

STUDENT INTRODUCTIONS *Through* STORYTELLING

LITERATURE REVIEW

Stories, and the art of storytelling, do many things. Stories teach cultural values and preserve cultural identity. Stories build community. Stories celebrate diversity. Stories, and storytelling, build literacy, vocabulary, presentation, self-expression and listening skills. Additionally, stories help people build self-confidence and self-esteem. Stories are a way for people to inspire themselves and others.

Storytelling, and the use of metaphors, have been used in therapy sessions. In particular, Creative Characters is a therapeutic storytelling technique that has been found to be very helpful with learning disabled children and adults. Brooks (1987) suggested that stories which represent key features “of the child’s world offers a vehicle which to strengthen both cognitive and emotional functioning, including the reinforcement of self-esteem” (p. 546).

Additionally, Brooks (1987) encouraged the use of storytelling in schools (p. 549). Students can learn a great deal by collecting, writing, presenting and reflecting on their stories. By completing the storytelling process, students can experience a sense of accomplishment, joy and mastery. Kease (2014) identified five benefits with storytelling. Storytelling encouraged imagination, flexibility, passion; human expression and concentration and visualization (p. 53). Stories allow the story teller to use words to captivate the mind and verbally share information in a more creative and flexible manner. Stories allow the story listener to actively listen, imagine and visualize. Stories serve as a vehicle to express one’s feelings, beliefs and experiences. The messages captured in the story can strengthen an individual’s self-esteem:

Teachers may use storytelling and related activities as part of the curriculum in the classroom or in tutorial situations to help [students] organize and express themselves, and to strengthen their self-esteem, especially in the learning environment..... Stories produced in school may be praised, read to others, and displayed, so that the author of the story experiences the joys of learning, creating, and feeling worthwhile (Brooks, 1987, p. 549).

A powerful teaching tool is to have students tell stories as a way to express themselves, present their values and explore their cultural roots. People are born into cultures and societies that promote, teach and impart their values. People are formed largely by their experiences. Subsequently, values form, grow and change. (Manning & Curtis, 2015, p. 153-154). Storytelling is a way for individuals to increase their self-understanding and examine current behaviors in light of personal values:

Storytelling is a mean to express who you are, an avenue to share a memory or experience, a medium to teach values and cultural differences....While storytelling can be entertaining and educational, it can also serve as a way for students to explore their own cultural roots....Through stories the truth about how different people share the same life experiences can be revealed (Kease, 2014, p. 53).

Storytelling is a way of human communication and learning, and stories make all types of learning more relevant, engaging and exciting. Storytelling is used by leaders and trainers in organizations. Diane Senffner worked as a corporate training director for Merv Griffin Hotels, was inspired by Noel M. Tichy's book, *The Leadership Engine*, and subsequently, began training in a much more story-based way:

We used our own leadership stories and experiences in class. We retold customer services wins, tales from the trenches of supervision, and stories of managing nasty conflict. We shared the good, bad, and ugly experiences so our staffs could learn from both our success and mistakes. Our executive leaders came to classes and related their own stories from when they walked in our employees shoes (Senffner, 2015, p. 34).

Senffner saw that learners were more tuned in to the content, and she believed that stories had taken the company's training sessions "to a new level of relevance for our learners....Stories gave data meaning. They have the power to engage, motivate, persuade, educate, and entertain" (p. 34). Stories can persuade a person to take action.

Similarly, in a business context, stories are one artifact that help define and explain an organization's culture. Narrative thinking is engaging and deeper communication takes the form of stories. Stories can influence change and be a catalyst for innovation. Storytelling is an engaging art that moves the listener beyond rationale thought and logical argument. Stories provide an invitation for one to express feelings and share fears, likes and dislikes. Stories convey meaning, arouse emotion and grab listeners. (Baek, 2006; Birchard, 2002):

In business, stories are useful in many kinds of communication – to explain, inspire, educate, training, schmooze, mentor and obviously, entertain. Stories used a business context are perhaps most widely thought as a means to sustain company cultures. Hero stories abound in corporations, for example, stressing integrity in the face of an ethical dilemma; extraordinary service that delights and surprises the customer; and empathy and kindness extended to employees by their leaders (Birchard, 2002, p. 99).

Likewise, oral tradition, namely storytelling, is considered an ancient profession of Native American peoples. Handed down from generation to generation, some stories

have been told, retold, shaped, and reshaped for thousands of years. “Storytelling was a way of relating history, transmitting cultural knowledge and giving expression to the esthetic and poetic endeavors of all Native American peoples” (Heredia & Francis, 1997, para. 2). Storytelling is an important part of the history and culture of Native Americans. “Legends, myths, folk tales and stories have long been an important aspect of the history and culture of indigenous people; vehicles to preserve, carry and teach historical events, religious beliefs, ethics and values to the young and old” (Heredia & Francis, 1997, para 1). Indigenous narratives and poetry have been one way to preserve and celebrate the Native languages and culture.

In summary, the art of storytelling is an ancient and valuable art that extends around the globe. A story well told can generate a range of emotions. Stories can make us laugh, cry or swell with pride. A story is a teachable moment. Storytelling is a unique way to help unite cultures, captivate an audience, arouse curiosity, create conversations, enhance intercultural understanding or spark diversity dialogue. Tribal, business and community leaders, managers, trainers, therapists, educators and students have used storytelling in various settings to get their message across. Stories can be used to illustrate a myriad of items, including history, problems, cultural roots, values and experiences. People like to tell stories. People like to hear stories. Stories allow people to share information in a more creative and flexible manner. Storytelling is a learnable skill with many benefits.

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