

The Art of Storytelling

Intro to Performing Arts

Adapted from: <http://eldrbarry.net/roos/eest.htm>

The Art of Storytelling

Characteristics of a good story:

- ❖ A single theme, clearly defined
- ❖ A well developed plot
- ❖ Style: vivid word pictures, pleasing sounds and rhythm
- ❖ Characterization
- ❖ Faithful to source
- ❖ Dramatic appeal
- ❖ Appropriateness to listeners

Examples of Artful Storytelling

The Rainbow Fish

Harry the Dirty Dog

Me and My Cat

The Art of Storytelling: Audience

Adapting to our audiences:

- ❖ The audience has a very important role in storytelling
- ❖ Storytelling has become more difficult. Attention spans are shorter and more demanding, more sophisticated, yet less able to independently imagine or visualize.



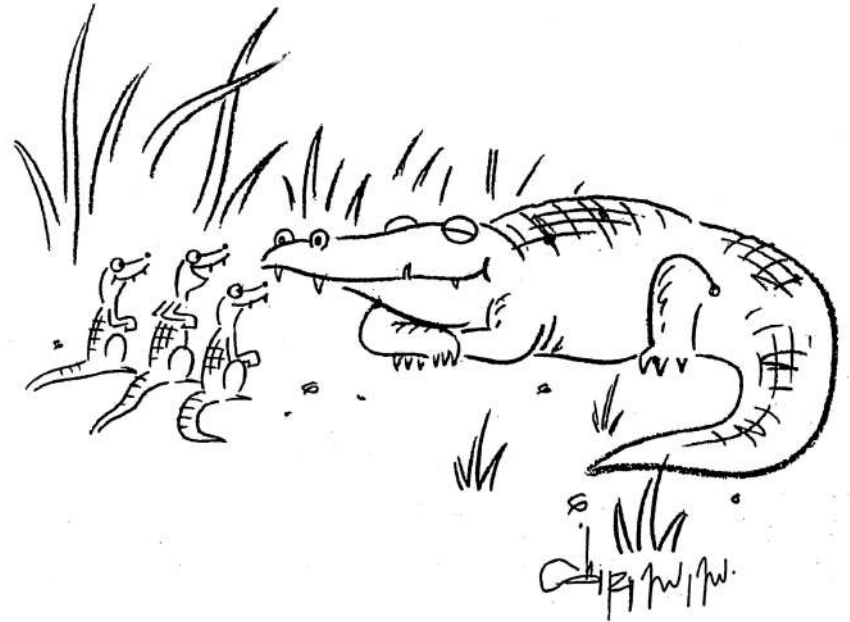
The Art of Storytelling: Audience

- ❖ **Take the story as close to them as you can.**
- ❖ **Keep it brief and simple-** especially for younger children - pare down to the heart of the story.
- ❖ **Stimulate their senses** so they feel, smell, touch and listen and see vivid pictures.
- ❖ **Describe the characters and settings,** and help them sympathize with the character's feelings.
- ❖ **Aim your story at the younger ones** when telling to a audience of mixed ages!

The Art of Storytelling: Preparation

Preparation:

Once you settle on a story, you will want to spend plenty of time with it. It will take a considerable period of time and a number of tellings before a new story becomes your own.



"Tell us again, Grandpa, about the time you almost had Tarzan for lunch."

The Art of Storytelling: Preparation

- ❖ **Read the story several times**, first for pleasure, then with concentration.
- ❖ **Analyze its appeal**, the word pictures you want your listeners to see, and the mood you wish to create.
- ❖ **Research its background and cultural meanings.**
- ❖ **Live with your story** until the characters and setting become as real to you as people and places you know.
- ❖ **Visualize it!** Imagine sounds, tastes, scents, colors. Only when you see the story vividly yourself can you make your audience see it!

The Art of Storytelling: Preparation

Learn the story as a whole rather than in fragments.

❖ **Map out the story line:**

- The Beginning
- The Body
- The Turning Point, or Climax
- The Resolution



❖ **Absorb the style of the story:** learn the characteristic phrases which recur throughout the story.

- Observe the sentence structure, phrases, unusual words and expressions.

The Art of Storytelling: Delivery Elements

Delivery elements:

- ❖ **Sincerity and whole heartedness** (Be earnest!),
- ❖ **Enthusiasm** (This does not mean artificial or noisy excitement),
- ❖ **Animation** (in your gestures, voice, facial expressions)

Stories are more interesting when there is animation and variety in the voice of the teller!



The Art of Storytelling: Delivery

Particular Oral Storytelling Skills:

A Storyteller's skills include:

- ❖ emphasis
- ❖ repetition
- ❖ transition
- ❖ pause
- ❖ proportion.



Particular Oral Storytelling Skills:

- ❖ **Dialog** should make use of different voices for different characters and using the **Storytelling "V"** - where you will shift your facing (or posture) as the dialog switches from character to character.
- ❖ **Use your voice** to create the atmosphere or tension as the story progresses.
- ❖ **Use gestures and facial expressions** add much to the visualization of the story. Be sure they are appropriate and natural. Practice them!

Particular Oral Storytelling Skills:

- ❖ **Pacing** involves both the volume and rate at which you speak, and the progression of the action in the story. Dialog slows a story's pace down, while narrating action speeds it up.
- ❖ **Repetition** and **Exaggeration** have always been basic elements of storytelling.
- ❖ Experience will hone these skills, and when - and how - to use them most effectively.

The Art of Storytelling: Beginnings

Beginning a story:

- ❖ Storytelling is best done in a relaxed atmosphere free of distractions.
- ❖ The audience ought to be comfortable and close.
- ❖ The teller needs to give careful attention to the setting before hand
Props, costumes, or some getting acquainted patter may also help in getting and keeping attention and creating a mood.

The Art of Storytelling: Beginnings

Storytelling traditionally begins with a "Once upon a time..." opening, and then a storyteller's silent pause to gather his or her thoughts.

- ❖ The traditional openings were "rituals" that served as a signal that the teller was suspending "time and space" as we know it and transporting the audience to a world of imagination and play.
- ❖ They identified the teller and established the audience's commitment to accept for the moment that imaginary world and its "rules". Similar "rituals" also signal the end of the story and their return to reality.



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Some attention keepers:

Many factors affect the attention of your listeners. A storyteller always needs to be sensitive to his audience and may need to regain their attention before continuing.

- ❖ **Involvement or participation.** Use volunteers from the audience in your story. Or have the audience participate in hand motions or making sound effects. Or responding with "chants" or refrains
- ❖ **A distinct change** in your pace, voice, or mood.
- ❖ **An unusual or unexpected twist** in the narration.
- ❖ **Throw-away lines or asides** work well as does **comic relief**.

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Finally...and most importantly:

- ❖ The more you practice- the more skilled you will become. Don't be afraid to try different methods.
- ❖ Be creative.
- ❖ Learn from your experiences.
- ❖ Expect to flop, the best of us do.
- ❖ Don't be overly self- conscious.
- ❖ Have fun and share the joy of story!

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....as told by Andrew Stanton, the writer of “Toy Story” & “Wall-E”

