

Storytelling

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Do you like stories? Yes, we all like stories when we were young and as we grow up the love for stories never fade. I remember the stories my parents told me when I was a child. The stories were told again and again, but I never got tired of them. Later, I had children and they enjoyed listening to any stories I told them, even some ridiculous ones. Now my children have grown up, and once they asked, “Mom, why don’t you tell us stories?” “No problem!” I promised then I told stories of themselves when they were babies.

I love stories, so do my students. They would shout “Hurray!” when I say, “Story time!” Then I can see the light shining in their eyes, and the smile on their faces and they are looking forward to listening to the story.

Kendall Haven, the author of *Story Proof: The Science Behind the Startling*, has provided extensive evidence supporting the importance of story in a child’s education. His most important message may well be that the use of story is a most effective and efficient way to enhance a person’s comprehension of all types of narrative texts.(p.18. Storytelling Magazine September/ October, 2009) Moreover, during the two weeks’ training in Bell Teacher Campus the trainers, Amanda, Iwona and Ian gave me some practical ideas about storytelling.

Some good reasons to use stories in our English classroom:

1. They are fun.
2. They teach moral values, problem solving, thinking strategies
3. They develop imagination.
4. They provide social experiences.
5. They can be repeated many times.

6. They can be used to teach grammar, vocabulary and pronunciation.
7. They can be used to practice listening, reading and writing.
8. They can be used to teach other subjects, such as maths, art and music.

(From Amanda's handout)

Like food, stories are divided into several types. Therefore we can pick up different types of stories every time and always give students new experiences.

Types of Stories

1. Traditional stories : *Snowwhite, Cinderella*
2. Fables: *The Fox and the Crow, The Lion and the Mouse, The North Wind and the Sun*
3. Stories with a moral: *The Lion and the Mouse, The Fox and the Crow*
4. Funny stories: *We Are Going on a Bear Hunt, Silly Sally*
5. Rhyming stories: *Brown Bear, Brown Bear, what do you see? The Gruffalo*
6. Stories which help children understand feelings: *The Giving Tree*
7. Stories from other cultures: *Handa's Surprise*

It is important to choose an appropriate story to enrich the textbook which we are teaching. If we tell a story which fits the textbook, the students would benefit from it and the teacher benefits from it as well. Here are some

Tips for choosing a story:

1. We choose stories from graded readers, story websites on the internet or picture books.
2. We choose stories which have interesting, appealing and memorable contents.

3. The story is illustrated, that the visuals are clear and attractive and will support children's understanding
4. The language level of the story needs to be appropriate.
5. The content fits in at least partially with our syllabus.
6. The sentence pattern of the story is repetitive and cumulative.
7. It is important to vary the kinds of stories we use and the most important thing is that the story we choose is suitable for the children.(website: onestopenglish)

After choosing a suitable story, an experienced teacher should always get well prepared to manage the atmosphere. Here are some

Ways to set up a storytelling atmosphere:

1. Preparing a cue for storytelling, like a witch hat, a wig, or a mask,
2. Applying a song to introduce a story,
3. Putting on an apron with the title or some characters,
4. Introducing characters in a special way,
5. Asking the “disruptive” student to be the assistant, to turn page or make sound effects
6. Involving a lot of gestures, sounds in storytelling
7. Inviting the kinaesthetic student to be a story statue

We have chosen a good story, set up proper atmosphere, and we should have

Some skills to deliver stories:

See

1. With props, pictures and facial expressions the stories become more authentic.

*Students get excited when we show props. A witch's hat, costume and jack-o-lantern represent a scene of Halloween. A pair of black glasses implies a detective story.

* When we use a picture we hope that it helps the students to understand the story,

therefore don't move the pictures too much and don't put our fingers everywhere.

Show the pictures as clear as possible.

* We show surprise, sad, mad, and happy emotions with our facial expressions.

2. Children can draw the pictures the teacher uses in the storytelling, then retell the story by using the pictures

3. Maps with the overall scene (*The Gruffalo*: The gruffalo, the mouse, the fox, the snake, and the owl) Students draw a line through the map showing the direction of character movement(only works with some stories).(website: onestopenglish)

Hear

1. Use our voice. Vary the pitch and the speed. Shout, whisper. Make sounds.

(whisper)One night, the man went into his neighbour's garden to steal some of the vegetables.

(shout)The old woman heard him, opened the door, and shouted, 'Who's that?'

(bravely)The man tried to explain to the old woman, 'I'm sorry'

2. Use sound effects.

It was raining heavily(rain sound) and there was lightning and thunder(thunder sound).

They were very tired.(yawn).

The ghost started laughing(make a scary laugh)...then it disappeared.

The owl was in the tree(whoot, whoot, whoot).

Move

1. For kinaesthetic students, we can give them chance to move. Eg. when we tell the story *Brown Bear, Brown Bear, what do you see ?* We ask students to sit down when they hear **Brown Bear, Brown Bear, what do you see ?**. Then stand up to answer the questions. **I see a bluebird singing in a tree.**

2. While we are delivering the story, *The Very Busy Spider*, we ask the students to do the same movement as a spider.
3. We also teach the students to sing and dance after we tell the story *The Wheels on the Bus*. **The wheels on the bus go round and round, round and round, round and round. The wheels on the bus go round and round, all through the town.**

Involve

We want to keep students' attention and want them to feel the story. Therefore we can

1. ask them questions: "Brown Bear Brown Bear what do you see?" "We present the picture and ask, **"What does Brown Bear see?"**
2. make them predict: **What will happen to the mouse when the real Gruffalo show up?**
3. make the students repeat or read together with us :Who took the cookies from the cookie jar? Who? Me? Not Me! Then Who?
4. make the students mime: "She took the grains of wheat and planted them. She took a sickle and cut down all the wheat . She threshed the wheat all day long."(Iwona's handout)

Besides Amanda and Iwona's storytelling class, I also attend Ian's workshop, Storytelling in the Language Classroom. In the workshop Ian told us a story then encouraged us to make comments or speak out what we think about the characters. Here is the story:

Mary's Story

Mary is pregnant by Simon but frightened to tell him. She goes to William for advice. He says she must force Simon to marry her. She pays £1 to Michael to row her across the river. She goes to Simon's house. Simon does not want marriage. She goes to Fred, her oldest friend, and tells him about her relationship with Simon. Fred is angry and throws her out.

Michael will not row her across the river because she has no money. She tries to swim across the river and drowns. (Ian Chitty's handout)

Question: Who is the most to blame for Mary's death?

Is it Simon, the man who made her pregnant but doesn't want marriage?

Is it William, the man who told her to force Simon to marry her?

Is it Fred, her oldest friend, who throws her out?

Is it Michael, the man who won't row her across the river because she has no money?

Is it Mary herself, who can't manage her own business?

Everyone may have different answer because everyone sees things from different angles.

Ian provided a topic for us to think and to talk also. On the other hand, I'd like to share the experience of telling the story *The Gruffalo* (By Julia Donaldson & Axel Scheffler) and rewrite it as a script of readers' theater. Then I instruct the students to perform it. Here is part of the story.

The Gruffalo

*A little mouse took a stroll through the deep dark **wood**..*

*A fox saw the mouse and the mouse looked **good**.*

*"Where are you going to, little brown **mouse**?*

*Come and have lunch in my underground **house**."*

"It's terribly kind of you, Fox, but no - I'm going to have lunch with a gruffalo."

"A gruffalo? What's a gruffalo?"

"A gruffalo! Why, didn't you know?"

*"He has terrible tusks, and terrible **claws**,*

*And terrible teeth in his terrible **jaws**."*

"Where are you meeting him?"

*“Here, by these **rocks**,
and his favorite food is **roasted fox.**”*

“Roasted fox! I’ m off!”

The fox said,

“Goodbye, little mouse,

And away he sped.

“Silly old wolf! Doesn’t he know, there’s no such thing as a gruffalo?”

... ..

The story was written in rhyme and the content is quite interesting. The smart mouse met with a fox, a snake, and an owl one by one. They were hungry and want to eat it. But Mouse remains safe by telling the three animals another big giant scary animal, Gruffalo, is coming to eat them. The three animals ran away. Unfortunately, the Gruffalo showed up. How can the little thing cop with the challenge? What a smart mouse! Mouse told Gruffalo, “I’m the scariest creature in this wood. Just walk behind me and soon you’ll see.” Gruffalo went after Mouse and saw every animal ran away as soon as they saw Mouse. Finally the Gruffalo fled away like wind and Mouse enjoys its yummy nuts and the peaceful deep dark wood.

I had rewritten the first part of the story into readers’ theater and instructed the students to perform it. They enjoyed it very much. Here is the script.

THE GRUFFALO

Revised from “*The Gruffalo*” by Julia Donaldson & Axel Scheffler

All: Sound effect of the wood

N: Narrator

W: Wolf(fox)

G: Gruffalo

M: Mouse

O: Owl

S: Snake

Part 1-1

All: O-Woo O-Woo, S-S-, Whoot- Whoot-

N: A mouse took a stroll through the deep dark **wood**..

A wolf saw the mouse and the mouse looked **good**.

W: Where are you going to, little brown **mouse**?

Come and have lunch in my underground **house**.

M: It's terribly kind of you, Wolf, but no - I'm going to have lunch with a gruffalo.

W: A gruffalo? What's a gruffalo?

M: A gruffalo! Why, didn't you know?

He has terrible tusks, and terrible **claws**,

And terrible teeth in his terrible **jaws**.

W: Where are you meeting him?

M: Here, by these **rocks**,

and his favorite food is **roasted wolf.(fox)**

W: Roasted wolf! I' m off!

N: The wolf said,

W: Goodbye, little mouse.

N: Away the wolf sped.

M: Silly old wolf! Doesn't he know, there's no such thing as a gruffalo?

In the story, there were some new words which I had to teach before the script. I taught them the rhyme words as well. Then they go home to recite line by line. When most of them can read it loud, we played. It's hard working, but it is worth doing.

Reflection for the training at Bell Teacher Campus Cambridge

It was a brilliant experience to learn methodology and different cultures with teachers from 36 countries most European. During the 12 days. I talked with teachers of 20 different countries in English. It's amazing. We come from different countries, have different color of skin and hair, and speak different languages. Then we were together to learn and to talk with the same topic: **How to teach students?** Because we know the same language, English. It's fantastic, isn't it?

I made a worksheet “**Which season do you like best?**” for Unit 1 of the 5th graders based on what I learned from the training. It's good to apply what I've just learned for teaching as soon as possible. I'll also try some activities which are easier to set up.

References :

Julia Donaldson.(1999). The Gruffalo. Macmillan

Onestopenglish. <http://www.onestopenglish.com/children/>