

Study Guide For Teachers

David Gonzalez

In

Aesop Bops

presented by
Young Audiences

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BACKGROUND INFORMATION FOR STUDENTS

Every culture in the world has a tradition of storytelling. For some non-literate societies it is the principal way for people to pass information and knowledge to one another and between generations. Storytelling maintains and sustains the body of shared beliefs of a community and thus serves to keep it alive. The children of traditional societies absorb the wisdom, knowledge and love of their culture through storytelling.

The storyteller is a master communicator who works to suspend the "real" world so that messages can be transmitted through imagery, sound and emotion. By using language, voice, and body movement the storyteller can infuse a printed story with the rhythms and music of life. Careful attention is always given to the content and message of the stories so that they are appropriate to the specific audiences who will hear them.

Multi-culturalism teaches children to recognize their own cultural background while giving them the kind of exposure to other people which will foster respect and kinship. Storytelling is an effective and stimulating way to learn about other people because it is universal form of communication. Stories from different cultures illuminate these universal aspects of human life and thus help us to honor and celebrate the diversity of world cultures.

ABOUT THE PROGRAM

A zoo full of animals comes alive in this fast paced performance which teaches children about sharing and friendship. With such stories as "The Lion and the Mouse," and "Why Turtle Has a Checkered Shell," this show features an ample dose of audience participation as it captivates and motivates.

LEARNING GOALS

- To acquaint youngsters with the art of storytelling.
- To encourage cooperation, friendship, and sharing.
- To increase awareness of forms and uses of nonverbal communication.
- To encourage storytelling, dramatic play, acting, and fantasy in young children.

BEFORE THE PROGRAM

Discuss storytelling with the children. What are the differences between reading and telling a story?

Pick one or more of the following activities to explore with your students:

1. Ask the children to tell a favorite true animal story. This can be about a family pet, a bird or squirrel in the park or an imaginary animal. Ask them if they ever learned something from an animal.
2. Ask the children to tell a favorite make-believe story about an animal.
3. Play "twenty questions" using only favorite or exotic animals.
4. Ask the children to make a body gesture for the following animals: turtle, rat, lion, mouse, and fish. How do these animals walk, run, and dance? If these animals could speak how would their voices sound?

AFTER THE PROGRAM

1. Spend time reflecting on the performance by talking to students about it. What did the children learn from the animals in the show? Which animals did they like best and why? If they were an animal in one of the stories would they have acted in the same way and/or made the same choices?

Practice these activities to prepare you and/or your students to tell stories, or just to experiment with storytelling techniques.

1. Explore the range of gestures for each body part.
2. Explore the range of facial gestures. Exaggerate them.
3. Explore the range of vocal expression. Use emotions (i.e. angry, surprised, scared, delighted, confused, etc.).
4. Explore vocal opposites such as high - low, loud - soft, fast - slow.
5. Experiment with different animal sounds in the classroom

Try these activities to go along with a story that you or your students tell

1. Tell a story but leave out its conclusion. Allow the children to write, recite or dramatically render their own invented ending.
2. Make sock puppets to go along with a particularly well liked tale.
3. Hand out a variety of photographs and tell the children to make up stories that go with them. Dramatize these.

ARTIST INFORMATION

David Rafael Gonzalez is a master storyteller, musician and radio host. He has a doctorate from New York University's School of Education, where his research examined the use of stories in education and rehabilitation. Over the past ten years, he has performed for hundreds of thousands of kids.

David grew up in the Bronx with his Puerto Rican mother and Cuban father and has traveled in the Latino world, regularly performing and teaching in Spain. For eight years, David was the host of *New York Kids*, an award-winning radio program for children.

STORYTELLING TECHNIQUES/TOOLS

These are some things you may have noticed during the performance which you, as a teacher, can incorporate into your storytelling.

Gesture and movement-using your body to create pictures of a story, changing your position from sitting to standing to create emphasis, using imaginary objects, etc.

Voice- using different "voices" for different characters and for the narrator, changing tones of voice, using silence when appropriate.

Audience participation-have the children act out a certain part, repeat a line or a repeated chant in the story, complete a sentence, do a repeated movement, sing a repeated song, etc. As children become more familiar with your story, they can help you tell it more and more.

RESOURCES

Storytelling: Process and practice. Livo and Rietz. Libraries Unlimited, Littleton Colo. 1986.

Storytelling: Art and technique. Baker and Greene. R.R. Bowker and Co., New York 1977.

Mollie is Three, Vivian Gussin Paley. University of Chicago Press, 1988. How children use fantasy and story to construct their reality, and how a teacher entered the child's world through storytelling.

www.storynet.org The National Storytelling Network, listings of festivals, resources, and local events. Many links to collections of stories and tales.