



# IT'S ALL ABOUT STORY: INCORPORATING STORY INTO YOUR TEACHING AND PROFESSIONAL COMMUNICATIONS

Social Science Librarians Boot Camp 2019

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There have been great societies that did not use the wheel, but there have been no societies that did not tell stories.

Ursula K. Le Guin

From *The Language of the Night: Essays on Fantasy and Science Fiction*, 1979.



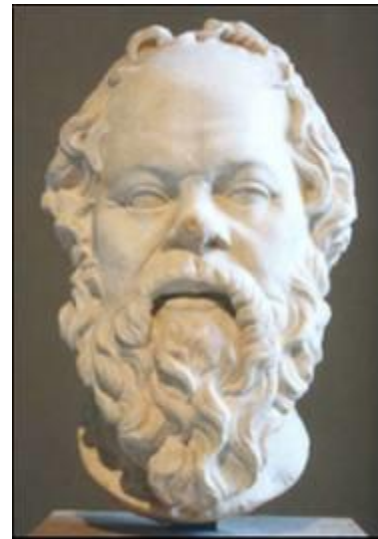
## TODAY WE WILL:

- Talk about the oral tradition and its roots
- Talk about other popular forms of storytelling
- Hear what other people have to say about storytelling
- Do some exercises to ready you for storytelling
- Give some tips for how to get started



# ORAL TRADITION AS OLD AS ...

- History as story
- Epic tales and mythologies
- Oral culture and Memory



# THE PSYCHOLOGY OF STORY

- Storytelling is a universal human trait across cultures and throughout history
- Empathy (theory of mind) necessary to understand stories
- Humans tend to create stories even when presented with animated inanimate objects without an actual storyline
- There is some evidence that stories are more engaging if they have a “story structure”



The King died, and then the Queen died. (Plot)

The King died. Then the Queen died of a broken heart. (Story)



# STORYTELLING

- Encourages listening skills
- Encourages imagination
- Helps develop language skills



# PURPOSE OF STORYTELLING

- Helps in understanding of human behavior
- Transmits culture and helps keep cultural heritage alive
- Stories help us remember
- Can simply be very entertaining





# TYPES OF STORIES

- Oral tradition
  - Folktales
  - Personal stories
- Literature
- Stage, television, film
- Digital storytelling



# TIME FOR A STORY AND AN EXERCISE



# CHEAT SHEET – BREAK DOWN THE STORY'S STRUCTURE

- Stonecutter
- Rich man
- Sun
- Cloud
- Wind
- Mountain
- Stonecutter



# MOST IMPORTANT THING (MIT)—DOUG LIPMAN

- After you have both told the story back to each other, ask each other “What about the story is the most important thing to you?”



# WHAT IS A STORY — KENDALL HAVEN AND MARYGAY DUCEY

1. Character/Character traits
2. Intent/Goal
3. Conflicts and Problems
4. Struggles (Plot)
5. Details



- Character/character traits

- All stories are about characters Things happen to characters. Folktales often use stock characters to “shortcut” character traits. “She was a good as she was beautiful” for instance. Caveat about stories from other cultures: it is ok to tell them, but do a bit of research to make sure you understand the context of archetypal characters, such as tricksters

- Intent/goal

- Characters have goals. While the goals may change throughout the story, they do not do things aimlessly. Goals are important to them.



- **Conflicts and problems**
  - Characters go through conflicts and problems to get them to their goals. This provides tension in the story and makes the listener involved.
- **Struggles**
  - Haven and Ducey describe struggles as the plot--those actions the characters take to overcome obstacles and achieve their goals.
- **Details**
  - A few details in oral stories can make stories more vivid and interesting. However, being overdetailed in oral storytelling can kill the story. Oral stories cannot support as much detail as a written narrative might.



# RULE OF FIVE

1. Introduction: Setting and place--who, what, when, where
2. Initial incident, problem, or conflict.
3. Plot development: Rising action and logical sequence of events
4. Climax: High point of interest
5. Conclusion: Possible solution to problem or conflict (tie up loose ends quick!)





# LEARNING AND TELLING STORIES

- No two people learn stories in the same way.



# TIPS FOR STORYTELLING: SELECTING A STORY

- Choose a story that you like.
- Not every book can be used to tell a story. Select stories that have a beginning, middle, and an end.
- Folktales, myths, legends, hero tales, humorous stories, and realistic stories are especially suitable for storytelling.
- Repetition, suspense, pleasing word sounds, and vivid action are positive qualities for story selections



## LEARNING THE STORY: FIRST STEPS

- Identify the dominant emotional mood
- What is the theme? What does the story say?
- Sum up the story in a phrase or a sentence
- The story should carry the message or theme through plot or characters, not through explanations or moralizing



# TIPS FOR STORYTELLING: LEARNING THE STORY

- Read the story several times and try to “picture” the events and “hear” the voices of the characters.
- Avoid memorization of the entire story, but you may want to memorize repetitive, interesting or beautiful phrasing to retain the flavor of the original story.
- The beginning and end are particularly important so know them well.
- Imagine your audience and practice telling the story aloud several times.



# HOW TO SHAPE PERSONAL STORIES

- Focus on a person, place, event, or thing.
- Use the rule of five: Introduction, initial conflict or crisis, rising action, climax, conclusion
- Can concentrate on one aspect: plot, character, place, atmosphere
- Endings are even more important in personal stories
- Plan out the beginning and end phrases, map out the events carefully



# EXERCISE: PERSONAL STORY

- Choose one of the following:
  - A favorite piece of clothing
  - A favorite piece of furniture
  - Think about how you might tell a story about one of these things: how you obtained it, what you use it for, how it makes you feel
- A quick example from Melanie
- Think about this for five or six minutes
- Tell your story to your partner



# TIPS FOR STORYTELLING: TELLING STORIES TO AN AUDIENCE

- Use your natural voice.
- Speak loud enough to be heard easily.
- Articulate clearly.
- Use pauses and changes of pace and pitch to create moods.
- Use gestures when appropriate, but avoid movement that is unrelated to the story.
- Keep your face alive and expressive
- Subordinate yourself to the story. **You are the instrument; the story is the thing.**



# PREPARATION

- Get the audience settled. Do not begin until they are ready.
- Announce the name and source of the story
- Begin when you are ready and not before
- Make a bridge for the audience between the ordinary world and the story world by the way you get into the story
- Take your energy level up a notch
- Cure for dry mouth: gently (!!!) Bite your tongue or clench your teeth





# TIMING

- Pauses can add drama and meaning
- Pause before any change of idea
- Slight pause before any significant word
- Emphasize words that carry special meaning or that are unusual



# GESTURES



- Try not to either hold yourself stiffly or add gestures simply to add them
- Let the story move your body naturally
- Avoid “drawing pictures” while you tell the story
- The key to gestures is control and having a definite ending to them
- Do what feels right for you



# ENDING

- Have a definite conclusion so the audience knows the story is over
- After the story is done, let things settle naturally before you leave the “stage”



# STORYTELLING ETIQUETTE

1. Stories are to share and tell. While we encourage the art of sharing stories, we also want to encourage respect in our community.
2. You deserve respect. Respect other tellers.
3. A storyteller's personal, family and original stories are her/his copyrighted property. It is unethical and illegal to tell another person's original, personal, and family stories without permission of the author/storyteller.
4. Folklore and folktales are owned by the folk, but a specific version of a tale told by an individual teller or found in a collection is that teller's or author's copyrighted property. If you like a folktale a storyteller has told ask that teller for a reference of where it can be found. Research the story by finding other versions, and then tell it you own way.
5. Published literary tales and poetry are copyrighted material. They may be told at informal story swaps, but when you tell another's story in a paid professional setting, you need to request the author's/publisher's permission. You need to research copyright law.
6. When telling anywhere it is common courtesy to credit the source of your story.
7. Pass stories, share stories, and encourage respect within the storytelling community.

*Compiled by Barbara Griffin, Olga Loya, Sandra MacLees, Nancy Schimmel, Harlynn Geisler, and Kathleen Zundell. July, 1993.*



# STEINBECK ON STORY



If a story is not about the hearer, he will not listen. And here I make a rule—a great and interesting story is about everyone or it will not last.

— *John Steinbeck* —

AZ QUOTES



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