



STORYTELLING

Advanced Communication Series



EXECUTIVE SUMMARY:

Folk tales are popular and easy to tell. Read the story and analyze its structure. What is the plot? How does the action flow? Where is the climax? Why is the story appealing? Become familiar with the scenes and characters and help your audience visualize them. Learn the story so thoroughly that you can tell it from memory. Use gestures and your voice to add impact to the story, paying careful attention to tempo, rhythm, inflection, pauses, and volume.

OBJECTIVES:

- ▶ To tell a folk tale that is entertaining and enjoyable for a specific age group.
- ▶ To use vivid imagery and voice to enhance the tale.

Time: Seven to nine minutes

THE FOLK TALE

Folk tales are popular stories and they are the easiest stories to tell. They are simple, entertaining, easy to understand, and their basic structure makes them fun to learn and interpret. Folk tales are found in every country and every language. Some of the classic folk tales are “The Three Billy-Goats Gruff,” “Hansel and Gretl,” and “Cinderella.” Most folk tales are centuries old, and they provide glimpses into the ideas, customs, and beliefs of the cultures that produced them.

FINDING A STORY

You should select a story that’s right for you and your audience, using these guidelines:

- ▶ The age of the audience. Are your listeners adults, teenagers, or children? Different age groups prefer different types of stories.
- ▶ The type of audience. Are your listeners boys, girls, men, women?
- ▶ The social and intellectual levels of your listeners.

When selecting your story, consider the age, type, and social and intellectual levels of your audience.

Generally, younger children enjoy stories with plot and action. Older children and adults like stories with humor and interplay with characters. All ages enjoy rhythm and movement of events in stories. Stories should be well paced, with few slow and no dull spots.

LEARNING THE STORY

Read the story thoroughly for pleasure, at first. Then read it over and over, analyzing its structure. What is the plot? How does the action flow? Where is the climax? What makes the story appealing?

Then visualize the story, part by part. Become familiar with the scenes and characters. Picture them in your mind. What are the main characters like? What color is their hair? What are they wearing? Does the story take place indoors or outdoors? In the summer or winter? Use your senses to feel, taste, hear, and see the story. This will help you to give descriptions as you tell it.

Learn the story. You won’t be reading your story to your audience, you’ll be telling it from memory. But it’s not necessary to memorize the story word for word – only

the pictures and actions you want to convey to your audience. You may find it helpful to memorize the beginning and ending to a story, however, so you can be sure that your retelling starts and ends well. Also, if the story contains any special phrases or rhymes that are critical to the plot, memorize them. For example, the sound of the Billy Goats crossing the bridge “Trip, trap! Trip, trap! Trip, trap!” in “The Three Billy Goats Gruff” adds to the character and plot of the tale.

REHEARSAL

When you really know the story, you’re ready to practice. Remember, your goal is to convey the story to your listeners. You want them to be able to visualize every scene in their minds, as you did when you learned this narrative. You must make them experience the story with all of their senses, too. You can accomplish that through your voice. Rehearse aloud so you can hear and feel the story. As you practice, pay attention to the following:

- ▶ **Tempo.** The tempo of your story should vary according to the action. For example, “Sleeping Beauty” is slow and dignified, while “Robin Hood” is firm and strong. In the story “Little Red Riding-Hood,” the tempo increases as Little Red Riding-Hood converses with the wolf disguised as her grandmother. Portions of the tale that are poetic or require much imagination should have a slower tempo so your listeners have time to understand and to visualize the story in their minds.
- ▶ **Rhythm.** Rhythm is a good device to add emphasis to a story, though you should be careful to avoid a flowery sing-song effect. Judicious use, however, can help build drama. Children especially like the rhythm of such dialogue as, “Then I’ll huff and I’ll puff and I’ll blow your house in!”
- ▶ **Inflection.** An inflection is when the voice rises or drops at the end of a word. Inflections can add meaning and emotion to words. For example raising your voice on the last syllable of “Mary” gives the name a questioning tone. Dropping your voice on the last syllable can indicate dismay.
- ▶ **Pause.** Pauses heighten the interest of your listeners. Pause before changing ideas, before important words, or before important actions to create curiosity in your listeners. Also pause after poetic or imaginative passages to allow your listeners time to reflect on their meaning before proceeding with the story.
- ▶ **Volume.** Increase the volume of your voice to indicate excitement, surprise, or action. Lower your voice to a whisper to add suspense or emotion.

You are not acting the story; you are interpreting and expressing the ideas and emotions of the author.

YOUR PRESENTATION

You’re ready to tell your story. As you tell it, act as if it’s the first time you’ve ever told it. Show your interest in it through your facial expressions, body, and voice. Be animated and energetic. Make direct eye contact with your listeners. But don’t use distracting movements. Any gestures should be natural. Use your voice to reflect the different characters as they speak, but don’t be overly dramatic. You are not acting the story; you are interpreting and expressing the ideas and emotions of the author. You are not portraying any one specific character. You are simply the medium through which the story is passed.

As you prepare your story, keep the following tips in mind:

1. Choose simply constructed stories. Follow the thread of the story with your imagination.
2. Reduce the number of characters to a minimum. Too many characters can confuse your listeners.
3. Eliminate parts that slow the story or aren't necessary to its plot.
4. Be sure to bring out the important idea, mood, or spirit that this tale suggests.

The setting for your storytelling should be informal and the atmosphere relaxed and intimate. Ask your listeners to sit in a semicircle facing you. Don't stand behind a lectern or other obstacle. You don't want any barriers between your listeners and you.

YOUR ASSIGNMENT

Select and tell a folk tale. Use your voice and imagery to project the meaning, emotion, and action of the story. If necessary, ask your audience in advance to pretend to be the age that you designate if the story you select is for another age group.

EVALUATION GUIDE FOR **THE FOLK TALE**

Title _____

Evaluator _____ Date _____

Note to the Evaluator: The purpose of this talk was for the speaker to tell, not read, a folk tale. The speaker should not act out the story, but instead interpret it for the audience, using voice and imagery. It is suggested you read the entire project before the presentation.

- ▶ How did the speaker attract your interest to the story? Were you entertained?

- ▶ What techniques (tempo, rhythm, inflection, pause, volume) did the speaker use that were especially effective?

- ▶ Comment on the speaker's use of vocal variety in telling the story.

- ▶ What parts of the story were most exciting? What parts (if any) slowed the story? What delivery technique(s) shaped or distracted from the effectiveness of the story?

- ▶ What was the idea or mood the speaker was trying to convey? How was the idea or mood conveyed?

- ▶ Was the speaker successful?

- ▶ Were you able to visualize the story in your mind? What parts of the story were most impressive?

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY:

Storytellers often create and tell their own stories. Use your own experiences and observations to build a story that will entertain listeners. Outline the story, paying close attention to plot, setting, characters, and conflict. Then fill in dialogue and description. Strive for images so real that everyone can see them. Personalize the story and keep it short. Use natural gestures and body movements.

OBJECTIVES:

- ▶ To learn the elements of a good story.
- ▶ To create and tell an original story based on a personal experience.

Time: Six to eight minutes

LET'S GET PERSONAL

Storytellers don't always have to rely on material written by others. Good story-tellers can create and tell their own stories.

A story can be humorous or dramatic, but it should always be entertaining. No matter if the story takes place in the jungles of South America or in the kitchen of your home, it should capture your listeners' interest and carry them along. In this project, you'll create and tell such a story, basing it on your own experience.

TELL ABOUT WHAT YOU KNOW

When writing a story, it's best to write about what you know. Use your own experiences and observations of yourself and your fellow human beings as the foundation. Think about your family and friends. What stories can you tell about them? How about your work, hobbies, vacations? Can your experiences in these areas become a story?

OUTLINE THE STORY

Now you've got to build your experience into a story that will entertain your listeners. Begin by following these seven steps.

1. Write down the point of your story. Keep it to one sentence.
2. Establish the setting. Where does your story take place?
3. List the characters. Who are the people involved in your story? Limit the number of characters to two or three. The fewer the characters, the less confusing the story.
4. Establish the time. When did the story take place – this morning, last year, ten years ago? Before dinner?
5. State the problem or conflict. A story usually involves a problem situation that is resolved by the end of the story.
6. Outline the plot. What happens in your story? List the events, making sure the action reaches a peak or climax.
7. Decide at what point the story begins and at what point the story ends.

Dialogue adds life to your characters, brings out conflict, and ties pieces of the story together.

GIVE IT LIFE

After you've outlined your story, you're ready to fill it in and add ambiance.

Two elements give any story ambiance and life: vivid description and expressive dialogue.

Description enables your listeners to paint pictures in their minds of the scenes, action, and characters you tell about. For example, saying "Bob has a new car" doesn't tell your listeners much. But this does: "Bob parked his new car in the driveway. The sleek apple-red Porsche gleamed in the sunlight." Your listeners can picture the car in their minds easily.

Dialogue adds life to your characters. It also brings out conflict and ties pieces of the story together. "Mary told Bob she didn't like the car" doesn't offer much information. However, this does: "Bob," said Mary, her voice shaking with anger, "I can't believe you spent our money on a frivolous sports car. The roof to our house is leaking, the furnace is broken, and you haven't worked in six months. How could you do something so foolish?"

In your story, strive for images so real that everyone can see them. You want your audience to see, hear, feel, smell, and taste the scenes you describe.

As you build your story, keep these points in mind:

- ▶ Describe the time, setting, and characters early in the story.
- ▶ Personalize your story. Don't say, "A friend of mine saw . . ." Say, "I saw . . ."
- ▶ Keep the story short. Don't drag it out with unnecessary details or go off on tangents. You'll only succeed in losing your audience.
- ▶ Keep gestures/body movements natural; do not exaggerate them or you'll distract your listeners.

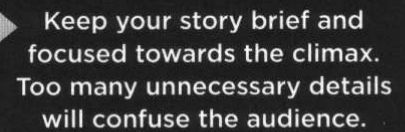
YOUR ASSIGNMENT

For this project, create, rehearse, and tell a story based on your own personal experience. Use vivid descriptions and dialogue to bring life to the story. You should tell the story without a script or notes.

Some suggestions for story topics are:

- ▶ The day your daughter or son left for college.
- ▶ Buying your first car, house, etc.
- ▶ Your fishing vacation.
- ▶ The day you met the person whom you later married.

The setting for your storytelling should be informal and the atmosphere relaxed and intimate. Ask your listeners to sit in a semicircle facing you. Don't stand behind a lectern or other obstacle. You don't want any barriers between your listeners and you.



Keep your story brief and focused towards the climax. Too many unnecessary details will confuse the audience.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY:

Every story should offer some lesson or insight into life and human nature. Use stories with lessons to illustrate points in your own speeches. You can quote the stories of others, or make up your own. A story with a lesson or moral should have a simple plot and simple characters and the topic should be something with which people are familiar. The story should have an unexpected and somewhat humorous conclusion.

OBJECTIVES:

- ▶ To understand that a story can be entertaining yet display moral values.
- ▶ To create a new story that offers a lesson or moral.
- ▶ To tell the story, using the skills developed in the previous two projects.

Time: Five to seven minutes

Stories are an excellent method for teaching lessons and providing insight as well as a source of entertainment.

THE MORAL OF THE STORY

Stories are an excellent form of entertainment for people of all ages. But they are also more than entertainment. They teach us valuable lessons.

INSIGHT INTO LIFE

Virtually every story offers us some lesson or insight into life and human nature. But the most obvious – and the most famous – of such stories are Aesop’s Fables. One of these fables is “The Hare and the Tortoise.”

The Hare and the Tortoise

A hare jeered at a tortoise for the slowness of his pace. But the tortoise laughed and said, “I’ll run against you and beat you any day you name.”

“Come on,” said the hare, “you shall soon see what my feet are made of.”

It was agreed that they should start at once. The tortoise went off, plodding along without a moment’s stopping, at his usual steady pace. The hare, treating the whole matter lightly, said she would first take a little nap, then she would soon overtake the tortoise.

Meanwhile, the tortoise trudged on. The hare overslept.

When the hare arrived at the goal, the tortoise was already there.

Lesson: Slow and steady wins the race.

Aesop, a slave in the sixth century B.C.E., told hundreds of such stories and lessons. His stories are still told today.

The Mice in Council

Once upon a time, the mice were upset by their persecution by the local cat. They called a meeting to decide upon the best means of getting rid of this continual annoyance.

Many plans were discussed and rejected. Finally, a young mouse stood up and proposed that a bell be hung around the cat’s neck. The mice then would be able to hear the cat coming and could escape.

The idea received much applause and was unanimously agreed to. At this point an old mouse, silent thus far, stood up and said that he considered the contrivance most ingenious and that it would no doubt be successful. But he had one short question: “Who would bell the cat?”

Lesson: It’s one thing to propose, and another to execute.

PLANNING YOUR STORY

Stories with lessons are useful to illustrate points in your own speeches. You can quote the stories of others, or you can make up your own. Remember to:

- ▶ Keep them simple. A story that has a lesson or moral should have a simple plot and simple characters.
- ▶ Make them about a universal subject. A topic should be something with which people are familiar. For example, in the above stories, it's a universal observation that hares are much faster than tortoises, and that cats and mice are natural enemies.
- ▶ Give them a twist. The entertainment in the above stories came from their unexpected and somewhat humorous conclusions.
- ▶ Make sure they have a plot, setting, conflict, action, and character development.

YOUR ASSIGNMENT

For this project, you have several options:

1. Create and tell a new story with a moral or lesson. The story and lesson should be original.
2. Take a lesson or moral from another story or quote, then create and deliver an original story to go with it. For example, you could take the lesson from "The Hare and the Tortoise" and create a new story that has that lesson.

Whichever option you choose, be sure to follow the story elements of plot, setting, conflict, action, and character development, and do not use a script or notes when telling the tale. The story should be entertaining and may be humorous. Use natural gestures/body movement.

The setting for your storytelling should be informal and the atmosphere intimate. Ask your listeners to sit in a semicircle facing you. Don't stand behind a lectern or other obstacle. You don't want any barriers between your listeners and you.

EVALUATION GUIDE FOR **THE MORAL OF THE STORY**

Title _____

Evaluator _____ Date _____

Note to the Evaluator: The speaker had two options for this project: Create and tell an original story with a lesson or take a lesson from another story and create a new story to go with it. The story was to be entertaining and have a surprise twist to the ending, and the speaker was not to use a script or notes when telling the story. It is suggested you read the project before the presentation.

▶ Was the story presented simply and clearly?

▶ How did the speaker capture and hold your interest?

▶ Were all of the elements of a good story included (plot, setting, characters, action, etc.)? If not, which ones were missing and how did this affect the story?

▶ How did the speaker use vocal variety to add to the story?

▶ What was the twist to the story? Was it successful? Why or why not?

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY:

Storytellers want their audiences to feel emotions, whether it be love, hate, anger, happiness, hope, or courage. Experiencing emotions involves your listeners in the story, keeps their attention, and helps them to remember it. Use dialogue or descriptions to convey the emotions you want the audience to feel. The secret to arousing emotion is to understate it. Don't be obvious or melodramatic.

OBJECTIVES:

- ▶ To understand the techniques available to arouse emotion.
- ▶ To become skilled in arousing emotions while telling a story.

Time: Six to eight minutes

THE TOUCHING STORY

As a storyteller, you try to tell interesting stories with good characterizations, good dialogue, and good descriptions. You are trying to please your listeners and entertain them. But you also have another purpose – to make them feel something. You want them to feel emotions. You're trying to make them feel a variety of emotions – love, hate, anger, friendship, grief, happiness, sadness, hope, courage, and jealousy. When you arouse your listeners' emotions, you're enabling them to experience the story with the characters. But how do you do this?

EVOKING FEELING

Emotions can be aroused in several ways.

1. **Directly.** Emotion kindled directly within the reader is generated by the characterization, dialogue, and overall tone of a story or scene. For example, consider this passage:

Jimmy stood quietly, his face pressed against the window, watching his friend David walk down the street. David was carrying a big box wrapped with a bright red bow. Jimmy knew David was on his way to Robert's birthday party. Jimmy knew about the party. He had heard his friends talking about it.

Robert had given out the invitations at school a few days ago. But Jimmy didn't get one. He didn't know why. He and Robert were best friends, he thought.

David saw Jimmy at the window and waved to him as he continued down the street. Jimmy's blue eyes welled with tears. What had he done to make Robert mad at him? He couldn't think of anything. Jimmy turned from the window and walked into the kitchen.

His mother was seated at the small wooden table, drinking a cup of coffee. She looked up as he entered the room, his little face filled with hurt.

"Oh, Jimmy," she said impatiently, "are you still moping around? It's only a little birthday party. Life's full of disappointments. You'll just have to get used to it. Now go play."

Evoke readers' emotions through the reactions of characters, dialogue, and overall tone of the story or scene.

In this scene, you grow to like Jimmy. He's described as a young boy with blue eyes welling with heartfelt tears. You feel sympathy for him as he experiences what appears to be rejection. By simple description, two emotions have been aroused.

Dialogue also contributed to your feeling of emotions. From the response of his mother, you perceive her as cold and insensitive.

2. **Indirectly.** Emotion can be aroused indirectly, through the reactions of the characters.

Robert's eyes grew wide as he saw his birthday present – a shiny, red, brand-new bicycle. He ran his hand over the gleaming chrome handlebars and touched the black seat. A new bike, just for him! He had never had a new bicycle before. He always had to ride his brother's old one. With a big grin on his face, he swung his leg over it and sat on the seat. It was a bit too high for him. His feet barely touched the ground. But it didn't matter. It was his bike.

Robert is happy. Through his reactions to the new bicycle, you feel happy, too. If you were simply to read a passage describing a new bicycle, you would not connect with that object emotionally in the way that you can by sharing in the joys of a story character who receives it as a gift. Through his eyes, you now see it for the treasure that it is. You might even remember the feelings you once experienced upon receiving your own first bicycle. Whether this passage reminds you of your own past or is something you can only imagine, its power comes from the character's response to the object. Robert's well-described reactions to the bicycle ignite, for you, the joy of the moment and the expectation of pleasant times to come.

Internal emotional conflict keeps the audience interested in the story and builds their emotional investment in discovering how it ends.

THE NEXT STEP: EVOKING CONFLICT

The skillful storyteller will evoke feelings, both directly and indirectly, for a purpose – to follow the challenges and victories of the hero and eventually lead the audience to the point of the story. In order to do this, you must build conflict. Your characters must struggle through difficult moments in the story in order to make their ultimate achievements valuable. The most effective challenges to any character are emotional.

Though you will experience some of Robert's joy, you may not feel it as fully as you expect his character does. And, you can't. After all, you have just shared Jimmy's rejection, and now you must balance your happiness for Robert with your knowledge of the pain he has caused his friend. This rising conflict in emotions helps to keep your interest in the story and builds your emotional investment in discovering how it ends.

LESS IS BEST

The secret to arousing emotion in your listeners is to understate it. Don't allow your characters to behave in a way that is obvious or melodramatic. "She sobbed hysterically, her wails and screams echoing against the walls" is too heavy-handed. "Jean bit her lip as her eyes welled with tears. She blinked them back furiously, until she couldn't blink fast enough and they streamed down her face" is much more realistic and more likely to arouse emotion in your audience.

YOUR ASSIGNMENT

Prepare, rehearse, and present a story designed to arouse emotion in your listeners. Be sure to include all of the elements of a story – plot, setting, characters, conflict, action – keeping it moving and building to a climax. Do not use a script or notes when telling the tale. Maintain direct eye contact with your audience. Use natural gestures/body movement.

The setting for your storytelling should be informal and the atmosphere relaxed and intimate. Ask your listeners to sit in a semicircle facing you. Don't stand behind a lectern or other obstacle. You don't want any barriers between your listeners and you.

EVALUATION GUIDE FOR THE TOUCHING STORY

Title _____

Evaluator _____ Date _____

Note to the Evaluator: For this project, the speaker was to prepare and present an original story designed to evoke emotion among listeners, using description and dialogue. The speaker was not to use a script or notes when telling the story. It is suggested you read the project before the presentation.

- ▶ What emotions did you experience as the speaker told the story? How did the speaker use descriptive words and phrases to evoke emotion?

- ▶ How did the speaker use dialogue to evoke emotion?

- ▶ Did the story contain the basic elements of setting, characters, plot, conflict, and action? If not, which were missing? How did this affect the story?

- ▶ Were the characters well developed? How did the speaker use description and dialogue to give them life?

- ▶ How was the story developed? Was the point of the story clear?

- ▶ How did the speaker build to a powerful climax?

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY:

Storytellers can be historians, using their talents to tell the world about the events that shaped it. Stories about the knights of the Round Table, battles, explorers, and leaders are as interesting today as they were many years ago. When telling an historical story, narrow it to one event and make sure it has a plot, conflict, characters, a setting, and action. Carefully develop the characters. You may have to cut the story to fit your time limits.

OBJECTIVES:

- To understand the purpose of stories about historical events or people.
- To use the storytelling skills developed in the preceding projects to tell a story about a historical event or person.

Time: Seven to nine minutes

BRINGING HISTORY TO LIFE

Storytellers have served many purposes throughout the centuries. They have been tellers of news, upholders of religion and morals, entertainers, and carriers of culture. But one of their most important functions has been that of historian. Before history was written on paper, storytellers were responsible for seeing that it was not forgotten. They told stories of leaders, war, love, and significant events.

Even though books have today largely taken the place of oral history, listeners still delight in hearing historical tales. Stories of the knights of the Round Table, biblical events, battles, explorers, leaders of countries, and intrigue are as interesting today as they were many years ago.

PLANNING THE STORY

Historical stories can be fun to tell and fascinating to hear if they're told properly. The following tips may help you:

- Narrow the story to one event. Don't try to tell someone's life story, for example. Limit the story to one incident in the person's life.
- Have a plot. The historical story, like any story, must have a setting, plot, conflict, characters, and action.
- Develop the characters. Give the characters some life. Don't assume everyone already knows the people you're talking about. Describe them. Make your audience see and hear them. And limit the number of characters in the story to make it less confusing for your listeners.

Help the audience follow the story by narrowing it to one event or incident and limiting the number of characters.

CUTTING THE MATERIAL

If you want to tell a story that's too long or too complicated for your listeners, you may be able to cut or edit it beforehand to fit your time limits and to make it more understandable and enjoyable.

Your goal in cutting is to keep the main point or plot of your story and to eliminate anything that doesn't enhance it. A brief introduction will provide your listeners with a synopsis of the action up to the point where your story begins.

When cutting:

- ▶ Eliminate lengthy descriptions.
- ▶ Eliminate a complete scene if the story still will have unity.
- ▶ Cut minor characters or subplots if the meaning will remain without them.

Use description and dialogue to make the story emotionally tangible.

Cut your story by:

1. Reading the story carefully
2. Deciding what parts to retain, keeping only what is essential to the main point of the story
3. Eliminating the other parts
4. Tying the parts together with transitions
5. Reading the selection again to make sure the story still makes sense, remains true to the plot or purpose and fits your time limit, and has well-developed characters.

TELLING THE STORY

The tempo of your story should vary according to the action, from slow to fast. Vary the volume and pitch of your voice, too, to enhance characters and drama. Pause before changing ideas, before important words, or before important actions to arouse curiosity in your listeners. Be sure to establish direct eye contact with your listeners. Use natural gestures/body movement.

YOUR ASSIGNMENT

Select, prepare, rehearse, and tell a story about a historical event or person. The event or person may be mythical (for example, a story about Zeus), imaginative, fictional, or real. You could tell a story about George Washington Carver, Eleanor Roosevelt, Winston Churchill, or Mahatma Gandhi.

Focus the story's plot, setting, conflict, characters, and action to build to a climax.

Be sure your story has a plot, setting, conflict, characters, and action and builds to a climax. Use description and dialogue to add feeling to your story. If necessary, cut the story to fit the project requirements. If needed, prepare a brief introduction that will provide your listeners with a synopsis of the action up to

the point where your story begins.

The setting for your storytelling should be informal and the atmosphere relaxed and intimate. Ask your listeners to sit in a semicircle facing you. Don't stand behind a lectern or other obstacle. You don't want any barriers between your listeners and you.



Project Completion Record **STORYTELLING**

PROJECT	SPEECH TITLE	DATE	VICE PRESIDENT EDUCATION'S INITIALS
1. The Folk Tale			
2. Let's Get Personal			
3. The Moral of the Story			
4. The Touching Story			
5. Bringing History to Life			

Save this page to verify your completion of the projects in this manual. Submit the Project Completion Record form from the appropriate manuals when applying for the Advanced Communicator Bronze, Advanced Communicator Silver, or Advanced Communicator Gold awards.