

Story Weavers

A Storytelling Showcase for Grades 3 - 6

Teacher Resource Packet

Each school is encouraged to have a school storytelling event or to provide grade level opportunities for students to experience the art of storytelling.



Schools can choose to send storytellers to the spring district event, Story Weavers.

Sponsored by the Gifted & Talented Department
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Story Weavers is designed to engage students in the enjoyable pursuit of literature and nurtures the preservation of the oral tradition of storytelling.

Students will:

- Develop an appreciation for the art of storytelling
- Develop presentation skills in telling stories
- Develop individual confidence in ability to use oral language

Guidelines:

1. Stories must be told from memory and not read aloud.
2. Stories may be told individually or two people may tell a story in tandem.
(No groups larger than two will be accepted in the district festival.)
3. Stories should be 3-5 minutes long.
4. No props or costumes.
5. The story you tell **must** be retelling of a published folk tale, fairy tale, myth, legend, fable or tall tale.
 - However, students may put their own twist and/or interpretation on the known story.
6. The Story should have a recognizable beginning, middle and end, along with supporting details.
7. The storyteller should keep the content appropriate for elementary school (no extreme violence, no extreme weaponry, etc.).

Skills developed in storytelling connect to the Speaking and Listening Standards in the English Language Arts of the [Utah Core Curriculum](#).



Definitions of Traditional Tales

Fable: A narration intended to enforce some universal truth or precept especially one in which animals and even inanimate objects talk and act as human beings.

Fairy Tale: A narrative containing supernatural or improbable events, scenes or personages and often having a whimsical, satirical, or moralistic character.

Folktale: A tale circulated by word of mouth among the common people, especially a tale characteristically anonymous, timeless, and placeless.

Legend: A story coming down from the past popularly regarded as historical although not entirely verifiable.

Myth: A story that is usually of unknown origin, and at least partly traditional, that ostensibly relates historical events usually of such character as to explain some practice, belief, institution or natural phenomena that is especially associated with religious rites and beliefs.

Tall Tale: A story that claims to explain the reason for some natural phenomenon, or sometimes illustrates how skilled/intelligent/powerful the subject of the tale was. In either case, the tall tale is fictional and usually obviously so. It can, however, be based on a real figure in history.



Evaluation Criteria

The information below gives a description of the evaluation items that appear on the Jordan District Evaluation Form for the district festival.

Set Up – Engaging Intro

- Takes the stage with confidence.
- Captures the attention of the audience.
- Delivers name and story clearly.
- Has thought about the story enough to give it a clear concise introduction.

Poise

- Teller likes the tale.
- Nerves do not affect the teller or telling.
- Teller recovers from trouble that may arise.
- Has a natural manner as the story is delivered.

Enunciation

- Can understand the teller.
- Volume is up and teller can be heard.
- Teller's voice is pleasant and easy to listen to.
- Voice has clarity; words are enunciated and not mushy.

Voice Expression

- Voice is used to bring interest into the story.
- Voice is not monotone.
- Uses pitch and pacing to vary the story.
- If different voices and/or dialects are used, they were consistent and done well.

Eye Contact

- Looks naturally at the entire audience.
- Makes eye contact with people from the middle, front, back and both sides.

Facial Expression

- Uses entire face as a nice complement to the telling.
- Face is engaged and not detached from the story.
- Eyes, mouth, muscles are tools.
- Face adds to, does not distract from the telling.
- Face adds effortless additions to the character.

Body Language

- Body is used to reflect physicality of character.
- Body is relaxed and part of the story.
- Teller uses body to reflect the emotion or character.
- Physical habits do not disturb the story.

Appropriate Gestures

- Remember, “Less is more!” Not “The More the Merrier.”
Teller does not “act out” the story.
- Gestures fit the story and help interpret characters or setting.
- Teller’s gestures help tell and move the story along.
- Telling is free of distracting or nervous action.

Pacing

- Teller varies levels with the speed of the tale. Fast, slow, and in between.
- Regulates tempo to hold and include audience in the tale.
- Teller uses dramatic pause effectively.
- Teller waits for audience response; laughter, sighs, gasp, reaction.

Enthusiasm and Connection

- Teller likes the story.
- Teller is mentally engaged and makes connections with the tale.
- Has a sparkle behind the eyes and shows spirit in the telling.
- Teller is part of the story. Has a mental picture of where they are in the story.

Satisfying Ending

- Teller brought the audience back from the journey letting them off appropriately.
- There was a final resolution to the plot, a denouement.
- Storyteller allowed the ending moments of appreciation and did not rush off the stage.
- Storyteller exits with confidence.

Familiarity with Story

- Teller can play with the story on the spot if needed.
- Teller has told this story so many times it is a natural part of them.
- Teller does not stumble over words.
- Teller does not need to look up or into “mind’s eye” to remember story.

Story Flow

- Story was not made up on the spot.
- Story ideas are combined in a thoughtful way.
- Teller adds a twist to a well-known tale, and it works.
- Story is well crafted and clever.

Is the Telling Unique?

- Is it an original choice?
- Does the length of the story fit the storyteller?
- Is the story appropriate for school-age listeners?
- Were instructions followed if a specific genre or theme was assigned?

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The Timpanogos Storytelling Festival ©
Youth Tells, Nanette Watts ©*

Youth Storytelling Showcase – Evaluation Form

Name: _____ Grade: _____

Story Title: _____

Length: _____ Genre: _____

Delivery	Needs Work	Fair	Good	Great
Set up – Engaging Intro	1	2	3	4
Poise	1	2	3	4
Enunciation	1	2	3	4
Voice Expression	1	2	3	4
Eye Contact	1	2	3	4
Facial Expression	1	2	3	4
Body Language	1	2	3	4
Appropriate Gestures	1	2	3	4
Pacing	1	2	3	4
Enthusiasm & Connection	1	2	3	4
Satisfying Ending	1	2	3	4
Story:				
Familiarity with Story	1	2	3	4
Story Flow	1	2	3	4
Unique Telling	1	2	3	4
Appropriate for Age	1	2	3	4
3-5 Minute Timing Limit	1	2	3	4
Totals:				

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Comments:

Performing Tips

Grab the Audience's Attention:

- You must stand out from the rest of the crowd.
- Introduce the story with a short sentence or intro.

Poise:

- Stand with feet shoulder width apart with slightly bent knees.
- Practice in the mirror or to a video camera.

Vocal Clarity:

- Take out the slag, e.g.: gets, comes, goes, like, etc.
- Speak slow enough for everyone to understand you.
- Make sure your words are not "mushy."

Voice Expression:

- Watch the tempo. Slow Down!
- Make repetitious parts different. Practice emphasizing a different word each time you say a repeated sentence. Have enthusiasm or a reason to say something the same exact way every time.

Eye Contact:

- Tell to the whole audience: both sides, front and back, middle.
- Play with and to the audience.

Body Language:

- Don't grab body, sleeves, pant legs, or twirl jewelry, unless it is for a specific character. Know what your hands and feet are doing.
- Don't stand right next to furniture in the room or up against the wall. Make sure you are comfortable out in the open.

Appropriate Gestures:

- Put your body naturally into the story.
- Too many gestures get in the way of the audience listening to you.

Familiarity With the Story:

- Watch for a good set-up. If you are familiar with your story, you will be able to play with it.
- Big pauses or looking at the ceiling lets the audience know you are not ready.

Satisfying Ending:

- Make sure the story has a handle on it. We want to be able to pick it up and take it home with us.
- Make your voice inflection go up instead of down. End with energy.

Helpful Guidelines

Where do I find/select a story?

Search for a story that you are eager to learn. Don't waste time on material that does not inspire you. You can find stories in favorite books, magazines, newspapers, at the library, on the internet, or go to a storyteller.

Where do I begin?

- Become very familiar with your story. You want to know the repetitious lines, but you don't want it to sound memorized.
- Develop story memory by chunking the events. Story memory does not mean learning the story word for word, sentence for sentence. It means developing an understanding of story structure.
- Visualize the scenes: Who are the people in each scene? What do they look like? How do they talk, move, and stand?
- Make a storyboard/story map of your story.
- Practice alone in your room or video yourself telling a story.
- Practice your story out loud as much as possible. Get practice telling your story in front of others.
- Speak clearly and speak up. Be careful not to bring the end of a sentence or line down. Think "bring-up."
- If there is only narration in the story, change some of it into dialogue to make the story more exciting.
- Give characters different voice or dialects. You can also use your body differently with characters.
- Use body language and appropriate gestures. "Less is more."
- Picture what is happening in your mind as you tell. If you can visualize it your audience will be able to see it too.
- Practice your story in front of the classroom or family members. Make sure you are not just looking at one person.
- Interpret even the narrative parts with appropriate emotions or moods of happiness, sadness, and apprehension, whatever fits. Be careful not to play one emotion.
- Remember to breath, have fun. Your audience wants you to be great!

Activities to Promote & Foster Storytelling in the Classroom

- Have students tell a story round robin style.
- Bring in a special storytelling chair and have the students decorate it.
- Have students create and tell, "Fractured Fairy Tales" (characters meeting from different folk tales or the story from another point of view).
- Tell most of an unfamiliar story and have students provide the ending.
- Have students create a map of their home or neighborhood. Use the map/places as story starters.
- Find and tell family stories.
- Have students lie on their backs and close their eyes, or put their heads down on their desks with eyes closed. Give them some visualization exercises with familiar stories.
- Use familiar rhymes to establish a relaxed atmosphere. (Who stole the cookies from the cookie jar)?
- Divide the class into two groups. Give one group three or four words from a story or joke that you know. One group leaves the room and is given no more than 10 minutes to develop a story around the words. When the group returns, each person has to tell the story to a person from the group that was sent out. It is interesting to finish this activity by listening to the different interpretations of the story.
- Have all children make simple puppets out of plastic flyswatter, and have students create a story surrounding their character. You have a happy face on one side and a sad face on the other side and create an unfortunate/fortunate event based on the book by Remy Charlip called "Fortunately." As you tell the story, the children show the corresponding face according to the fortunate or unfortunate event.
- Retell a story as a Readers' Theater piece.
- Have students act out, walk and talk, a character from their story.
- Read folk tales from a specific area or country.
- Read different versions of the same story.
- Put "Story-Starters" in a hat. Students draw them out and use to create their own stories.

- Dramatize a folk tale.
- Have students bring a natural object such as an interesting stone, flower, leaf or bird's nest. Then, in turn, each show the object and tell a story.
- Create a class hero and have the students create adventures from their own imagination.
- Create a new adventure for a favorite character or add a new character to a story.
- Show students five items to develop a story. Example might be a fishing hook, a coconut, a braided mat, a stone, and an egg.
- Bring puppets into the classroom or have the student create their own.
- Have students recite some tongue twisters.
- Call out an emotion, have the students use their whole face to look: surprised, mad, sad, silly, scared, disappointed, thankful, excited, bored, shy, frustrated, and happy.
- Read a few comic strips aloud and try to play with vocal choices to match the characters and their moods.
- Play the "Add On" game. One person begins the story. Each person in turn adds a sentence to the story.
- Have students bring in family heirlooms and then write stories to go with those pieces.
- The Story Web: Everyone sits in a circle. The first person holds a ball of yarn and begins telling a story by contributing several sentences (a paragraph or so). Then holding on to the end of the yarn, he/she passes the ball to someone across the circle whose turn it is to contribute the next paragraph. That student in turn passes the ball to the next teller. Continue until a complete story is told and everyone is holding one or more parts of the yarn, forming a web that connects the storytellers to each other. Next, try to untangle the web by telling another story in reverse order so that the yarn is passed back eventually to the first speaker.
- Gibberish Stories: Put the group in pairs. Each pair will consist of a storyteller and an interpreter. The storyteller must tell a story in gibberish, as if he/she were speaking a foreign language. E.g.: Perry Moppins instead of Mary Poppins. The interpreter must then translate the story for the rest of the group. Make sure the storyteller understands that there is no "right" version of the story. The interpreter gets to make up the story as it goes along. This activity is wonderful for demonstrating how much storytelling depends on elements other than language. For example, gesture, intonation, volume, facial expressions and so give clues about what the gibberish story might actually be about.

- Tableaus: Children can create tableaus of still photographs of scenes from a story as it is being told. Emphasize that the tableaus are non-verbal, frozen states.
- Tell “whoppers” or tall tales. Who can tell the wildest tale? This is especially useful for primary children who may be reluctant tellers.
- Have students tell creation stories: Why the bear has a short tail? Why the hare is always running? Etc.
- Copy a folktale from a printed anthology and cut it up into sections or scenes. Paste each section on a separate page. Give out the sheets to students who each prepare to retell their small piece of the whole story. Assemble the story by having each student retell his or her part in the plot's sequence. Have students keep the flow going as the story is told so that the performance moves along as though one person were telling it. Do a second round by giving students different sections to retell. Notice how differently students retell the same sections!
- A class selects a classical painting. Looking at the painting for inspiration, the class constructs the first few sentences of a tale through group discussion and suggestion. The paragraph is then sent on to another class, which reads the first paragraph and adds on another. The process is repeated including as many classes as possible until the tale seems finished. All the classes then gather to hear the result of their group effort read out loud and to see the painting that inspired the story.
- Write down different characters on strips of paper. Have students draw the strips and use the voice and body language of that character. Example, an old woman, a baby, a strong man who's really mad, a delicate little fairy, a really boring teacher, etc.
- Have students tell their stories to younger children. This is not as threatening and it gives students experience in performance.
- Improvisation: Retell a small section of a printed tale as part of a chain story. Each person tells a bit of the story until it's over.
- Have a Story Exchange Week. During this celebration of stories, teachers can use their story corners as a place to have guest teachers from other classrooms share favorite stories. The stories could be read (with lots of characterization) or retold.

Storytelling Resource List

How to Books:

- Del Negro, Janice M. and Green, Ellin. "Storytelling: Art and Technique." ISBN 10: 1591586003
- Bauer, Caroline Feller and Freeman, Judy. "The Handbook for Storytellers." ISBN 10: 0838911005
- Cassady, Marsh. "Storytelling Step by Step." ISBN 10: 0893901830
- Davis, Donald. "Telling Your Own Stories." ISBN 10: 0874832357
- Haven, Kendall and Ducey, MaryGay. "Crash Course in Storytelling." ISBN 10: 1591583993
- Lipman, Doug. "Improving Your Storytelling." ISBN 10: 0874835305
- Livo, Norma J and Rietz, Sandra A. "Storytelling: Process and Practice." ISBN 10: 0872874435
- Mallan, Kerry. "Children as Storytellers." ISBN 10: 0435087797
- Mooney, Bill and Holt, David. "The Storyteller's Guide." ISBN 10: 0874834821
- Pellowski, Anne. "The Family Storytelling Handbook." ISBN 10: 0027706109
- Sawyer, Ruth. "The Way of the Storyteller." ISBN 10: 0140044361
- Shedlock, Marie. "The Art of Storytelling." ISBN 10: 1426427794
- Tooze, Ruth. "Storytelling." ISBN 10: 0138508593

Story Collections:

- Abrahams, Roger. "African Folktales."
- Abrahams, Roger. "Afro-American Folktales."
- Afanasev, Aleksandr and Alexeieff, Alexander. "Russian Fairy Tales."
- Belpre, Pura. "Once in Puerto Rico."
- Boggs, Ralph Steele and Davis, Mary Gould. "Three Golden Oranges and other Spanish Tales."
- Bushnaq, Inea. "Arab Folktales."
- Calvino, Italo. "Italian Folktales."
- Cole, Joanna. "Best Loved Folktales of the World."

- Courlander, Harold. "A Treasury of Afro-American Folklore."
- Curtis, Edward and Bierhorst, John. "The Girl Who Married a Ghost and other Tales from North American Indians."
- DeRoin, Nancy. "Jataka Tales."
- DeSpain, Pleasant. "Thirty-Three Multicultural Tales to Tell."
- Dorson, Richard. "Folktales Told Around the World."
- Durham, Mae. "Tit for Tat and Other Latvian Folk Tales."
- Erdoes, Richard and Ortiz, Alphonso. "American Indian Myths and Legends."
- Glassie, Henry. "Irish Folktales."
- Grimm, Jacob and Wilhelm. "Grimm's Fairy Tales for Young and Old."
- Grimm, Jacob and Wilhelm. "The Complete Grimm's Fairy Tales."
- Hamilton, Virginia. "The People Could Fly: American Black Folktales."
- Hamilton, Marth and Weiss, Mitch. "Stories in My Pocket: Tales Kids Can Tell."
- Hearn, Lafcadio. "Japanese Fairy Tales."
- Holt, David and Monney, Bill. "Ready to Tell Tales."
- Hume, Lotta Carswell. "Favorite Children's Stories from China and Tibet."
- Jacobs, Joseph. "English Fairy Tales."
- Jaffrey, Madhur. "Seasons of Splendor: Tales, Myths & Legends of India."
- Jewett, Eleanor Myers. "Which was Witch: Tales of Ghosts and Magic from Korea."
- Kendall, Carol. "Sweet and Sour: Tales from China."
- Lang, Andrew. "Fairy Tales from Around the World."
- Lester, Julius. "The Knee-High Man and Other Tales."
- MacDonald, Margaret Read. "Twenty Tellable Tales."
- Minard, Rosemary. "Womenfolk and Fairy Tales."
- Nic Leodhas, Sorche. "Heather and Broom Tales from the Scottish Highlands."
- Norman, Howard. "The Girl Who Dreamed Only Geese, and Other Tales of the Far North."
- Perrault, Charles. "Perrault's Complete Fairy Tales."
- Phillip, Neil. "Fairy Tales of Eastern Europe."
- Picard, Barbara Leoni. "Tales of Ancient Persia."
- Riorden, James. "Tales from Tartary."
- Sanfield, Steve. "The Feather Merchants and Other Tales of the Fools of Chelm."
- Shah, Idries. "World Tales."
- Sierra, Judy. "Cinderella."
- Tashjian, Virginia. "Juba This and Juba That."

- Undset, Sigrid. "True and Untrue and other Norse Tales."
- Walker, Barbara K. "Once There Was and Twice There Wasn't."
- Wolkstein, Dian. "The Magic Orange Tree and Other Haitian Folktales."
- Yeats, William Butler. "Irish Folk Stories and Fairy Tales."
- Yolen, Jane. "Favorite Folktales from Around the World."

Local Online Resources:

- Timpanogos Storytelling Festival: <https://timpfest.org>
- Story Crossroads: <https://storycrossroads.org/>

***Story Weavers is a enrichment program
created and compiled by Collette Justesen
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Thank you, Collette!***