



THE HANDBOOK FOR

Storytellers

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THE HANDBOOK FOR

Storytellers

JUDY FREEMAN *and* CAROLINE FELLER BAUER



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Caroline Feller Bauer (1935–2013) was a public librarian, professor of children’s literature, radio personality, international speaker and performer, author of nineteen children’s books and professional books about children’s literature for adults, and a tireless cheerleader for literacy and storytelling.

Judy Freeman is a former school librarian; an adjunct professor at Pratt Institute in New York City teaching courses in children’s literature and storytelling; an international speaker and performer for children, teachers, librarians, and parents; a children’s book reviewer; and the author of more than a dozen professional books about children’s literature and storytelling. She continues to work closely with librarians, teachers, and hundreds of students at several elementary schools to test out new books, ideas, and ways to incorporate literature into children’s lives.

Both have developed and performed thousands of programs and workshops incorporating children’s literature, storytelling, music, poetry, and drama to tens of thousands of children and adults across the United States and abroad.

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*To Izzy Feldman, my right-hand man,
who graciously withstood five years of nonstop drama and stories*

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Preface



By Judy Freeman

HERE'S HOW I FIRST MET THE WHIRLWIND THAT WAS CAROLINE Feller Bauer. Way back in the 1980s, when I was a young school librarian, my friend and librarian colleague, Alice Yucht, told me she had just gone to a workshop with the most amazing presenter she had ever seen, a book-crazed lady named Caroline Feller Bauer. Alice said, "She gave us so many ideas, my wrist got sore from taking notes! She wears costumes, brings puppets and all sorts of crazy props, and she's a total maniac." When Caroline rolled back into New Jersey the next year, I went with Alice to see her. In the hotel ballroom, we were more than a hundred strong, sitting in long rows of skinny tables at her seminar, sponsored by the speaker's bureau BER (Bureau of Education & Research). By the end of the day, we were all family.

In the morning session, Caroline blew us away with her hypercharged performance, a dazzling torrent of booktalks, storytelling, songs, wordplay, and creative drama. She pulled an endless assemblage of objects from her overflowing trunks, a veritable King Tut's tomb for book lovers, and bestowed upon us a staggering abundance of creative ways to turn kids into readers. She told the Eric Carle book, *The Very Hungry Caterpillar*, using a caterpillar glove puppet pulled over her arm; cracked jokes and recited poems; did magic tricks; and regaled us with her retelling of "Tikki Tikki Tembo," a nonsense tale about a boy whose great long name almost leads to his drowning in a cold, cold well.

Alice said, "Let's see if she wants to have lunch with us." Turns out, she did. "Nobody ever thinks to invite the presenter," Caroline said delightedly,

and we ended up with about a dozen workshop folks at a long table in the hotel restaurant, having a raucous lunch where we laughed and told stories. I asked her if she knew a song I learned in summer camp called “Eddie Coochee Catchee Kama Tosa Neara Tosa Noka Sama Kama Wacky Brown.” She didn’t.

After lunch, Caroline caught me off guard when she announced to the audience, “And now Judy Freeman will come up and sing us another version of ‘Tikki Tikki Tembo.’” Dumbfounded, I got up from my chair and did just that. As a performer, Caroline was always so generous with her audiences, learning as much from them as they did from her. How many of those fortunate enough to attend one of her sessions came out of it saying, “I want to be Caroline when I grow up!”? I know I did.

That day, I gave her my little business card, never thinking I’d hear from her again. I was wrong. Caroline sent postcards every now and then as she traveled the world. About once a year, I’d pick up the ringing phone to hear, “Hello, this is your friend, Caroline. I’m in the airport on the way to . . . (fill in the name of any city here).” It wasn’t just me. Everywhere she went, Caroline talked with people and made friends. She was known to stand up on airplanes and give booktalks. Her lifelong job was to turn everyone in the world into a book and story lover. One time, I went into a restaurant with Caroline for brunch and watched her ask strangers on the buffet line what they were reading to their kids.

“Reading is a lifetime sport,” she preached. “Books shouldn’t be a luxury, a treat. They’re a necessity, like toothpaste.”

In the 1990s, I was asked to audition as a national speaker for BER. I had done plenty of speaking at workshops and conferences, and taught as an adjunct at Rutgers University for years, but working for BER was something I had always hoped I’d be able to do one day. Still, I was apprehensive. I called up Caroline and started whining. “This is a great opportunity, but I’m working as a school librarian full time and I’d have to find ten days for BER, if I even made the cut, and develop a whole big handbook and—”

She interrupted me and gave me an indispensable piece of advice I have used ever since as a mantra for my whole life. “Judy,” she said firmly, “just shut up and do it.” So I did.

Then there was the time she called and said, “I just found your business card that you gave me the first time I met you, decades ago. I was dumbfounded to see that you still live in the same house, in Highland Park, New Jersey. And my question to you is, ‘Why?’”

I fell over laughing. Caroline always loved living in different places. She lived in Paris; Portland, Oregon; California; Miami Beach; Thailand; and Bangladesh. She relished learning about the different cultures in all the hundred-plus countries where she visited and/or gave her memorable book and storytelling programs. The notion that someone would stay in the same town year after year was utterly foreign to her.

When she called in 2008 and asked me to help update her now more than thirty-year-old book, I could not say no to my mentor. Caroline wrote *Handbook for Storytellers* in 1977, and then did a revised edition, *New Handbook for Storytellers*, in 1993. It has always been considered a classic in the field of storytelling and children's literature, so filled with original ideas, books, stories, and the author's insouciant personality.

Caroline said, "Judy, this will be easy. You can do it with one hand tied behind your back. Just update the booklists. Piece of cake."

I dove in and five years later finished a massive rewrite of the text and booklists, reflecting the rise of technology, the Common Core, the explosion in the number of children's books published each year, and an ongoing call for literacy through books and stories.

The stories and the passion for literature are one particular legacy of Caroline's. In 2000, she and her husband, Peter Bauer, moved to Chittagong, Bangladesh. Peter was working there, and for a while, Caroline continued to travel around the world presenting workshops and speeches. Then she homed in on Bangladesh, a country she particularly adored. She compiled and published *Bangladesh at Work*, a handsome book of her color photographs. And she opened a Play Park, "a facility dedicated to the entertainment and education of children in the village of Bhatiary," near Chittagong, serving five hundred children and their families. This was Caroline's baby. Her extraordinary undertaking now includes a three-story building with a library, open daily, with a collection of more than four thousand English and Bangla books; free classes for children in art, tae kwon do, English, computers, dance, embroidery, singing, crafts and cooking; a preschool; and a playground.

While I plugged away on the handbook, Caroline became gravely ill. She would call and say, "Are you working? Let's get this thing finished!" We both desperately wanted to publish this book sooner, but it refused to be rushed. Sadly, Caroline died in 2013 after a valiant battle with mesothelioma. (Her daughter, Hilary Wendel, is seeking to continue funding the Play Park, which costs about \$20,000 a year to operate. If you'd like to contribute, go to

www.gofundme.com/2lp9uk; for general information, see www.facebook.com/ThePlayParkBhatiary.)

It has been my honor to get to know and work with Caroline Feller Bauer. In this book, you'll still hear her irrepressible voice, exhorting you to tell more stories, read more stories, and share more stories with the children in your life.

Finally, an image and a story. When literature experts overanalyzed and deconstructed children's books, Caroline Feller Bauer remembered her grandmother's admonition, embroidered in needlepoint, which became her motto: "Those who live without folly are not so wise as they think."

Picture tiny, slender, elfin Caroline, dressed in a big, fat red tomato costume, waddling into a hotel ballroom filled with impassioned teachers and librarians. She makes her way to the front of the room, faces her wide-eyed, bemused audience, and starts to speak:

The Three Tomatoes

Retold by Caroline Bauer

A family of three tomatoes was walking in the woods one day. There was Papa Tomato, Mama Tomato, and Baby Tomato. Baby Tomato started dawdling and lagging behind. "Hurry up, dear," called Mama Tomato. But Baby Tomato walked even slower. "We're waiting for you!" Mama called again. Baby Tomato walked even slower. "Darling, walk faster," Mama cried.

Papa Tomato was very annoyed. He ran back to Baby Tomato. He stamped on Baby Tomato and hollered, "Baby Tomato, KETCHUP!" (*At which point, Caroline stamped her foot and held up a big bottle of . . . ketchup, of course.*)

Did you know that Uma Thurman told a version of that joke to John Travolta in the movie *Pulp Fiction*? Caroline's delivery was better.

Now you have a chance to sample some of the magic and the welcome folly that is Caroline Feller Bauer. May you find hundreds of stories, books, and delicious ways to use them in your life. What do we hope this newly revised book will help you to do? Ketchup!

Introduction



WHILE THIS BOOK (AND THE FORTHCOMING *THE HANDBOOK for Storytime Programs*) stands on its own, each complements and buttresses the other. The books contain scores of carefully compiled and annotated story lists, booklists, and website lists, plus hundreds of ideas and activities for using storytelling and literature with children.

When Caroline Feller Bauer's first *Handbook for Storytellers*, published by ALA, came out in 1977, there was nothing like it. Truth be told, there was no one like Caroline Feller Bauer in the library world back then—a book-mad sprite who not only advocated reading aloud and telling stories to children, but incorporated books, magic tricks, creative drama, readers' theater, puppetry, poetry, music, and technology in her books and presentations as part and parcel of what youth services librarians (both in schools and public libraries) and teachers could and should do with children. When she burst on the scene, she transformed the profession, giving us permission to fill our programs with delight and fun and joy. She revised her book in 1993, adding still more stories, poems, and songs, along with hundreds of new, useful, and innovative methods of storytelling and building a culture of reading with and for children.

Fast-forward a mere twenty-plus years and, at long last, we have revised, updated, reworked, rethought, and rebuilt Caroline's classic book—we've needed to break it into two large volumes to accommodate everything. Each book is filled to the brim with the best of Caroline's wonderful stories and ideas, plus an overflowing cornucopia of new stories, poems, songs, plays,

and activities; a grand assembly of all-new annotated lists comprising thousands of the best stories, children's books, and professional titles; and a vast array of hundreds of related websites and technology tie-ins.

It's now an encyclopedic but very fun-to-read series of reference books that school and public librarians, teachers, and storytellers can use on a daily basis to support their programs and curriculums (tying in with the many education goals of the Common Core State Standards, with their focus on "reading, writing, speaking, listening, and language"), and to supplement and strengthen their story hours.

The thousands of titles and stories listed in this book are the most exemplary ones of the hundreds of thousands I have read over the course of my career as a librarian, storyteller, reviewer, writer, and speaker to tens of thousands of teachers, librarians, and children. Inspired by Caroline's masterwork, I have mined my own material and stretched my knowledge of children's literature and storytelling to add practical ideas and inspiration on every page.

Each book contains:

- An eclectic and wide-ranging mix of folklore and children's books to develop innovative connections between storytelling and literature
- Practical, surefire suggestions for using storytelling and children's books together to create a literature-based and story-infused environment in schools and libraries
- Easy-to-learn storytelling techniques and read-aloud strategies to make each storytime session an enthralling experience for tellers and listeners
- The full texts of many dozens of stories just right for telling
- Scores of stories, poems, songs, chants, jokes, crafts, story scripts, magic tricks, and other literary delights to share with children
- Ideas, ideas, ideas, everywhere! The plethora of successful and invigorating ideas and activities can be used immediately in story hours, programs, booktalks, and lessons across the curriculum.
- Hundreds of painstakingly selected and annotated folktale, children's book, professional book, and website bibliographies, all of which are the most up to date and comprehensive in scope in a storytelling and literature guide
- Comprehensive indexes by author, title, and subject

Here's what you'll find in *The Handbook for Storytellers*.

The first half of the book, "Part One: Getting Started with Storytelling," provides:

- Practical information on how to publicize and promote your storytelling programs
- Basic techniques for pulling together a story hour
- Detailed step-by-step instructions on how to select, learn, prepare, and tell stories

The second half of the book, "Part Two: Sources for Storytelling," contains these features:

- Inspiration, hands-on instruction, and practical, easy-to-follow suggestions for success, especially for the novice teller, nervous about learning stories to tell
- An overview of the major types of folk and fairy tales, including many sample stories and annotated booklists. Types include: cumulative, repetitive, and swallowing stories; trickster tales; drolls and humorous stories; pourquoi (how-and-why) tales; jump tales, scary stories, and urban legends; fairy tales; fables, myths, legends, and epics.
- A history and virtual tour of folktales told on six of the seven continents (the penguins in Antarctica don't tell stories) that illuminates how people in other parts of the world are not so different after all
- Other literature-based sources for storytelling, including: parodies, literary tales and short stories, picture books and beginning readers, informational books and biographies, and family stories
- "Favorite Stories to Tell," an extensive annotated list of more than five hundred of Caroline and Judy's personal favorites, arranged by subject/theme, from which tellers can find the perfect stories to fit every occasion and begin to build their own repertoire of wonderful tales to tell

In this book and its companion, *The Handbook for Storytime Programs* (2015), you'll find countless stories to tell as well as songs, poems, jokes, crafts, puppets, and magic tricks to use in your story hour programming; and ways to use them with children. So many gorgeous and enticing children's books are published every year, and we have included our recommendations of

more than a thousand irresistible titles to read aloud, tell, and share. There's a spectacular mix of brand-new and tried-and-true, all books we have read, adored, and, in more cases than not, used with the people for whom they are intended: actual kids.

On a practical note, many of the marvelous books Caroline originally recommended for reading and/or telling a quarter of a century ago are long out of print. In this new book and in *The Handbook for Storytime Programs*, we've omitted the ones that will be far too hard to locate, though we've kept a small number of ones we couldn't bear to toss.

When we list an older book in the many booklists you'll find within, we've used the original publisher and copyright date, even if the book has changed publishers or the publisher had merged with another house or gone out of business. One can't keep up with all the merges and purges of the publishing world. Assume, if it's an old book or an unfamiliar publisher, that the book is still in print in one edition or another. If it's out of print, chances are good that you can still find a remaindered or used copy to buy online. For any title you seek online, there might be one or more hardcover or paperback versions, an e-book, a DVD, and/or an audiobook. Sometimes the choices of formats are downright dizzying.

Here's something that's going to startle and vex book lovers, especially if you're a librarian trying to replace worn-out or lost treasures: the number of books no longer available in hardcover editions. Publishers are putting their older hardcovers—even popular ones that are still read and loved—out of commission in favor of paperbacks and e-books. This is the case with every genre in children's literature, from picture books to fiction. Unless it's a run-away and perennial hit, expect a huge percentage of hardbacks more than five years old to be no longer in print, including many big award winners.

Libraries can turn to companies like Perma-Bound (www.perma-bound.com) that take paperback books and rebind them inside a laminated book cover, or the rebinder Bound to Stay Bound (www.BTSB.com), which use the interiors of hardcover books and add a pretty much indestructible cover and binding so they'll last through one hundred circulations. (The tradeoff is that there is no dust jacket, though the cover is imprinted with the hardcover book's original artwork.) They also might have in stock those books that are no longer available from the publisher in hardcover.

Along with boundless annotated bibliographies of children's and professional books, look for annotated website lists in each chapter, but please

forgive us for dead links. The Web is evanescent—websites go viral, then collapse and disappear in a trice, like stars into black holes.

Where does storytelling fit in our high-tech whirlwind? Will it become obsolete? Even in today's testing-obsessed educational climate, my personal prediction is that we will never stop needing to hear and read stories. The caring, sharing, eye contact, and sheer love that are passed from teller to listener, parent to child, teacher to student, librarian to child, are part of our shared humanity. You can appreciate the technology and use it to make your curriculum or your teaching more cutting edge, but the stories we tell and read will continue to fill our hearts and make us all—tellers and listeners—kinder, better people.



part 1

GETTING STARTED WITH STORYTELLING

Why the World Has Stories

Retold by Caroline Feller Bauer

In the beginning of time, when the world was so new and all, the animals did not work for Man.

The rooster refused to crow. “Why should I get up at first light and wake the world? I’m going back to sleep.”

The dog refused to fetch and carry. “I don’t want to go and get the newspaper. I don’t even know how to read.”

The sheep didn’t want to give wool. “Sorry, I don’t want to stand here in the freezing cold. I’m keeping my wool.”

The cow refused to give milk. “I don’t enjoy being tugged on every evening. My milk will stay where it is.”

The cat was too lazy to chase mice. “I’m exhausted just thinking about stalking mice. I’m taking a nap.”

The horse refused to pull the cart. “I don’t want to pull a heavy load. I’d rather eat grass.”

The man, who was trying to keep a tidy world, was outraged. “If you don’t crow, fetch and carry, give me wool, give me milk, catch mice, or pull, I won’t read you a bedtime story.”

“I’ll crow,” said the rooster.

“I’ll fetch and carry,” said the dog.

“I’ll give you wool,” said the sheep.

“I’ll chase mice,” said the cat.

“I’ll pull the cart,” said the horse.

And the man said, “*Once upon a time . . .*”

And today, stories are told and animals work . . . including my ferret, whose job it is to look cute.

You’ve just read a story that you loved, and you can’t wait to share it with someone. You start talking about it, and before you know it, you’re telling the whole thing. Your listeners are enthralled. It’s such a satisfying experience that you decide you’d like to learn about storytelling and even hold story hours. But how do you get started? What story should you learn first?

Perhaps you should start learning something tried and true, like “Little Red Riding Hood.” Or a contemporary version of the classic—maybe Niki Daly’s *Pretty Salma: A Little Red Riding Hood Story from Africa*, in which bad Mr. Dog tricks young Salma out of her basket, her clothes, and even her song. Or a more comical version like *Tortuga in Trouble*, by Ann Whitford Paul, where tortoise Tortuga runs into that bad actor Coyote while taking a basket of *ensalada*, tamales, and flan to Abuela’s house. Or, wait! Maybe you want to learn all three.

If you are a beginning storyteller, welcome! This book is especially for you. It will help you to answer fundamental questions about storytelling and start you off with a wonderful selection of tales to tell and resources where you can find more. If you are a more experienced storyteller, think of this book as a refresher course. Browse through the chapters and see if you can find a creative promotion tip you haven’t tried, or a new story to learn and tell. There’s something for everyone.

chapter 1



Welcome to Storytelling

It takes a thousand voices to tell a single story.

—NATIVE AMERICAN PROVERB

WHY SHOULD YOU TELL STORIES WHEN THERE ARE PERFECTLY wonderful books out there that you can read aloud and share with kids? Or book apps or websites where kids can hear someone else read to them? Isn't that enough? We're not saying that reading aloud isn't vital. We just happen to think that storytelling is a senior partner to all the literary print and technological activities you share with your children.

We can think of many reasons to tell stories to children. For parents and grandparents, it's a way to induce wonder in your kids. Children will be amazed that grown-ups they know can make up such marvelous stories and will start wondering if they can make up and tell stories of their own.

Pragmatically speaking, storytelling is all about language. When children listen and focus on a story told to them, they are developing listening, comprehension, and analytical skills. In terms of higher-level thinking skills, storytelling helps children recall details, summarize a plot sequence, and visualize and describe settings and scenes. They can speculate on what will happen next in the story, and afterwards, cite clues that supported their predictions. They can analyze the story structure; discuss plot elements; and evaluate,

debate, and make their own judgments about why the characters behaved the way they did. They can compare and contrast other similar stories. Finally, they can synthesize the experience in a creative way, perhaps acting out the story, writing a new story using the same structure, or retelling the story from another character's point of view. All the strategies that we use to analyze and evaluate other texts, both fiction and nonfiction, work just as well—if not better—when a story is told.

Hearing stories also makes a child want to read more of them. Storytelling helps turn kids into readers.

To Whom Should We Tell Stories?

One of the first things to think about is the age of your target audience. Here are some simple ideas that may help you along.

BABIES AND TODDLERS

Babies and toddlers will go gaga over lap-sit storytimes planned just for them, which are now standard at most public libraries. Keep in mind that the children will be accompanied by adults, so the programs you present will be for the caregivers as much as their charges. Brief stories, simple books, fingerplays, songs, and a rhyme or two will begin a toddler's introduction to the treasures of the library. If you're meeting with the same group every week, revisit activities from previous programs. Small children delight in repeated stories, songs, chants, and fingerplays.

One of Judy's favorite stories for this age group is the silly and infectious "Little Bunny Foo Foo," sung to the approximate tune of "The Eensy-Weensy Spider." Many preschool teachers know a version of it. Here's the way Judy likes to tell and sing it.

Little Bunny Foo Foo

Retold by Judy Freeman

(Sung) Little Bunny Foo Foo, hopping through the forest,
Scooping up the field mice and bopping them on the head.

(Spoken) Along came his Fairy Godmother, and she said:

(Sung) "Little Bunny Foo Foo, I don't want to see you
(wag finger reprovngly)

Scooping up the field mice and bopping them on the head.
(Spoken) I'm going to give you three chances to be a good little rabbit,
And if you won't, I'm going to turn you into a GOON!"

Little Bunny Foo Foo, hopping through the forest,
Scooping up the field mice and bopping them on the head.
Along came his Fairy Godmother, and she said:
"Little Bunny Foo Foo, I don't want to see you
Scooping up the field mice and bopping them on the head.
I'm going to give you two more chances to be a good little rabbit,
And if you won't, I'm going to turn you into a GOON!"

Little Bunny Foo Foo, hopping through the forest,
Scooping up the field mice and bopping them on the head.
Along came his Fairy Godmother, and she said:
"Little Bunny Foo Foo, I don't want to see you
Scooping up the field mice and bopping them on the head.
I'm going to give you one more chance to be a good little rabbit,
And if you won't, I'm going to turn you into a GOON!"

Little Bunny Foo Foo, hopping through the forest,
Scooping up the field mice and bopping them on the head.
Along came his Fairy Godmother, and she said:
"Little Bunny Foo Foo, I don't want to see you
Scooping up the field mice and bopping them on the head.
I gave you three chances to be a good little rabbit, and
you goofed.
So now, I'm going to turn you into a GOON!"

POOF!

And the moral of the story?

HARE TODAY, GOON TOMORROW.

As you sing the song part, make a fist, stick up two fingers to make bunny ears, and have your “bunny” hop along to the song. For the scooping and bopping parts, scoop with one hand and then bop your other fist.

When you tell this story to preschoolers, they may think the final line is, “I’m going to turn you into a GOOF,” which is pretty hilarious. You can simply tell them a goon is “a very silly rabbit.” Paul Brett Johnson wrote and illustrated a sweet picture-book version, *Little Bunny Foo Foo*, with which you may want to follow up.

PRESCHOOL AND PRIMARY SCHOOL CHILDREN

Your preschool program (which may include children from infancy to age five) will usually feature simple stories, songs, and picture books. If the children are enrolled in day care or nursery school, they may not attend full time, but they are still an eager audience for any organized entertainment. Programming for this age group is usually strongly supported by parents who are looking for book-oriented activities outside the home. If you are a teacher of preschool or primary children, storytime is undoubtedly a daily activity in your classroom. It is through stories, poems, and songs that children acquire information, work on listening and group social skills, and develop a love for words and fine illustrations.

In the spring, parents register their children for the preschool or kindergarten in their local elementary schools. Often, the children come to school for a few hours to meet the staff and get a brief orientation to the school. This is a grand opportunity for the school librarian to initiate a free story hour, once a week for anywhere from two to six weeks, for parents and about-to-be new students. Hand out a flyer to prospective parents and encourage them to sign up.

At these programs, you can tell and read stories, use puppets, do simple crafts activities, and help children and their parents get comfortable with the school library. Encourage parents to borrow books with their kids after each program. As part of each session, take the group on a school walk to see where the different rooms are—the art room, music room, gym, auditorium, nurse’s office, and office, for starters—and to help the incoming students acclimate to their new environment. Arrange for staff members to introduce themselves and lead the children around their rooms. Meeting the principal, nurse, special-area teachers, and custodian will make the kids feel they’re part of their new school family. When they come back to school in September, they will consider themselves old-timers, and you will probably gain a

whole new set of parents who support your library program and even sign on as weekly volunteers.

Children in the primary grades—kindergarten through second grade—are also active listeners. They will hang on every story you tell. The classroom is a perfect place to hold story hours for these youngsters. If you are a public librarian or church-group leader, you may be tempted to include both preschool and primary children in one story hour, especially if the groups can be kept small. Keep in mind, however, that many primary-grade children are able to listen longer and understand on a higher level than preschool children, though they also love group participation stories and humorous folktales.

One of the objectives of your program will be to teach your audience to listen to stories that are more complex. This comes about as children become more accustomed to listening.

CHILDREN IN GRADES 3 THROUGH 6

Children in grades 3 through 6 simply love book-and-storytelling programs, and they are old enough to appreciate longer folktales, more complex fairy tales, and myths. Children in this age group are likely to belong to clubs (Boy Scouts, Girl Scouts, and other youth organizations) that can provide you with a ready-made audience. Once the hormones kick in around fifth and sixth grade, children may make a show of rolling their eyes and being “above all that,” but they still appreciate suspenseful, compelling stories and booktalks that don’t treat them like their younger brothers and sisters. Programs for these kids offer the storyteller an added opportunity to experiment with multimedia programs and theater-based follow-ups, such as making podcasts or story trailers, or writing and acting out readers’ theater scripts. They can also learn stories to tell to each other and to younger children.

MIDDLE SCHOOL CHILDREN AND YOUNG ADULTS

Pull together stories from folklore, classic literature, poetry, and excerpts from contemporary fiction when considering programs for this audience. Booktalks, which combine storytelling with reading aloud, are popular, as young people enjoy the language of good literature. These children are digital natives and will be game for taping book trailers, poetry slams, and music videos. They may be reached in the classroom, in the library, or through special-interest clubs. They can be a challenging audience, but ultimately a satisfying one.

Where to Tell Stories

It was raining. No, it was pouring. The promised picnic was definitely out of the question. Clearly the children were disappointed, and Caroline felt bad. After all, she had promised her daughter, Hilary, and her friend, Holly, a picnic. They had a picnic anyway—on a make-believe beach, under a dining room table, with a blanket tent cover to provide privacy and a sense of mystery. With the rain drumming on the roof, the blanket tent turned out to be the perfect place to tell and listen to ghost stories. Even Caroline’s husband, Peter, crawled into the tent and told about a snowbound ski trip in Vermont. That memory remains a special one for Hilary, now long grown and with children of her own.

The importance of the physical setup for storytelling cannot be underestimated. It will determine whether your listeners truly feel part of the presentation. But how can you make that space your own? In a library or school, you might be telling stories in a classroom, a meeting room, a cafeteria, or even in an auditorium with a stage. Do your best to be adaptable. Survey each new space to figure out how to make the most of it for your intended audience, whether you are expecting ten preschoolers and their caregivers in a library story room or one hundred rowdy teens on bleachers in a school gym. Move chairs when needed. When she knew she would be speaking in a large auditorium, Caroline would bring yarn with her to close off the back rows. Sometimes—particularly when you are a visiting storyteller—your heart will drop as you enter a proposed storytelling site, but the experience can still turn out well for you and your audience.

When Caroline was a branch librarian in the New York Public Library system, story hours were held in a dusty attic piled high with broken, unused furniture. At first, from her adult point of view, it seemed an entirely unattractive place; but when she saw the children’s reactions of awe and delight, she realized what a splendid story room it really was. Not many of the apartment-dwelling children who came to her story hour had ever seen a real attic, let alone spent time in one. She says, “I’m certain that those stories were long remembered in part because of the magical atmosphere in which they were told.”

SCHOOLS

If you are a classroom teacher or a school librarian, think about how you can best situate your classes for storytelling and book-and-story-sharing sessions. Having kids stay at their desks or at library tables will not foster

the camaraderie of sitting together on the floor or on a “story rug.” Irving Primary School in Highland Park, New Jersey, has a large, lovely, oval-shaped dragon rug that fits a class nicely. The children love sitting on it for storytime. You can find some beautiful, kid-friendly, stain-protected rugs at www.schooloutfitters.com and www.demco.com. (You can even find a dragon rug, if you now think you need one, too.)

If you don’t have a designated story area, think about creating one. It doesn’t take long for students to move desks and tables to make a temporary spot. Work out a procedure for clearing the floor, and practice it with your group. It will soon be just like any other routine.

ASSEMBLIES

Although storytelling might seem best suited to a family sitting around a peat fire in Ireland, the most prevalent contemporary setting may be the school assembly. Although the optimum number of children at an assembly is under two hundred, larger schools will have five hundred or more children. Try telling participation stories and stories that bring overt responses (such as a good laugh!) to groups like these. The trickiest programs are the ones where children sit at long lunchroom tables, on long, hard benches. That can mean trouble, since half of the children have to turn around to sit with the tables at their backs. There can be squirming, kicking, and, thanks to the environment, a yearning for lunch. It is more difficult to capture their attention and to weave a spell with stories when your group is physically uncomfortable.

When Judy gives a school assembly program, she likes to have the children sit in rows on the floor of the all-purpose room/gym/cafetorium. She keeps a center aisle free so she can walk to the back of the room during her presentation and make eye contact with the kids in the last rows. Can children sit on the hard floor for an hour? Listening to and participating in good stories and songs make an hour fly. The rule of thumb is to arrange the room and your group to create an environment that works best for all. Even if that’s not possible, put on a big smile, make the best of what you have, and persevere. You’ll do just fine.

THE PUBLIC LIBRARY

A typical storytelling program in a public library features the children’s librarian telling stories, doing fingerplays, singing songs, and reading children’s books on a given theme, followed by games or crafts related to the

stories. Sometimes there is a separate story room; usually there is simply a corner or section of the room devoted to storytime where children sit on the carpet or on chairs and then move to tables afterwards.

Judy was privileged to be a visiting storyteller and give a program of her songs and stories for children and parents at the Palmer Public Library in Palmer, Alaska. When she finished her presentation, one little girl said, pointedly, “We’re ready for our craft now.” Kids do love those hands-on craft activities. Often, the public library is the only place, besides summer camp, and—if the arts haven’t been slashed from the school budget—art class at school where they get to make cool stuff.

STORES AND OTHER PUBLIC SPACES

And then there is the bookstore. Although the advent of e-books and Amazon.com has changed things, megabookstores and box stores with huge children’s departments still exist, and they often offer book, activity, and author programs (something indie bookstores have always done). You may find these large stores receptive to the offer of a story hour, but be forewarned. As a consultant for a large bookstore chain, Caroline gave book programs around the United States. Undisciplined little darlings would pick up her puppets and props, throw temper tantrums, and generally misbehave while their parents looked on benevolently. The storekeepers were loath to offend their customers and, as a visitor performer/storyteller, Caroline felt it was hardly her job to discipline the children. In situations like this, the rule of thumb is simply to do the best you can.

Storytellers at the Hans Christian Andersen statue in New York City’s Central Park must work especially hard to capture the attention and imagination of their audience. In addition to wiggly, noisy kids, they have to contend with the often deafening roar of passing traffic and the distractions of loud passersby. Famed storyteller Diane Wolkstein, who died in 2013, began this Central Park tradition in 1967 as the only teller. The storytelling turned into a weekly event for more than twenty presenters each season, from June through September, featuring some of the leading performers in the storytelling community. As Diane said, “Often I meet adults who are bringing their own children to hear stories that they heard twenty-five years before.” Now under the leadership of Laura Simms, the summer programs have continued. Each session includes at least one Hans Christian Andersen story. Though it is recommended for ages six and up, the audience can range from babies in strollers to seniors sitting on the benches, basking in

tales well-told. For information and program schedules, go to www.hcastorycenter.org.

Today many parks and performance spaces like town squares, playgrounds, and mini-stages at town street festivals sponsor storytellers and other presenters, usually in the summer months.

Here are some other possible venues:

- School buses during field trips
- Afterschool programs
- At home or at someone else's home
- Backyards
- Neighborhood garage sales
- Scout troop meetings
- Summer camps
- Holiday and family dinners
- Birthday parties, graduations, and other occasions
- Weddings
- Child-care centers
- Hospitals
- Senior citizens' clubs and retirement homes
- Police stations and firehouses
- Detention centers and prisons
- Shopping malls
- Community events
- County fairs and street festivals
- Book fairs
- Open-air markets and craft fairs
- Bookstores and toy stores
- Houses of worship
- Campfires
- The beach, the woods, and during a hike
- Any form of transportation where people look like they could use a pick-me-up

Who Can Be a Storyteller?

Who will actually tell the stories at your story program? You. Yes, you should be your first choice. Why shouldn't you be the person to get that wonderful feeling that comes with telling a good tale to an audience of enthralled listeners? Watch their eyes get wide and glazed as they fall into your story and their imaginations start to whir. Who are you? Are you a school librarian? A public librarian? A classroom teacher? A volunteer? A student? A parent, grandparent, or doting relative? All kinds of people love to tell stories, and you don't have to be a professional to do it.

THE SCHOOL LIBRARIAN

These days, many school librarians teach research and information skills; effective searching skills, starting with the library's computer catalog; and

literature appreciation. In the elementary school, they may have a structured schedule, or a flexible one where teachers sign up their classes as needed.

If you are a librarian with a structured schedule, you have a built-in weekly audience and can probably slot in storytelling on a regular basis. With a flexible schedule, you will need to approach your teachers and ask if they have a time you could see their students for storytelling, especially a session that ties into a curricular area. If a social studies class is studying Native Americans, explorers, or the fifty states, offer to tell stories relating to those subjects. If students are learning about astronomy, animals, or weather in science, offer to do a program of *pourquoi* tales that give listeners a very different explanation of scientific phenomena.

If you are a librarian in a middle or high school, you may not see classes on a weekly basis, but you can still collaborate with subject-area teachers when students are working on projects, research, or papers. Keep track of who's studying what when, and offer to tie that subject matter into a related program that will also familiarize students with library resources. When a class comes in to do research on the presidents, as a part of your instructions on where and how to look for information, slip in the story of how Washington crossed the Delaware on Christmas Eve, 1776, and turned the tide of the Revolution, which you read about in a biography of George Washington. History, after all, is just a collection of stories.

Look for times when the teachers can use a breather and offer to take their students for a class period or even ten minutes. Right before a holiday or during standardized testing, when the kids are desperate to have a bit of fun, invite several classes to the library and knock their socks off with a couple of well-placed stories, songs, poems, and booktalks. You'll need to be proactive, but once you've established a reputation as someone who can tell a mean story, the word will spread.

THE PUBLIC LIBRARIAN

Historically, public librarians have done more to introduce children to storytelling than anyone. They routinely hold weekly programs of songs, stories, crafts, and activities for



babies through teens. Often these programs are dependent on reading aloud, not storytelling, but you can easily integrate storytelling into a weekly session. Sometimes you'll find you've read a book aloud so many times, you already know the story. Try telling the story without the book and see how it goes. You will get hooked on telling.

It's tricky sometimes to get older children to come to the library for scheduled programs, so you'll need to be inventive, maybe offering irresistible incentives. If you're showing a movie, tell a story or two beforehand. Invite older kids to a book party, a pizza night, or a games night, and they'll come back for more once they hear the stories you tell.

Public librarians were expected to tell stories to children, back in the days of iconic public librarians like Pura Belpre (1903–1982), the first Hispanic public librarian in New York City, and Augusta Baker (1911–1998), first African American public librarian in the same system. The first library in the United States to establish a weekly story hour for children was the Carnegie Library of Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania. Until recently, New York City public youth services librarians were trained within the system to tell stories, but with budget cuts and more budget cuts, that training went by the wayside. What a loss to the children.

If your library system has no formal classes or workshops in storytelling, you can train yourself by reading books like this one and taking a leap. Take a class in storytelling or get together with other librarian and teacher friends and form a storyteller's league to practice new material on each other.

TEACHERS

Each year, classroom teachers are expected to cover more and more curriculum. At the same time, they are expected to be social workers, psychologists, coaches, medical advisors, and surrogate parents, and, above all, miracle workers, transforming children each year into eager, industrious, and successful learners. On top of that, they should be storytellers? Sure. What's one more thing?

Whether you're a subject area teacher, a self-contained classroom teacher, a special-area teacher, a resource-room teacher, an aide, or a substitute, it can never hurt to have some stories in your bag of tricks. You don't need to know a hundred—a handful to pull out when the time is right will do. Your kids will forget the spelling tests, the worksheets, the textbook chapters, but they won't forget the books you read aloud, the songs you sing, and, especially, the stories you tell.

FAMILY MEMBERS AND OTHER CAREGIVERS

Are you one of those parents who tells stories to your kids at bedtime? Maybe you start a story about a blue whale or a princess or your child as a superhero, and each night you continue the saga or make up a new adventure. You probably never thought of yourself as a real storyteller, but, of course, you are. Your kids remember your stories and wait for each new installment, which is why you started telling stories in the first place.

Middle school English teacher Rick Riordan had published several adult mysteries before making his first foray into children's fiction. The book came about because of bedtime stories about Greek gods and heroes he told his second-grade son, Haley, who was having reading difficulties. When Rick ran out of stories about the gods and heroes, Haley asked him to make up a new story about them, so Rick created the character of Percy Jackson, an American kid with ADHD and dyslexia, whose father is a Greek god. When he finished his story, Haley told him he should turn it into a book. The story became *The Lightning Thief*, and Riordan is now a huge favorite among readers, especially reluctant ones who identify with Percy.

Does this mean the stories you tell your kids will turn into best sellers? Probably not, but you can still tell stories at bedtime, birthday parties, in the park. Maybe you're a grandparent or devoted aunt or uncle who tells the kids about what life was like in the olden days. Any story you share will be a hit with your kids, who will grow up and tell stories to their kids. What better legacy can a parent or grandparent leave?

Start a family storytelling tradition. Choose a night to relax, stay home, and enjoy stories or read aloud as a family affair. Don't limit these staycation sessions to the preschoolers at home, either. Your entire family will delight in a good story well told. As your children grow up, they can tell stories of their own or take turns at reading alternate book chapters aloud. Why not record each other telling stories on video? Your kids will watch it again and again.

Now think in terms of families in your neighborhood, or where you work or worship. Why not plan a joint family program in someone's home or even in a public place—at your school or library or park—where parents can share their stories with everyone's kids? Afterwards, serve lemonade and cookies. If you're at the library, everyone can then check out an armload of books to continue the fun at home.

STUDENTS

You may discover that some of the older children and young adults who have been coming to story hours at your library, school, place of worship,

or club are as interested in learning and telling stories as you are. Consider organizing a storytelling class for them. Keep the group small, between three and ten; that way the members will be assured of your personal attention.

Begin the training by having members perform informally, telling jokes, describing their families, or relating school experiences. Tell them a story or anecdote yourself, or perhaps invite a guest to tell a story. Explain that there are different types of stories, such as folktales, fairy tales, pourquoi tales, fables, myths, epics, and modern short stories. Help your students select appropriate stories by providing them with a list of tales particularly suited to beginners. *Twenty Tellable Tales: Audience Participation Tales for the Beginning Storytellers* is just one of many easy-to-tell collections by master storyteller and collector Margaret Read McDonald. Anne Pellowski's *The Story Vine: A Source Book of Unusual and Easy-to-Tell Stories from Around the World* is another good source for beginners.

Encourage students to practice on each other to develop their proficiency and gain self-confidence. Permit the student who is ready to perform to tell his or her story all the way through. Don't interrupt to make suggestions. Take notes as you listen, but be responsive. Afterwards, be sure to say something positive. Gently point out any common faults, and do not permit a situation to develop in which everyone acrimoniously criticizes a performance. To pinpoint and correct particular faults, talk privately with each child.

If students are willing, record their stories on video so they can see themselves as others see them. (Watching the playback afterwards will help them shed undesirable traits, like swaying back and forth or saying "You know" every other sentence.) You can also build a performance library that others can watch and enjoy. Encourage each student to try a variety of stories in the shelter of the group. You'll be astonished at how quickly they master their selections—learning new stories is child's play for them.

To whom can the students tell stories? Everyone. Fifth graders can tell them to third graders, seventh graders to fourth graders, and so on. If administrators and teachers are reluctant to take time away from other activities to permit your group to tell stories, explain that learning and telling stories enriches sequence, comprehension, and public-speaking skills, helps students develop self-confidence, and raises test scores. (Okay, we don't have any hard data on the last one, but it wouldn't surprise us one bit if it were true.)

A storytelling club in elementary school or a storytelling elective in middle school can encompass literature, folklore, theater, and child-care activities all in one. Send out teams of storytellers. Anyplace an adult can tell

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