelling is often static and word- based. Children respond to physical movement and it enlivens the tales. Mime forces the storyteller to start learning scenes and to visualize the story."

***The facilitator should model how to mime a story first.***

The storyteller needs to become the character and mime the action of the scenes.

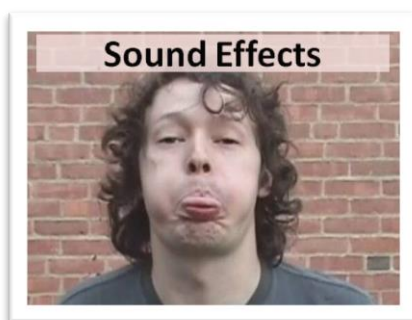
After a demonstration by the facilitator, participants should go to a private spot nearby to mime and once there they should close their eyes and explore the scenes in their story. Allocate a specific amount of time (10 minutes should be enough) and tell participants to return promptly.

### ***NOTE to facilitator***

*Participants may be quite comfortable to work in the course room as everyone is concentrating with their eyes closed. This would make it possible to ring a bell or give some other signal for them to return to their places.*

*(Page 8 in participant's notes.)*

## c) Sound Effects



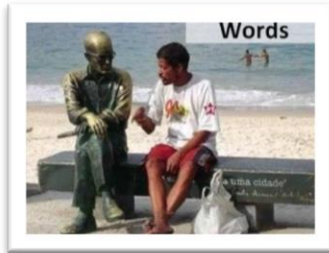
Hopefully by now no one is feeling embarrassed!

We want to add sound effects to the mime. NOT WORDS. And we don't want the whole story to be a series of noises! Select the parts of the story, the actions, that would benefit from having sound effects added.

***The facilitator should first model making sound effects.***

Encourage participants to experiment with various sound effects. People will find some sounds more difficult than others. Work in groups to discuss the most suitable and recognisable sound effects to make. (Page 9 in participant's notes.)

#### d) Words



The important thing is not to lose the actions and sounds when we add the words.

***Facilitator should model this step.***

***Tell part of a story using actions, sound effects and words as well.***

#### Putting it all together

The participants should now work in pairs, telling each other their stories using actions, sound effects and words. The listener needs to give feedback. Facilitator should monitor.

#### Listener Feedback

The partner needs to ask questions about parts that are difficult to visualise, if it's not clear who is speaking or what is happening.

Participants should each pair up with another partner and try again.

(Page 9 in participant's notes.)

## 2. Telling the Story



Of course the following aspects of storytelling also need some practice, but by now everyone is beginning to feel the need to get on with telling the story.

### a) Character Voices, Faces, and Placement



We have already practised movements and sound effects, and had listener feedback to tell whether it was obvious who was doing what in the story.

Dialogue can really liven up a story, but when telling the story, it becomes tiresome for the narrator to be saying "Now the cat says ... and then the mouse says ... and then the cat says ..."

So to keep the audience informed about who is talking when, the storyteller needs to keep the characters clear in space and in relation to one another. Each character should have a position where the teller stands/sits/bends down, and each character should have specific facial expressions, gestures, and voice quality – pitch, gruffness, vocab range etc.

***Facilitator should demonstrate this with a segment of story.***

Participants consider a story with a couple of characters, and plan how to depict each one.

Discuss choices with their group / partner and if necessary adapt ideas.

*(Worksheet below. Page 10 in participant's notes.)*



## Worksheet 5:

Consider your story, think of two characters and jot notes about how you could depict each one.

Character 1: Name .....

Age / physical characteristics .....

Position on stage during story (left / right etc.) .....

Facial expression .....

Gestures .....

Voice and language .....

Character 2: Name .....

Age / physical characteristics .....

Position on stage during story (left / right etc.) .....

Facial expression .....

Gestures .....

Voice and language .....

**Demonstrate to a partner and discuss and if necessary adapt ideas.**

## b) Eye contact



The storyteller must make eye contact with the audience. This will 'hook' them and keep them listening. They will each know that the storyteller is talking directly to them.

It's a two-way street. The audience will feel the storyteller's energy, and the storyteller will be energised as he feels the connection.

***Facilitator should demonstrate this, and draw attention to the eye contact.***

Give several participants an opportunity to tell part of a story to the whole group and attempt to maintain eye contact.

## c) Five senses



Storytellers are often reminded to "Show, don't tell". The audience should be made aware of how things look and feel, including colours, smells, tastes, and textures.

"Showing" may involve using a literary device such as a simile or metaphor rather than straight-out description. Storytellers endeavour to paint a picture with words.

Similes, Metaphors, and Onomatopoeia all make nice additions, but keep it simple.

A good story will have three to five sensory descriptions.

***Facilitator should model a short colourful descriptive passage.***

Participants take notes about adding descriptive passages to their storytelling and discuss it with their group.

*(Worksheet below. Page 11 in participant's notes.)*

## Worksheet 6:

Consider three to five points in your story where you could insert a short, colourful description. Plan how you will “show” the audience.

1. Description of .....

.....

Description: .....

.....

.....

.....

.....

2. Description of .....

.....

Description: .....

.....

.....

.....

.....

3. Description of .....

.....

Description: .....

.....

.....

.....

.....

### 3. Project

*(Page 12 in participant's notes)*

**Participants have a homework task:**

Prepare a story.

Practice your story (in front of a mirror).

Tell your story to a group of classmates.

Listen to feedback and make adaptations.

Tell your story to a group of children.

Report back to [ruth.wickham@gmail.com](mailto:ruth.wickham@gmail.com) .



If you chose to tell an original story, are you willing to have it included on <http://storiesformalaysiankids.weebly.com> for others to enjoy?

## Evaluation

Ask participants to fill in and hand in the evaluation form.

### Participants Workshop Evaluation

Name *(optional)* ..... Date .....

Lecturer / Teacher / Trainee .....

	Strongly agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
I believe that Storytelling is very important for good teaching. <i>(optional comment)</i>				
I now have the skills I need to be an effective storyteller. <i>(optional comment)</i>				
I will definitely tell lots of stories to my students. <i>(optional comment)</i>				
Telling stories makes me very nervous. <i>(optional comment)</i>				
I think I can make up good stories to tell. <i>(optional comment)</i>				
I am only going to read stories out of books. <i>(optional comment)</i>				
Other comment				

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