A Curriculum for Developing Supplemental Storytelling Activities to Enhance Reading Skills for Intermediate Students

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A Curriculum for Developing
Supplemental Storytelling Activities
to Enhance Reading Skills
for Intermediate Students

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Abstract

This curriculum was developed to assist elementary school teachers in the intermediate grades in the use of storytelling activities in the classroom. It is divided into four sections. The first two sections are addressed to the needs of the elementary students; they include activities that enhance the learning of reading, and activities that will enable the student to become a storyteller. The last two sections are directed to the elementary school teacher; they include various methods and ways for the teacher to become a successful storyteller. These activities and resources will enable the classroom teacher to incorporate storytelling into the learning environment of the classroom.
Chapter 1

INTRODUCTION

Students who are poor readers usually sport an aversion to books and stories. For children who are struggling to read, books can arouse negative feelings rather than enjoyment of the stories. Because of the negative feelings towards books that so many poor readers have, many books of quality are never discovered by the poor reader.

Storytelling can play an important role in expanding the world of the reluctant reader. One way to interest reluctant readers in the world of books is to tell the stories to them. If teachers can tell stories to children in interesting and informative ways, they might encourage children to read the books for themselves. It is assumed here that having the children become interested in reading books is a first step in becoming a successful reader.

In order for the students to take this first step, teachers must have the ability to stimulate students through storytelling. This is where it becomes necessary to convince teachers to take the time and preparation needed in order to tell a story.

There are many good reasons for including
storytelling in the reading curriculum. One reason is that it exposes the children to rich oral language. Oral language is our primary form of communication, and it is basic to learning in all disciplines, especially reading. It is for this reason that oral language is one of the beginning building blocks in learning to read. By using storytelling in the classroom, the exposure to oral language introduces children to a broader vocabulary, and a broader vocabulary helps to enhance reading development.

Listening to stories introduces children to patterns in language. This enables them to hear the sentence structure and to expand their language ability which are other important steps in the process of learning to read.

Another reason for storytelling is that it leads children to books. When children become interested in the story that is being told, many times they will want to read the story for themselves. The enjoyment of the story is the primary motivating factor for reading. Enjoyment of the story can lead, in turn, to enjoyment of literature as a whole. This is another goal of reading instruction - enjoyment of
A third reason is that storytelling actively involves the storyteller with those who are listening to the story. By involving the storyteller with the audience, the affective domain of learning is highlighted. This involvement also provides students with the opportunity to be introduced to life forces beyond their immediate experience, thereby helping to prepare them for life itself. The story becomes communication between the storyteller and the listeners, and when this communication occurs, life is enriched for both by the sharing of the story.

Many educators believe that storytelling is essentially for primary-age children. This is unfortunate, because intermediate-age children can benefit greatly from storytelling. Storytelling can become a way for intermediate students who are poor readers to become exposed to vocabulary that they otherwise would not encounter in their basal readers. By being exposed to this vocabulary, students can broaden and expand their oral language skills.

By listening to the story, children have the opportunity to visualize and create their own mental images resulting from the colorful and descriptive
words that the storyteller is using. In visualizing and creating mental images, children tend to empathize with others more readily, again, adding to the involvement of the storyteller and the children with the stories.

These are just a few of the advantages of storytelling. Unfortunately, too few teachers use storytelling in the classroom to its fullest advantage. Perhaps one reason for this is that, for many, storytelling is a skill that must be learned, rather than an art that comes naturally, and few teachers have mastered the skill of storytelling. Also, it takes time to learn the story. Learning the story comes about by practice, and many times teachers do not have the energy or time to put the effort into practice. However, for the story to be successful, practicing the story is essential.

Storytellers hold the power of language in their stories, and by learning to tell a story, teachers, too, will hold this power. Through storytelling, teachers become masters of the spoken word, and the spoken word becomes alive and can give children, intermediate as well as primary, the desire to read. It is for these reasons that this curriculum guide
has been developed: to enable teachers to learn the skill of storytelling and to provide them with resources and activities to facilitate storytelling in the intermediate elementary grades.

Definition of Terms

**Storytelling**: "The oral communication of a story without the use of the printed word." (Jones and Buttrey, 1970, p. 1)

**Oral Language**: "A pre-reading skill which emphasizes the development of speaking skills including vocabulary as well as syntactical ability." (Cheek and Cheek, 1980, p. 453)

**Reading Process**: "The process used to identify printed symbols and associate meaning with those symbols in order to understand ideas conveyed by the writer." (Cheek and Cheek, 1980, p. 454)

**Reading Skills**: "Skills which involve the learning of procedures or strategies necessary for decoding and understanding the meaning of printed symbols." (Cheek and Cheek, 1980, p. 254)

**Readibility**: "The determination of the approximate grade level at which various materials are written." (Cheek and Cheek, 1980, p. 254).
Chapter II

REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

This chapter will present a review of literature related to storytelling. The history of storytelling will be discussed so that the reader can better understand the origin of storytelling. Different storytelling techniques will be discussed so that the reader will be able to understand how stories can be told. The types of stories will be discussed in order to familiarize the reader with the variety of stories which can have educational merit. Educational implications of storytelling will also be discussed to encourage teachers to use storytelling not only as a source of entertainment but also for its full educational value.

Storytelling is not reading aloud. Jones and Buttrey (1970) define storytelling as the oral communication of a story without the use of the printed word. They determine that storytelling belongs not to the tradition of print, but to speech, not to our skill in reading, but to our natural urge to listen and talk.

According to Colwell (1983), storytelling consists of three parts: the storyteller, the story,
and the audience. These three must be in harmony for
the story to be effective. Colwell (1983) describes
the three parts as follows.

The story should be short. It can be real or
fictitious, and many times it includes the struggle
between good and evil. The most effective stories
should touch the depths of human and spiritual
experience.

The storyteller is the link between the story
and the audience. If the storyteller is interested
and excited about the story, this excitement will, in
turn, interest the children and the adults who are
listening. In the same way, if the storyteller lacks
enthusiasm, this quality will influence and carry
over to the listener's response.

The third element in storytelling is the
audience. The audience shows its response through
absorption into the story. The children who are
involved with the story will retell the story
silently within and create an image that can last.
This image becomes part of the life experiences of
the children.

**History of Storytelling**

The history of storytelling is divided into two
sections: the origin of stories and the development of storytelling in different regions of the earth.

Wagner (1970) described the earliest storytellers as primitives who, after experiencing an event, would recount it to others. Their purpose may have been to amuse, instruct, or boast. These stories were told many times, and in the process of the telling only the subjects of universal appeal withstood the test of time. The classic folktale emerged from these countless stories. The Grimm brothers supported this theory of the origin of stories. It is possible that these stories may have served as the core for Homerian epics, Beowulf, and the Canterbury Tales (Wagner, 1970).

Another belief of the origin of stories that Wagner described is the "Sun Myth" position. This belief holds that heroes of folk tales are allegorical representatives of nature—sun, moon, rain, and so on. Early peoples had trouble interpreting natural phenomena; therefore, they concocted elaborate stories to explain these phenomena.

A third group of theorists believe that all stories originated from India. They claim that the
stories may be traced by language to a common Aryan heritage. Hindu people in ancient times were educated and intellectual enough to conceive and develop plots (Wagner, 1970).

Another interpretation of the origin of stories is to attribute them to a primitive form of cosmology. Primitive peoples were concerned about their personal origin, how the world was made, and why one season followed another. This thirst for knowledge led early peoples to develop stories in order to explain their existence (Wagner, 1970).

Most authors readily remind us that storytelling is older than written history; it has been brought down from century to century. Stories became a mixture of legends, mythology, folktales, and personal tales.

The first written record of a story is found on an Egyptian papyrus called the Westcar Papyrus (Wagner, 1970). It was given the title, Tales of the Magicians. It describes how the sons of Cheops, the great builder of pyramids, entertained their father with stories. These stories were centralized around a certain idea. Two or three thousand years later, compilers of The Thousand and One Nights borrowed the
central idea for their Arabian tales.

In Africa, there were two kinds of storytellers: a resident teller and a traveling teller. The resident lived with the leader of the village and had the responsibility of keeping alive the exploits of the leader. The traveling storyteller was able to go from village to village with different tales (Wagner, 1970).

There is little information regarding Roman storytellers; however, the Romans were probably one of the greatest contributors to much of the lore of the Eastern Hemisphere. The Romans, as well as the gypsies, helped to distribute the stories in the Eastern Hemisphere (Sawyer, 1942).

Next to the Romans and the Gypsies, the Pilgrims and the Crusaders of the Middle Ages also distributed stories over the Eastern Hemisphere. Tales were exchanged along the way through France and Galacia, Spain. Unfortunately, there is little record of the tales that were told along this route, other than the chronicle of Alcuin, King Charlemagne's clerk. Alcuin's chronicle mentioned the storytellers, but he did not chronicle any of the stories that were told (Sawyer, 1942).
Sawyer (1942) describes the Anglo "gleemen" and minstrels across the Channel who sang their stories throughout the countryside. They traveled all around Europe singing their stories and accumulating new ones. In Ireland, the storytellers who were considered masters were called Ollamhs. The Ollamhs were divided into nine sections. They were historians; writers of heroic stories; judges; teachers of wisdom, satire, and wit; keepers of genealogies; and tellers of tales. The masters trained apprentices, and these apprentices would travel from master to master learning the craft of the master storyteller. The master owned certain stories which no apprentice could tell without the permission of the master.

Sawyer also mentions the bards of Wales who were known as the Pinkerdd. These were the master storytellers. They were held in high esteem, and because of this, they were placed under the direct protection of the king.

Trouveres and troubadours were abundant during the Middle Ages. The trouveur was the composer and the troubador was the reciter. The terms, troubadore and trouveur, eventually became synonymous. They
fell out of favor because of their arrogance and quibbling among themselves. They, too, became relegated to the nomadic life of the wandering storyteller (Sawyer, 1942).

With the invention of printing in 1450, the minstral storytellers began to fade from the scene. Stories were transmitted through writing rather than through word of mouth (Wagner, 1970).

Wagner's (1970) account describes how folklorists began to search for these stories that had been passed down by word of mouth; the collecting of oral narrative forms thus became an important part of storytelling. Early poets, troubadores, ministrals, and storytellers have been very important in keeping alive the art of storytelling. However, they are not the only ones responsible for the oral tradition of storytelling. Parents, grandparents, and teachers have always told stories to amuse and entertain children. Bedtime stories are still a ritual in many households today (Wagner, 1970).

Sawyer (1942) notes that storytelling in children's libraries came into being in the late nineteenth century. Librarians began to tell stories in order to interest children in books. They soon
began to see more than just the interest value in telling stories to children. It became an entertaining and an educational experience for children. Today, storytelling still remains a part of libraries, classrooms, and homes.

Types of Stories

There are many different types of stories. Wagner (1970) has divided this literature into four main areas: folk literature, poetry, realistic stories, and biographical material. His descriptions of story types which follow serve to outline the variety of material available.

Folk literature can further be divided into myths, sagas, and folktales. A myth is a story that is concerned with gods or supernatural beings; it is usually an imaginative investigation of science and scientific research. A saga is a prose narrative of the heroic exploits of an individual written to commemorate a factual matter, war, heroism, or some outstanding occurrence; only persons of good lineage would qualify for a saga. The folktale is a story that forms part of the oral tradition of a tribe or people. As opposed to the saga, these tales usually extol the lowly or the peasant. Fairy stories are
usually included in this category, also.

A second type of story is narrative poetry. Narrative poetry includes epics, ballads, story poems, and nursery rhymes.

An epic is a long poetic composition, usually centered upon a hero (Wagner, 1970). It is related in a series of heroic achievements. Several famous epics are the Illiad and Odyssey, Beowulf, El Cid, and Milton's Paradise Lost. Epic poetry is usually told in condensed versions in several different sittings.

Ballads are characterized by rhyme, rhythm, and plot. They are a type of folk-expression that is sung (Sawyer, 1942). Ballads usually involve tragic, young love that is not fulfilled until after death. They are one of the oldest types of storytelling known.

Story poems, another type of narrative poetry, contain lyrical qualities and deal with any topic. Some examples of story poetry include Noyes' "The Admiral's Ghost," and Browning's "The Pied Piper of Hamelin."

Nursery rhymes are limited in content and are among the first type of storytelling to which
children are exposed. Nursery rhymes contain a sense of nonsense and fun that young children find very enjoyable.

The third type of story used in storytelling is the realistic story. The realistic story tries to represent life in an honest way. They contain elements of life from all over. For example; Mark Twain's *Adventure's of Huckleberry Finn* depicts river town life, and Bret Harte's "The Outcasts of Poker Flat" depicts life in a mining camp. Realistic stories many times represent life in both the goodness and evilness that are inherent in mankind.

Biographical stories are the fourth type of literature used in storytelling. Tales of Christopher Columbus, John Smith, George Washington, and Abraham Lincoln are examples of biographical storytelling that take place in the classroom. Historical facts can be learned in an entertaining, informative way through the use of biographical storytelling (Wagner, 1970).

**Storytelling Technique**

The technique of telling a story involves several different elements. It involves the selection of the story, the preparation of the story,
and the presentation of the story (Baker & Greene, 1977).

The selection of the story involves knowledge of the audience to whom the story is being told. The story also needs to have meaning for the one who is telling it. Children can sense the true feelings of the teller about the story; therefore, storytellers should find stories that they like to tell. This involves reading constantly in search of new material.

In selecting the story, the storyteller also needs to determine if the story is a good story. Baker and Greene (1977) outlined some of the characteristics of a good story. They are as follows:

1. A single theme, clearly defined
2. A well-developed plot
3. Style
   Look for vivid word pictures
4. Characterization
5. Faithfulness to source material
6. Dramatic appeal
7. Appropriateness for the listener
Another thing to look for in story selection is the appropriateness of the story to the audience. The storyteller needs to know the age of the audience so that the particular needs of that age group can be met by the story. For example, young listeners, ages 3 to 5, enjoy rhythmic, nursery rhyme stories, whereas 6-, 7-, and 8-year olds might enjoy stories that have a folk or fairy tale theme. The 9 to 11-year olds enjoy folktales that have more meaning behind them. Most children who are over the age of 9 have begun to develop the power of reason and judgment, and they enjoy stories that encourage them to use these abilities. Children who are 11 to 13 years old are ready to appreciate the development of the plot and enjoy stories that appeal to their growing sexual awareness (Baker & Greene, 1977).

It is also important in story selection to select the most appropriate version of the story. The version selected should be smooth with a rich language, and it should flow without awkward breaks in the telling of the story (Farnsworth, 1981).

After the story has been selected, proper preparation of the story is essential. In order to prepare the story, the storyteller must make the
Storytelling

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story his/her own. This involves living with the story until one knows it so well that it becomes almost a personal experience.

Baker and Greene (1977) describe several elements in the preparation of a story. The first step is to read the story silently in order to introduce the story to the teller. After the story has been read once silently, the storyteller should read the story again to determine the mood of the story. It should be determined if the story is a sad story, a happy story, a romantic story, or a suspenseful story. After determining the mood of the story, the storyteller should try to determine the particular aspect of the story that should be shared with the listeners.

The second step in preparation is to read the story aloud several times. Timing oneself while reading the story will enable the storyteller later to approximate the amount of time it should take to tell the story. This can help the teller to see if he/she is adding or deleting too much from the original story. The more often the story is read, the easier it will become to learn the story.

The story should not be memorized, nor should it
be learned in fragments. One should learn the story as a whole and master the structure of the story. The structure of the story can be divided into three parts: the introduction, the body, and the conclusion.

The introduction of the story should capture the attention and interest of the children. It should set the mood of the story. Many a good story can be lost to the audience if the introduction does not capture the attention of the audience.

The body of the story should contain key situations that lead to the high point, or climax, of the story. While practicing the story, the storyteller needs to practice building the tension so that the climax is not lost in the other details of the story.

The conclusion of the story should be short and interesting. Excitement has begun to wane from the climax of the story, and the storyteller should not prolong the ending of the story.

The third and final element in storytelling technique is the presentation of the story. Presentation of the story, or telling the story, involves not only the storyteller but the physical
arrangement of the listeners. One of the effective physical arrangements is to have the listeners seated in a semi-circle around the storyteller. The closer the children are to the storyteller, the more influence the story will have.

Baker and Greene (1977) emphasize that when presenting the story, it is important for the storyteller to be exceptionally familiar with the story so that it becomes almost one's own experience. According to Greene (1983), the storyteller creates the illusion that the listener is hearing the author's voice. The more familiar one is with the story, the more true this becomes.

Baker and Greene advise the storyteller to use a low-pitched voice with a lot of volume. The speaker needs to remember to speak clearly, distinctly, and slowly. One frequent mistake made by the beginning storyteller is the tendency to speak rapidly. Children will better be able to make sense of the words if the storyteller speaks slowly.

While presenting the story, the storyteller should look directly at the listeners. Eye contact is one advantage that storytelling has over simply reading aloud. The gaze of the storyteller should
shift from person to person in the group; this allows closer eye contact.

The storyteller establishes the mood of the story by gestures, appearance, expressions, and the enjoyment that he/she shows in the story. The mood should be one of kindliness and adventure, and the listeners should look forward to an eventful story hour. Setting the mood also encourages the listeners to listen intently to what the storyteller has to share.

The story hour group is most effective if it does not exceed a maximum of 30 children. While the master storyteller can still tell an effective story with a large group, the intimacy feeling of a small group is lost (Wilson, 1979).

The storyteller should end with the ending of the story. A moment or two of silence after the story helps to retain the spirit and privacy of the story. If the children wish to come up later and discuss the story, they should feel free to do so; however, the privacy of the listeners should not be invaded by trying to discuss the meaning of the story directly after the telling of the story. This can be done at a later time if the storyteller sees a need
for it (Baker & Greene, 1977).

Sawyer (1942) says that the most important requirement for a good storyteller is the right approach, the experience of the storyteller, the ability to build the background, a creative imagination, and a gift for selection. These are all part of the storytelling technique.

**Educational Implications**

There are many educational implications of storytelling. According to Farnsworth (1981), storytelling is an ancient art that offers students a first-hand experience that both encourages the basics and at the same time helps them to understand themselves and their world better.

Storytelling can motivate basic reading skills by introducing children to books. Sawyer (1942) tells of her experience as a storyteller in greater Boston when she used many of her story hours to introduce listeners to books that had long been forgotten. She would hold the book in her hand and tell her audience that it was a book that she liked. She then asked them if they would like to hear about it. They responded with a resounding "Yes", and in a few days the book would be gone off the shelf into
the hands of one of the eager listeners.

Storytelling encourages the art of listening. Children are basically poor to mediocre listeners. According to Wagner (1970), they have grown accustomed to constant noise, and, as a result, they ignore a certain amount of speech. In years past, adults were models of listening for their children. Children realized the importance of listening through observing the adult role models. Today, in many instances, most listening is done in front of the television set (Wagner, 1970).

By listening to a story, children are preparing to read (Baker & Greene, 1977). It helps children to associate the symbols that they are hearing to the symbols on the printed page.

Children who are poor listeners usually have this habit well established before they enter school (Wagner, 1970). They have learned to tune out things that do not interest them. Listening habits are not something that children are born with, but rather a skill in which the children can be trained. Good listening habits are essential if children are to gain anything from the storytelling experience. According to Wagner (1970), storytelling can help
children to realize immediately the benefits to be gained from attentive listening just by the pleasure gained from listening to the story.

A second educational implication of storytelling is the development of oral communication skills. A research project at New York University (Baker & Greene, 1977) determined that children speaking nonstandard English expanded their language ability dramatically when they were exposed to oral language activities involving literature.

A third educational implication would be that story-telling encourages children to tell stories. By telling stories, children can experience first-hand the sequence involved in a story (Farnsworth, 1970). Older children can especially benefit from the telling of the story. It becomes an outlet for them to judge the worth of their self-expression (Magee & Sutton-Smith, 1982). Not only does it improve their speaking skills, but it can help to instill self-confidence. Two sixth graders who learned to tell stories responded this way: "I feel that storytelling is very exciting. It helped me in public and class speaking. I liked being able to tell a story. I really learned what
it's like to tell a story." "I told four times and the way that I felt when I told to the kindergarten was extraordinary. It was simply amazing to see how the children would listen to me." (Farnsworth, 1981, p. 165).

When children become storytellers, the adult needs to be an interested listener. At first this interest should not be so intense so as to frighten the child (Magee & Sutton-Smith, 1982). As the child becomes more confident, the listener should become more intent. Having the adult as a listener not only encourages the child in oral communication, but it enables the child to observe a good role model - a listening adult.

A fourth and final implication is the development of the creative ability in each child. Through the story, children can create scenes, action, and characters. They can explore the experience of the story without actually having experienced it (Appleby, 1979). Creativity is something that storytelling can enhance by broadening the scope of imagination. According to Colum (1927), imagination is the beginning of creation: "one imagines what one desires; one wills what one
imagines; and, at last, one creates what one wills"
(Colum, 1927, p. 360).
Chapter III

DESIGN OF THE STUDY

This curriculum will be developed to assist elementary school teachers in the intermediate grades in the use of storytelling activities in the classroom. Storytelling can meet the needs of the students by motivating the students in areas of learning. This curriculum will meet the needs of the teachers by providing a means to learn how to tell stories and to use storytelling in the curriculum. Research shows that teachers tend to use that which they are comfortable and about which they are knowledgeable; this curriculum is intended to provide the background which might encourage such use of teaching approaches.

The curriculum will be divided into four sections. The first two sections will be addressed to the needs of the elementary students. One objective will be for the student to learn the art of storytelling. Another will be for the student to enhance learning in several curriculum areas by the integration of storytelling into these areas. The last two sections will be directed to the elementary school teachers; they will include various methods...
and ways for the teacher to become a successful storyteller.

The first section of the curriculum will include activities that will be developed to enhance the skill of storytelling in intermediate-age students. The activities will give the students the opportunity to improve their oral language abilities; they will also give the students the opportunity to increase self-esteem by the positive interaction that they will receive from those who are listening to the story.

The second section will include activities that the teacher can use to incorporate storytelling into the classroom. The activities will be developed so that storytelling is integrated into the discipline of reading. Storytelling is a tool that can be used to enhance the learning in this area. The activities will enable the teacher to implement storytelling in this area.

The third section of the curriculum will include instructions and techniques to assist the teacher in learning the art of storytelling. This section, as well as the last section, will be directed to the teacher rather than the student. The objective will
be for the teacher to learn how to tell a story. A teacher must first learn how to tell a story effectively before implementing storytelling into the curriculum.

The fourth and final section of the curriculum will contain a list of annotated resources for the teacher that will enable the teacher to locate a story that would be appropriate for the subject matter that she/he is teaching. The resources will be divided into sections derived from Wagner (1970): folk literature, narrative poetry, realistic stories, and biographical stories.

These activities and resources will enable the classroom teacher to incorporate storytelling into the learning environment of the classroom. Integrating storytelling into other areas of learning provides the student with the opportunity to receive storytelling as a learning experience, rather than just a pleasureable activity to fill empty minutes.

This curriculum will be evaluated by a checklist given to knowledgeable persons so that feedback may be obtained regarding this curriculum. Also, the evaluation will be able to provide information so that improvements can be made upon the curriculum.
A CURRICULUM FOR DEVELOPING SUPPLEMENTAL STORYTELLING ACTIVITIES TO ENHANCE READING SKILLS FOR INTERMEDIATE STUDENTS

Introduction

Storytelling does play a useful and vital role in the teaching of reading to intermediate elementary students. It can be integrated into the reading curriculum, or it can be taught as a separate subject. Storytelling will enhance oral language skills and encourage the student to become interested in the source of storytelling - the stories themselves. This, in turn, can produce a renewed desire to read.

The following curriculum guide is divided into four units. The first two are directed to the student, and they show how storytelling can be integrated into the curriculum. The last two are directed to the teacher, and they will enable the teacher to become an adept storyteller.

Unit 1 - Storytelling for the Student
Objectives:
During the course of these activities, the student will develop:
- skill in using dramatic action to bring illustrations to life.
- skill in large group pantomime.
- skill in small group pantomime.
- skill in individual pantomime.
- skill in role-play with a partner.
- skill in expressing mood and feeling through the use of dialogue.
- skill in using the voice to express conflict.
- skill in utilizing pantomime and dialogue to convey the story line.

Teaching Strategies:

The activities in this unit should be spaced out enough so that they are done on different days. They should be done in a sequential development. The lessons are written so that the student will gradually obtain confidence in expression, body movement, speaking and finally, in storytelling. It is important that all attempts made by the student to express himself/herself be accepted. Suggestions to help the student better himself/herself should be used in the place of criticism.

Begin with group activities in which all students can participate simultaneously. Later have
students working in small groups, and finally, individually. Never force a child to participate. Each activity should be followed by a discussion of the relevance of the activity. The teacher should ask questions that will enable the student to evaluate his/her own performance.

Activity 1

The first activity in this unit is to enable the student to obtain the ability of using dramatic action to bring illustrations to life.

"There are other ways to make pictures than by drawing them. Using your body is one other way. You are going to make a picture with your body. I'll tell you the name of a picture. Then I'll close my eyes and count to ten as you make the picture. When I open my eyes, freeze and don't move unless I push a button to bring your picture to life. Show me someone:

   erasing the chalkboard
   opening a present
   looking for one shoe
   catching a butterfly."

"Now find a space in the room. I'm going to give you the title of an illustration needed for the
book *Sylvester and the Magic Pebble.*" Give them the title of the first illustration. Close your eyes and count to ten. Stop at a few students and turn them on. After coming to life for a few seconds, turn them off.

For very active titles, have the students bring them to life in slow motion. After creative pictures for titles that you supply, give the students the opportunity to create their own.

**Activity 2**

This activity will enable the student to gain confidence in group pantomime.

The entire class can participate in this activity. It can be done at their desks, or standing in a circle. The teacher describes the following actions as each student acts them out.

1. hiking up a rocky mountain, walking through an icy stream, skating on ice, roller skating, tiptoeing through a puddle, thrashing through the jungle.
2. trying to find their pajamas and robe in the dark.
3. sewing and sticking themselves with the needle.
4. seeing the new toy that they've been wanting for a long time.
5. observing a building on fire.
6. saying goodbye to someone they love who's moving away.
7. eating a lemon.

Activity 3

This activity will also help the student to gain confidence in group pantomime.

Divide the students into groups of five. Give each group one of the following situations, and as they pantomime the situation, the other groups should try to determine the action that is taking place. Allow time for each group to plan the pantomime. The situations are as follows:

1. Pass a perfect rose from one person to another. When the rose is received, examine it. Through facial expression show the class that it is a beautiful rose.
2. Pass a ball from one person to the next.
3. Pass a small rabbit from one person to the next.
4. Pass a bowl of hot soup filled to the rim.
5. Pass a ballon on a string.
Activity 4

This activity is a pantomime that will help the student to gain confidence in appearing before a large group. It is an individual pantomime, and it is important that students do not feel forced to participate.

Students will individually come to the front of the room. At the front of the room, there is a table upon which there are imaginary objects. The students must approach the table, pick up an imaginary object, and through body language and pantomime, convey what the object is to the other students in the class.

If a student has a problem coming up with an imaginary object, give him/her suggestions, such as: bow and arrow, baton, cheerleading uniform, or McDonald's fast food.

After the students have completed the pantomime, follow up with a discussion on the purpose and benefits of the activity. What did they learn? How did they feel when doing the activity? How might it have been easier?

Activity 5

Role-playing can introduce the student to speaking in front of other people, a skill essential
for storytelling. This activity will give students the opportunity to role-play a given situation with a partner.

Divide the students into teams of two, or allow them to choose a partner. Give each team one of the following situations to role play for the other students. They are as follows:

1. A caterpillar eating, spinning a cocoon, resting, then emerging as a butterfly.

2. Imagine that you are a blade of grass. In spring, you are soaking wet from rain, in summer you are dry from the sun, and in the winter, you are dying.

3. You are a puppy, and you have lost your mother. You come upon a cat and ask for help.

4. You are a kite stuck in a tree. The wind helps you to become free.

5. You see a building on fire. There is a friend unable to get out.

6. You are a child telling your mom why you're late coming home from school.

7. You are a mother cat teaching her kitten how to take a bath.
Activity 6

Ask for volunteers to participate in a situation in which two children create their own dialogue to resolve the given situation. Some situations might be:

1. Your parents have given you a new bike. Take it to a friend's house and tell him/her about it.
2. Tell your mom about the twenty-dollar bill that you found on the way to school.
3. You wanted a skateboard for your birthday, but instead, open a package with a transformer and a ten-dollar bill in it.
4. You are walking home from school, when a very nice-looking lady stops her car to see if you want a ride.
5. You go to the bus stop only to have the school bully push you down and accuse you of stealing his lunch money. In return, he wants your lunch.

Activity 7

The following activity will help the student to express mood and feeling through the use of dialogue.

Write a sentence on the board such as "I don't
want to play with you." Ask a student to say the sentence. Then encourage other students to say the same sentence using different words. Discuss how the meaning of the sentence is changed when different words are emphasized.

Read the story Pierre by Maurice Sendak. Everytime Pierre says, "I don't care", point to a student who must supply the line using the proper emphasis.

This activity can be done several different times using other stories and using different phrases. It should be done frequently before the student attempts storytelling.

Activity 8

In this activity, the student will begin the final process towards storytelling. The student will develop characterization through the use of dialogue. Divide the group into partners. The first partner becomes a favorite book character, and the second partner becomes a journalist interviewing the storybook character. They can ask the character how he/she felt in certain situations and why they responded the way they did. After a certain amount of time, allow the partners to switch roles. It
would be best for the partners to also switch
storybook characters.

It is suggested that the students use well-known
characters from stories such as: "The Three Bears,"
"Cinderella," "Hansel and Gretal," "Little Red Riding
Hood," and "The Three Little Pigs." Older children
can use characters from stories that they have
recently read if their partner is familiar with the
character.

**Activity 9**

This activity is a good follow-up for the
previous activity. It, again, reinforces
characterization through the use of dialogue.

Divide students into groups of five. Each group
goes to a place in order to decide on a story.
Within the group, each child selects a character from
the story. One by one, each group must answer
questions from the other group to determine their
story. As the group answers the questions, the
students in the group must answer the questions the
way their character would answer. Each group should
have the opportunity to be questioned.

**Activity 10**

This activity should be done several times
before the student is ready to tell a complete story. Have the students sit in a circle and tell them a familiar story. One example might be "Goldilocks and the Three Bears." After telling the story, tell the students that they are now going to tell the story back to you. Have one volunteer student start the story, then, when that student has told the first part of the story, ask another to continue. This should go on until the story is told.

After the story is completed, talk about the good things in the storytelling and have the students come up with some things that could be better. This should be done so that no one student feels singled out.

This activity is a prelude to the actual storytelling. Once the students have done this several times, they should begin to feel more confident in storytelling. Allow them to choose their own story to learn and tell to the class. Go over the steps in learning how to tell a story presented in Unit 2. Assign a storytelling time for the students to tell their stories.

When the students feel comfortable telling their stories, team up with a class in the lower-elementary
grades and allow the upper-elementary students to share their stories. This can be incredibly motivating for both groups of students. It can be done as a group activity or on a one-to-one basis.

When students tell stories, they are not only increasing their oral language ability, they are also increasing their motivation to read.

**Unit 2 - Storytelling in the Reading Program**

This unit is a compilation of activities that will help the teacher to incorporate storytelling into the discipline of reading. This is just a small portion of what actually can be done with storytelling in this area.

**Objectives:**

During the course of these activities, the children will increase reading comprehension through the use of storytelling in these areas of comprehension and critical reading:

- finding the main idea
- recalling details
- classifying information
- determining fact or opinion
- drawing conclusions
- predicting outcomes
- using context clues
- making judgments
- solving problems

Finding the Main Idea

1. Select articles from books, magazines, and newspapers. Share the articles with the class and have the students decide on the main idea.

2. Choose selections from the reading lesson and re-tell them to the students. After re-telling that portion of the story, have the students give the main idea of that section. The students can also be the ones who are telling that portion of the story.

3. The main idea can be expressed in different positions of the story. It can be expressed in the beginning, middle or the end of the story. It can also be expressed in both the beginning and the end. In order to better enable the students to determine the main ideas, tell the students several short stories in which the main idea is expressed in these different areas. Have them determine the location of the main idea in
4. After telling the class a story, discuss the main idea of the story with them.

Recalling Details

1. Tape-record a story relating to a unit of study. Ask a student to listen carefully for facts brought out by the material. Prior to the activity, construct ten question cards and ten answer cards on index cards. Ask the students to match the cards after listening to the story.

2. Before telling a story, instruct the students to listen for certain things that you will later ask questions on. After telling the story, ask the questions.

3. About ten test items, such as true or false, multiple-choice or completion are constructed for each short story. After listening to the story, the students are to answer the questions about the selection.

4. After listening to the story, the students may, make a map of some part of the story. They may indicate certain events that took place.
Classifying Information

1. Students are given an animal to tell a brief story about without giving the name of the animal. The other students must determine the identity of the animal, and then classify it with other animals of like characteristics.

2. Students make booklets that are to be used for classification. The booklets should contain pictures of anything that can be grouped together. The students then tell a story about their pictures.

Using Context Clues

1. Tell a story that contains several different vocabulary words. After the story is told have the students determine the meaning of the words using context clues.

2. The teacher tells a story using a lot of nonsense vocabulary words. Students try to determine the meanings of the words by the words that are surrounding them.

Determining Fact and Opinion

1. After telling two different stories, students are to determine which one of the
two stories presents factual information,
and which one presents opinionated
information.
2. The students are to tell if the story really
could have happened or if it is
make-believe. They should recognize the
fact that most make-believe stories begin
with "Once Upon A Time."
3. Students listen to a factual story and
change words in the story to make it
opinion.
4. Give several students different stories to
tell of which some are factual and others
are opinion. After telling the story, have
the students determine if it was, indeed,
fact or opinion.

Drawing Conclusions
1. After telling part of the reading lesson,
students predict what will happen next and
why they think this will happen.
2. Tell a story to the class that has an
open-ended ending. Have the students
determine an appropriate conclusion to the
story.
3. Tell the students a ghost story or real-life story. Ask them how they would have finished it. Accept oral contributions.

4. Discuss news articles and current event happenings. Ask the students to draw conclusions about the events based on the information they have gathered.

Predicting Outcomes

1. Several endings to a story are given, and the students are to decide which would be the best conclusion based upon agreed criteria.

2. After telling a story, the outcome is discussed, and the students tell why they think this character acted as he did and what they would have done in a similar situation and why they would have done it.

3. Mount pictures on construction paper. Ask a student to choose a picture, then use the picture to tell a story to several other students. The student should look at the picture and tell what is occurring in the picture, and explain the circumstances that led to the events. Then he/she should think
Making Judgments

1. After telling any fable, discuss what occurred and why it occurred. Ask the students what the characters could have done differently and why.

2. Analyze story characters and discuss the reasons that they behaved as they did. Ask the students what they would have done in similar circumstances.

Sequencing

1. After going on a field trip, have a student tell the sequence of events in a story form.

2. Have students describe a routine activity. For example: brushing teeth, getting ready in the morning, making the bed, etc...

3. After listening to a story, have the students describe as accurately as possible the sequence of events as they occurred in the story.

Problem Solving

1. Tell a story in which there is a problem to be solved. The students are to tell how they would solve the problem and give
reasons for their decisions. They should discuss these with one another.

2. Tell a problem solving story such as:
   a. There are seven amoebas in a bowl. They multiply by dividing in two every minute. At the end of forty minutes the bowl is completely filled. How long did it take to get the bowl half-filled?
      (Answer: 39 minutes)
   b. You remember the story about the hare and the tortoise. The tortoise moves at the speed of 1/100th of a mile an hour, while the hare runs at a speed of 45 miles an hour.
      (a) How long will it take the tortoise to run one mile?
      (b) How long will it take the hare to run one mile?
   c. Divide a circle into as many segments as you can with four straight lines.
      (Answer: 10 segments)

Unit 3 - Storytelling for the Teacher

This section, which is directed at the teacher, is developed to enable the teacher to tell a story.
It will include instructions and techniques for use in the art of storytelling. This will consist of a series of steps that the teacher can follow to enable him/her to learn the most effective way to tell a story.

1. Train the voice. The voice is the instrument that will convey the story; therefore, it is very important for the voice to be strong. It should not be thin and raspy, but full of emotion. The storyteller can train his/her voice by listening to it on a tape recorder. They should pinpoint the areas of weakness as they listen.

One area to specifically make note of is the pitch of the voice. Voice pitch involves the highness or lowness of the voice. It also involves the loudness or softness of a voice. The storyteller should listen to the pitch of his/her own voice to determine if it is pleasant to listen to. Voice pitch can be controlled by breathing properly. The breath should come from the abdomen rather than the throat, as this gives a more resonant value to the voice. The storyteller should have the ability to change voice pitch when necessary. Practice speaking softly with emphasis and loudly with emphasis. Know
the points in the story that the teller should change pitch. Learn to know your voice and to use it effectively. Do not be afraid to experiment with your voice. Remember, an unpleasant voice will cause many to stop listening to the story.

2. Use words effectively. The first essential point to remember is to articulate words carefully. The words have no meaning if they are not heard distinctly. After the enunciation of the words has been mastered, it is important for the storyteller to have a rich vocabulary when telling the story. A story is much less interesting when the storyteller has a poverty-striken vocabulary. If a storyteller has command of a rich vocabulary, it will make it a lot easier to use a variety of stories. The teller will not be limited by the vocabulary.

3. Learn the story. This step seems an obvious one. Of course the storyteller must learn the story in order to tell the story. However, this is probably the most difficult and time-consuming step in storytelling.

There are two ways to go about learning a story. Either it is memorized word for word, or it is not. Unfortunately, few of us have the ability to memorize
a story word for word. For one thing, time is not available, nor is the desire to do so. Another problem in strict memorization is that if a few words are forgotten, many times the entire passage is forgotten.

Probably the best way to learn a story is to tell it scene by scene rather than word for word. This brings us to the fourth step.

4. Practice the story. No one can expect to tell a story effectively without practicing the story beforehand. The best way to go about this is to read the story through several times. The more familiar one becomes with the story, the easier it will be to tell. After reading the story, imagine scene by scene the events that occur in the story. Then tell the story to yourself aloud. It is important to tell the story aloud to yourself, because it is very common to forget part of the story or to lose your place in the story. It is much better for this to occur when telling it to yourself rather than in front of a group of students. However, if you should forget part of the story or lose your place, one effective way to give yourself some time to remember is to describe in detail something in the story. For
example, if the story involves an old house, you might want to elaborate on the unique features of the house. Use your imagination in moments like these and make up an alternative story if the story that you are telling is completely lost.

Listen to the way you pronounce words. Notice the pauses in the storytelling. Pauses are one of the most useful tools of the storyteller. Make sure that when you tell the story that you are using a rich vocabulary. The story should become alive to the storyteller, and this can only be done by telling it over and over to make it part of yourself.

Another useful tool in learning how to tell a story is to tell it while facing a mirror. Are your facial expressions appropriate? Do you use gestures only when it will enhance the story?

5. Know the audience. This is an area that is often overlooked by storytellers. It is essential that the storyteller know the audience. By knowing the audience, the teller can determine if this is indeed an appropriate story. For example, if the audience were comprised of junior high students, the storyteller would not want to tell a fairy tale unless it were geared to an older audience.
Likewise, the storyteller would not want to tell an extremely long and complicated story to a group of five-year-old children. If the situation arises where the audience is not the group that the teller expected, the storyteller should be prepared to change the story or adapt the story to the audience that he/she is telling to. For example, if the story has a difficult vocabulary for the particular age group that you are telling the story to, it might be necessary to change some of the words so that the momentum of the story is not lost, but yet the students understand what is going on in the story. It is important to remember that a rich vocabulary is not a vocabulary that is too difficult for the audience to understand, but one that will convey most adequately the meaning and beauty of the story.

When these points are utilized by the teacher in preparing for storytelling, it will help the teacher to master the art of storytelling. It may also open the students' eyes to the joy of listening to an adept storyteller.

Unit 4 - Resources for Storytelling

The last section of this curriculum guide will contain a list of annotated resources for the teacher
to use in order to facilitate storytelling in the classroom. This list will continue to grow as more information is made available. It is divided into four sections: folk literature, narrative poetry, realistic stories, and biographical stories.

Folk Literature

"Beauty and the Beast." From the Blue Fairy Book, edited by Andrew Lang.

"Beauty and the Beast" is a rather long story to tell. It is especially enjoyed by upper-elementary students because of the love story element.


This Scottish story is especially good for storytelling to upper-elementary students. It involves a bewitched bridge and the kelpie she encounters.

"Clever Elsie." From Grimm's Fairy Tales, translated by Margaret Hunt.

This story is a slapstick tale that will appeal to middle and upper-elementary students. The stupidity of Elsie may cause many students to groan in disbelief.
"Conla and the Fairy Maiden." From *Celtic Fairy Tales*.

This is an ancient story that goes back to the pre-Christian times. The theme is that of a hero traveling to the Land of the Ever Young. Suitable for middle and upper-elementary grades.


This story of a shoemaker and the elves that helped him is a good story for students to tell. It is short and easy to describe. Suitable for all elementary grades, especially lower-elementary.


An emperor, who is totally absorbed in his clothing, hires two rogues to weave a magnifican outfit from a magical cloth. The magical cloth turns out to be invisible. Upper-elementary will enjoy the irony in this story.

"The Fisherman and His Wife." From *Grimm's Household Tales*, translated by Margaret Hunt.

The fisherman in this story has a lesson to
teach children of all ages. The telling of this story is made more effective by a somber tone.

"Hansel and Grettal," by the Grimm brothers.
This favorite story deals with the fear a lot of children have of being abandoned. The happy ending is reassuring to children.

"The Princess Who Could Not Be Silenced." From East o' the Sun and West o' the Moon by Gudrun Thorne-Thomsen.
An enjoyable story about a princess who does not have the last word. Upper-elementary students will like the ending in this story.

The Selfish Giant by Oscar Wilde.
A story of a giant and one little boy shows him the true meaning of love. A beautiful story for any age.

The Snow Queen by Hans Christian Andersen.
The story of Gerda and Kay and their experiences with the demon mirror and the Snow Queen. This is a good story for all elementary grades.

The Swineherd by Hans Christian Andersen.
A selfish empress receives her just reward in this tale of a prince disguised as a swineherd.
Suitable for all elementary grades.

"Tom Tit Tot." Collected by Joseph Jacobs.
This is a humorous variant of "Rumplestiltzkin."
Children of all ages will enjoy this story of a little creature deceiving a beautiful lady.

Narrative Poetry

"A Reply to Nancy Hanks," by Julius Silberge.
This short poem of Abraham Lincoln is a response to "Nancy Hanks 1784 - 1818." It has a lot of impact when told together.

"A Song of Sherwood," by Alfred Noyes.
A poem detailing the exploits of Robin Hood and his Merry Men.

"Atlantic Charter, A.D. 1620 - 1942" by Francis Brett Young.
An inspirational poem of the Pilgrims, this lends itself very well to group recitation.

"Columbus," by Joaquin Miller.
This poem incorporates itself very well into the curriculum.

This song of Joan of Arc lends itself very well to classroom telling.

This poem of Hiawatha's childhood would be good for more than one person to recite. Suitable for upper-elementary students.

A sad, romantic poem suitable for upper-elementary and Junior High students.

This poem of Abraham Lincoln is especially significant when told in conjunction with "A Reply to Nancy Hanks."

Students in the upper-elementary grades enjoy this rhythmic ballad of Paul Revere's ride.

Realistic Stories

Dawn by Molly Bang.
This story may bring tears to the eyes of many. It is a story that will confuse younger students, but it will fascinate those in grades 4 – 8.

A Russian tale of an old miner and how with the help of faith, he saves other miners from certain death in a cave-in. People of all ages will enjoy this story.


A much liked story of a dog and a roadmaster. Suitable for grades 1 - 5.

The Giving Tree by Shel Silverstein.

A moving story about a boy and a tree. The tree always gives and the boy always takes. A story for everyone.

The Little Old Man Who Could Not Read by Irma Simonton Black.

A great story to tell to encourage children to read. Elementary grades 2 - 5.


This legend of Saint Elizabeth tells of her compassion and her desire to, above all else, help others. Especially appropriate for intermediate children.

Maurice's Room by Paula Fox.

Many children will relate to Maurice's Room.
His room is so cluttered that his parents threaten to move to the country. When they do, Maurice wonders what he will ever do in the country without his collection of junk.

*Miguel's Mountain* by Bill Binzen.

The realistic story of a boy and the mountain he fights to save. Good for grades 2 - 6.

"The Miraculous Staircase," as told by Arthur Gordon in *A Touch of Wonder*.

This story has the touch of a legend to it. Children as well as adults will love this story of inspiration and wonder.

**Biographical Stories**

"Babe Ruth's Own Story," from *Babe Ruth's Own Book of Baseball* by George Herman Ruth.

This story, written by Babe Ruth, can be told in the first person narrative. The students can try to guess the author of the story.

"Boy into Man." From *Benjamin Franklin* by Ingu and Edgar Parin d'Aulaire.

In this selection, young Ben comes to life for children in the middle and upper-elementary grades.
"By the Rappahannock." From George Washington, Leader of the People by Clare Ingram Judson.

This selection recreates young George Washington and his admired older brother, Lawrence Washington.

"The Chief at Warm Springs." From Franklin Roosevelt - Boy of the Four Freedoms by Ann Weil.

An inspiring story of Franklin Roosevelt and a small boy named Jimmy. Franklin helps Jimmy, a handicapped boy, and encourages him to continue with his dreams.

"Daniel Boone's New Home in Kentucky," by Enid LaMone Meadowcroft. From On Indian Trails With Daniel Boone.

The adventures of Daniel Boone come alive in this story. Children will enjoy hearing this story, and they will be able to identify with the pioneer spirit of Daniel Boone.

"The Earned Name." From Crazy Horse by Shannon Garst.

Crazy Horse, a Sioux warrior, led the Indians in one last stand against the white invaders. This story tells of his resourcefulness and intelligence.
"George Washington Carver - The Boy Who Had to Know," by M. I. Ross.

This story of George Washington Carver overcoming obstacles to become the "Savior of the South," is especially inspiring for minority students.


Harriet Tubman comes to life for students of all ages in this story of the beginning of the underground railroad.

"Penn" by Elizabeth Janet Gray.

This story of William Penn can be shortened and adapted to the audience.

"Pocahontas and Captain John Smith," By Ingri and Edgar Parin d'Aulaire.

The story of Pocahontas and John Smith is a story that children of all ages enjoy being told time and time again.

"Pupil and Teacher." From The Helen Keller Story by Catherine Owens Peare.

This true story of Helen Keller and Anne Sullivan depicts Helen in the beginning and afterwards when the miracle at the pumphouse
occurs. An inspiring story for all children.

"The Story of Robert E. Lee." From Hero Tales From History by Smith Burnham.

This is a story that depicts the strength of character of Robert E. Lee. This story will be enjoyed by all ages and is especially appropriate when discussing the Civil War.
Many children today are in critical need of help in learning how to read. If it can be shown that storytelling is beneficial as a motivational factor in learning how to read, and also in the enjoyment of reading, then storytelling can become a part of the curriculum of many schools.

Storytelling can enhance the curriculum, and it can be shown as an important element in the teaching of reading. Teachers will see that storytelling can become a part of their programs and they will, subsequently, incorporate more storytelling into the curriculum.

This research will shed new information on this area, and hopefully, educators will begin to determine that storytelling is not just an extra, but an essential part of the reading curriculum.

This curriculum was given to three fifth grade teachers at S. Bryan Jennings Elementary School. They felt that it was a useful and effective resource to aid in the teaching of reading to reluctant readers through the use of storytelling.
References


Appendix

SA  Strongly Agree
A  Agree
D  Disagree
SD  Strongly Disagree

1. The purpose of the curriculum was clear and easy to understand.
2. The objectives were stated in a clear, concise manner.
3. The activities were appropriate for intermediate elementary students.
4. The instructions were clear and easy to follow.
5. The resources were applicable.
6. The activities led to the goal of the curriculum.
7. The curriculum guide was too lengthy.
8. The curriculum guide did not give enough information on the subject.
9. The curriculum was difficult to follow.
10. The curriculum guide would be a useful tool in the school.