

Leeny Del Seamonds

Master Story Performer™

TEACHER GUIDE

WHAT IS STORYTELLING?

Storytelling is the ancient art of relating a tale to one or more listeners through voice, movement and gesture. The storyteller looks into the eyes of the audience and **together** they tell the tale, bringing to life the written word. Storytelling stimulates the imagination through vivid word pictures and physical expression without the aid of electronic media. Both teller and listeners find a reflection of themselves in the stories, as they identify with the story characters' emotions, values, challenges and triumphs.

Storytelling enhances reading, writing, listening and interpretive skills and helps to augment the school language arts curricula through the integrated study of reading and storytelling. In addition, storytelling transports the listener to foreign places and into multicultural situations which foster understanding and appreciation of human and cultural diversity.

Storytelling is the best vehicle for passing on factual information to students. Historical figures, social studies, geography and world events linger in listeners' minds when communicated in story form. Any factual topic can be incorporated into story form and made more memorable if the listener takes the story to heart. The storytelling experience can be profound and personal and is unsurpassed as a tool for learning about ourselves, about the ever-increasing information available to us, and about the thoughts and feelings of others and ourselves. Together, let's live the story!

I. BEFORE THE PROGRAM

Although it is not necessary to prepare students for a performance by Leeny, the following may be helpful in getting students excited about storytelling.

QUESTIONS FOR DISCUSSION:

1. Who tells you stories in **your** life? Are there any people you know who tell or read you stories? Have **you** ever told a story?
2. What **happens** in a story? (You learn about something that happens to someone or something.)
3. What is **different** about learning a story from a person, instead of from reading, watching TV, or listening to recordings?
4. How is storytelling **different** from watching a movie or play? Are the words always spoken the same way in a play or movie? (Yes, but in storytelling, the teller can change the way that the story is told each and every time it is told. The stories are not memorized.)
5. When you listen to a story, your imagination helps you "**paint pictures**" in your mind. How do you get clues to help you with the pictures? Do we all see, hear, and feel the same things when we hear an oral story?

ACTIVITY: *Sharpening Our Listening Skills*

You and your students can practice excellent listening skills. We are surrounded by a variety of sounds in our daily lives—from the simple sounds of our own heart beating and breathing, or muffled voices heard in the next room, or the ticking of the clock, or the sound of traffic outside, to the bigger sounds of children playing in the playground, or a whistle being blown, or the sound of the school bell or someone speaking over the P.A. system.

First, have the students take two deep breaths for relaxation. Then ask everyone to sit perfectly still, with their eyes closed. Counting on their fingers and thumbs, they are to count up to ten sounds they hear in the classroom and outside. When they have counted ten sounds, students put their heads down on the desks to wait until everyone is finished. When the teacher says “STOP” or “HEADS UP,” teacher and students can make a list of the various sounds everyone heard. Have the children describe the types of sounds they heard. Was it a passing car, truck, or bus? Was the barking dog a large German shepherd or did it sound more like a small Terrier? What were the different voices they heard—adults or children? Could their voices be recognized and identified?

ACTIVITY: *Imagination Games (K to Grade 4)*

1. Have students sit with their eyes closed. Ask them to imagine:
 - The seashore in winter.
 - The seashore in summer.
 - What their yard or favorite park looks like in the spring (or autumn).
 - What the house in “Goldilocks and the Three Bears” or “The Three Little Pigs” looks like.
 - How did Cinderella look before and after the ball?
 - What did the Beast from “Beauty and the Beast” look like (before and after the spell)?After each question, let the students talk about what they pictured in their minds.
2. Try reading or telling a familiar story, but leave off the ending. Have students complete the story, creating different endings.
3. Read or tell an entire story. Have the class list all the characters in that story. Discuss what could have happened to them after the story ended. New stories can be created.

ACTIVITY: *Group Tale (Grade 3+)*

You and your class can develop a group story. Sitting in a large circle, start a story by holding an object (a vase, chalkboard eraser, pencil box, sneaker, necklace, etc.) and incorporate that object into the story. Then pass the object on to a student for him/her to add to (or alter) the story. As the object is passed around the circle, each student builds the story about the object. The story can be realistic or a fantasy. Let your imaginations run wild!

II. AFTER THE PROGRAM

Here are some suggested activities designed to keep students excited about storytelling.

ACTIVITY: Draw the Scenes (Grades K-3)

This is the perfect opportunity for students to transfer onto paper their **visual** images of their favorite parts in one of the stories they heard. Have each student illustrate his/her favorite moment or scene from one of the stories Leeny performed. To add practice in sequencing, line up the drawings and ask, “Which scene came first in the story?”; “What scene came next?”; “Are any scenes missing?”

ACTIVITY: Writing the Emotions (Grades 3+)

Review one of Leeny’s stories with students for its **emotional** content. What are the important feelings in the story? List parts of the story in which a specific emotion came up. What situations evoked those feelings? How did the character(s) express that feeling? Did any of the characters change in any way during the story? Were there **other** stories Leeny told which expressed that emotion (or similar feelings)? Have students write a paragraph or two describing their feelings about the story or a particular scene.

ACTIVITY: Improvisation/Pantomime

The teacher reads one of the following descriptions and students take turns acting it out in pantomime:

“The old, sickly King slowly opened the large wooden door, and crossed the threshold into a crowded gathering. With all of his strength, he smiled at the people and waved back to them.”

“The beautiful young maiden finished combing her long, red hair and walked through the silk curtains onto the balcony. She scanned the courtyard searching for the young man who left her the golden comb.”

“Through the tall weeds leading to the gate, the mysterious, evil troll/witch carefully carried the purple bottle containing the poison. Suddenly, he/she stumbled on a large rock, and fell to the ground!”

“A young boy/girl, holding a pouch of priceless jewels, pushed open the cottage door to search for his/her mother. When s/he found her, s/he opened the pouch and showed her the valuable reward inside.”

VARIATION: These descriptions may be repeated using dialogue. Students can improvise words and dialogue which they think these characters might say. What type of voice would each character have? High-pitched or low-pitched? Squeaky or gravelly? Kind and compassionate or stern and angry? Patient or anxious? Does this voice match the movements and facial expressions of the character being portrayed?

* ENJOY! *