



# Preparing for the Storyteller

## A guide for teachers



### Storytelling: More than meets the eye

While they are definitely entertaining, stories play an important pedagogical role as well. An awareness of that potential can make hearing a story much more rewarding. Not only are there obvious connections between storytelling and other language arts, but almost every discipline can be enriched by the power of story. This guide is intended to answer some of the questions teachers frequently ask about the storyteller's visit as well as offer ideas for integrating the storytelling experience into the learning process.

### Insuring a proper setting

- Model good listening by being an active listener yourself. Your involvement in the program sends a signal to your students that what is happening is important.
- Remind younger students not to interrupt the telling (e.g. ask questions after a story – not in the middle), but inform them that they are free to participate in the stories if directed to do so by the storyteller.
- Be aware of students who tend to be disruptive. Most often they become involved in the stories and no problems occur. For the rare exception, the storyteller is not in a position to stop the presentation to handle disruptions and will rely on those supervising the group to intervene.
- Inform the teller in advance of any groups with particular needs. If special sound equipment is necessary or provision for signing has been made, let the teller know shortly after arriving to ensure the best possible experience for everyone.

### Preparation Activities

While listening to stories is a perfectly legitimate pastime without any prior preparation, the educational potential of the experience is increased with some advance consideration. If you have both the time and the inclination, the following suggestions may be helpful.

- The stories will be **bold** not **read**. While there was a time when telling was the only way stories were transmitted, many people today have little or no exposure to oral literature. You may wish to discuss the variety of ways in which we experience stories – books, television, hearing one's grandparents talk about the past, making up a story in one's own mind, hearing a story from a friend, etc.
- Unlike most theater, the storyteller will intentionally use **no costumes or props**. The characters and setting will emerge through the power of the human voice and the creative use of gesture and movement. For those who are unfamiliar with this art form, imagination exercises are sometimes helpful. As an example, have the students pretend they are mimes. Create objects by simply using your hands to suggest them. (e.g. a ball, a box, a magic wand, a butterfly, etc.) OR have students use only body language (no words) to express a variety of emotions. (e.g. sad, happy, afraid, angry, etc.) Then discuss the varied ways in which we can communicate or tell a story.

### Integrating with other subjects

Depending on the program, look for opportunities to use the stories as a springboard for other activities.

Hopefully the following suggestions will trigger your own ideas for using the stories in your particular setting.

- **CREATIVITY / WRITING:** Hearing stories almost always stimulates the imagination. Use this momentum to have students create their own stories. As a first step, have them write or tell different endings to one or more of the stories they heard in the program, or more fully describe some of the characters in the stories.
- **ART:** Illustrate one of the stories, or simply portray one of the characters from a story.
- **ENVIRONMENTAL SCIENCE:** Learn more about any animals, plants, or geographical areas mentioned in the stories. Look at the way the people and nature interact.
- **MUSIC:** Explore some old ballads or folk songs, and discover ways in which music has been used to tell stories. What contemporary songs tell stories as well?
- **MATH:** Many folktales have elements within them that can be used to teach various mathematical concepts. Look for ways to build on one of the stories in a lesson you are already planning.
- **HISTORY:** Have the students study an historical character and present the information in the form of a story.

