

Invisible Stories

Top Ten Reasons to Try Stories without Books

1. It is the oldest teaching method in human history

2. Research supports the effectiveness of storytelling.

Haven, K. (2007). *StoryProof: The science behind the startling power of story*. Westport, CT: Libraries Unlimited.

Here are just a few findings..

- Experiences that are not framed into story suffer loss of memory (Mandler,1984; Mandler and Johnson, 1977)
- Canadian researchers (O'Neill,Pearce, and Pick, 2004) found a correlation between early storytelling ability and later math ability.
- Trostle (1999) compared storytelling to story readisng. Telling stories improved vocabulary faster than did reading stories.
- Storyteller Susan Danoff's study was based on anecdotal records from kindergarten teachers:
 - 93%: storytelling improved verbal skills
 - 50%: storytelling improved writing skills
 - 75%: storytelling built confidence in shy students

3. Storytelling directly relates to the Illinois Early Learning Standards

- Language
 - Identify emotions from facial expressions and body language.
 - Communicate effectively using language appropriate to the situation and audience. (e.g., listening, making eye contact, taking turns speaking)
 - Use language for a variety of purposes.
 - With teacher assistance, participate in collaborative conversations with diverse partners (e.g., peers and adults in both small and large groups) about age-appropriate topics and texts.
 - Engage in agreed-upon rules for discussions (e.g., listening, making eye contact, taking turns speaking).
 - Describe familiar people,places, things, and events and, with teacher assistance, provide additional detail.
 - Demonstrate interest in stories and books.
- Social Learning
 - Explore his or her self and personal history.
 - Recall information about the immediate past.

- Develop a basic awareness of self as an individual.
- Show empathy, sympathy, and caring for others.
- Recognize the feelings and perspectives of others
- Investigate, begin to appreciate, and participate in the arts (including music and drama activities)

4. Oral stories are easy to adapt for various ages and settings.

Brickmayer, Jennifer Anne Kennedy, and Anne Stonehouse *From Lullabies to Literature: Stories in the Lives of Infants and Toddlers* (NAEYC and Pademelon Press, 2008)

- Storytelling in the earliest stages is learning to talk to your child. There is no such thing as a child who is too young for stories.
- Keep it short, simple, and close to home
- Start by telling a story about what the child is doing in play. (Christopher drives the cars down the hill, down the hill...He has a blue car, he has a green car....He drives his cars down the hill)
- This kind of storytelling is a great tool to get *adult* language going, and eventually, their language as well.
- Stories for preschoolers can easily be shortened and simplified for toddlers. (Karis' dresses)
- Props can be used in a sensory pan and story told during play (*The Very Hungry Caterpillar*, *The Very Busy Spider*, and *The Napping House* work well)

5. Oral stories can be adapted to fit the needs of the child and to enhance inclusion of all children in the experience.

- Your hands are free, so you can use them to hold the child, move the child, and provide sensory input as you tell.
- Your hands are free to sign some words.
- You are free to move about the room to make eye contact happen.
- You can speed it up or pause as long as you need to, depending on the child's reaction.
- You could use adaptive technology, such as a communication device or picture clues to allow a child to participate.
- You could use props that provide texture for children with visual impairment or sensory needs.

6. Storytelling creates a sense of belonging within a group

Paley, Vivian Gussin. *The Boy Who Would Be a Helicopter*. Cambridge:Harvard University Press. (1990)

Paley, Vivian Gussin. (1981). *Wally's Stories*. Cambridge:Harvard University Press, 1981

- "Storytelling is contagious and listening to the children's stories will rekindle the teacher's...The classroom that does not create its own legends has not traveled beneath the surface where the living takes place" *The Boy Who Would be a Helicopter*, p.6

- “...verbatim bits of book dialogue bring a group closer together. The children understand that an appropriately used phrase from a favorite book has the power to release pleasurable memories of a special world held in common.” *The Boy Who Would be a Helicopter* p. 44

Some ideas to get you started:

- Funny family memories, Stories of a child’s arrival, Stories your parents told you, Places you have traveled. None of these have to be huge events! Simple events make great stories for young children.
- Look for a repeated refrain.

7. Storytelling helps us to understand other people.

- Every culture has stories to delight young children. Sharing stories from around the world is a great way to “explore people and families” (early learning goal).
- Sharing personal stories that include our feelings help children is a great way to help children understand and label their own feelings and recognize them as valid.

8. Oral storytelling is low tech and inexpensive.

- Nothing to buy, check out, or recharge!
- My props are mostly recycled and interchangeable items. If you have a few hats, shoe boxes, cloths, stuffed animals, and play food, you’re all set! You can change a story based on available props. If you are committed to bagless therapy, storytelling is for you!

9. Storytelling is something you are already doing.

- You have probably told several stories already today. No doubt, you have many children’s books memorized. You can feel good about the stories you do tell, and look for new ways to tell more.

10. Storytelling helps me when I am Bombaloo.

- Stories with soothing refrains, songs, pleasant touch, and positive emotions can have a calming effect on both the listener and the teller.

“Aravis immediately began, sitting quite still and using a rather different tone and style from her usual one. For in Calormen, storytelling (whether the stories are true or made up) is a thing you’re taught, just as English boys and girls are taught to write essays. The difference is that people want to hear the stories, whereas I’ve never heard of anyone who wanted to read the essays.”

-*The Horse and His Boy*, C.S.Lewis.

Stories you may have heard today, and where they came from:

Campbell, Rod. *Dear Zoo* (Little Simon, 1999)

Clark, Emma Chinchester. *I Love You, Blue Kangaroo* (Double Day Books, 1999)

McDonald, Margaret Read. *Three Minute Tales*. (August House, 2004), “Coyote’s Ran Song”, “The Tailor’s Jacket”

McDonald, Margaret Read. *Shake-It-Up-Tales: Stories to Sing, Dance, Drum, and Act Out*. (August House Publishers, 2000). Contains “El Conejito”, “Pickin’ Peas”, and “The Girl Who Wore Too Much”

McDonald, Margaret Read. *Tuck Me In Tales*. (August House, 2005) “Snow Bunting’s Lullaby” “Kanji-Jo, the nestlings”

Robinson, Deborah. *Anthony’s Hat* (Scholastic, 1976).

Van Witsen, Betty. *Cheese, Peas, and Chocolate Pudding*. (Scott Foresman, 1956).

Vail, Rachel. *Sometimes I’m Bombaloo*. (Scholastic Press, 2002).

More Helpful Books:

The Parent’s Guide to Storytelling: How to Make Up New Stories and Retell Old Favorites

Margaret Read McDonald (August House, 1995). Great advice for parents and teachers on how to get started and adapt personal stories for telling. This book has many nice stories for young children.

Story Dictation: A Guide for Early Childhood Professionals by Ann Gadzikowski (Red Leaf Press, 2007). This guide provides the “how to” for a teacher whose children begin to tell stories of their own.