

Priscilla Howe

storyteller



All my stories start with a seed of truth.

Storyteller's Choice Study Guide, K-5

About Priscilla Howe

A former children's librarian, Priscilla has been a storyteller since 1988, full-time since 1993. She tells stories all over the US and in Europe to kids and adults of all ages. Priscilla has lived in Belgium, Bulgaria, Rhode Island, Vermont, Connecticut, New York and Kansas. She now makes her home in Lawrence, KS. She's also looking for the best restaurant pie on earth.



The Program: Storyteller's Choice

Priscilla tells a variety of stories from her large repertoire, including stories from books (without the book in hand), world folktales and occasionally a few of her own stories. Younger kids have lots of audience participation and a few puppets, while the older kids get more sophisticated stories.

Details

Each session is approximately 45 minutes long. Times can be adjusted for lower grades. Kindergarten through second grade sessions are highly interactive. Priscilla encourages group participation. Her hand puppets help out in between stories. Third through fifth grade sessions are less participatory and Priscilla includes a reflection session at the end, time permitting.

As well as residencies and performances, Priscilla offers workshops for teachers and students (see <http://www.priscillahowe.com/pages/findout.htm>). She is available for customization and consultation.

Curriculum Connections

Reading, writing, listening, speaking, social studies, music, character education, theater, cross-cultural appreciation.

Instructional Objectives

Students strengthen listening skills and gain an understanding of the many facets of oral storytelling through participation in live performance. Storytelling is wonderfully accessible to visual, aural and kinesthetic learners.

Storytelling is an excellent pre-writing tool; through listening to stories, students learn story structure, sequencing, prediction of events and expanded vocabulary. Use of gesture, voice and movement underlines the meaning in the stories.

Kansas Educational Standards (many of these are applicable to the suggested pre- and post-visit activities)

Listening: Learners will participate effectively as listeners within formal and informal groups.

Benchmark 1: The effective listener is attentive.

Benchmark 2: The effective listener identifies/recognizes verbal and nonverbal cues accurately.

Benchmark 3: The effective listener understands the message.

Benchmark 4: The effective listener remembers and applies content of message.

Benchmark 5: The effective listener analyzes/evaluates the message.

Benchmark 6: The effective listener participates appropriately in small groups

Reading: The student reads and comprehends text across the curriculum.

Benchmark 3: The student expands vocabulary.

Benchmark 4: The student comprehends a variety of text (narrative, expository, technical, and persuasive).

Literature: The student responds to a variety of text.

Benchmark 1: The student uses literary concepts to interpret and respond to text.

Benchmark 2: The student understands the significance of literature and its contributions to various cultures.

Writing: The student writes effectively for a variety of audiences, purposes, and contexts.

Benchmark 1: The student writes narrative text using the writing process.

Benchmark 2: The student writes expository text using the writing process.

Theater Standard 1: Developing Scripts

Benchmark 1: The student knows the basic elements of a story.

Benchmark 2: The student knows how to improvise dialogue to tell stories.

Theater Standard 3: Developing Acting Skills

Benchmark 1: The student imagines and clearly describes characters and their relationships.

Benchmark 2: The student uses variations of voice, movement, and gesture for different characters.

Theater Standard 4: Designing and Producing Theatre

Benchmark 2: The student visualizes a setting appropriate to a story.

Theater Standard 5: Evaluating and Reflecting on the Characteristics and Merits of Dramatic Content and Theatrical Forms in their Work and that of Others

Benchmark 1: The student identifies how dramatic elements communicate meanings and elicit emotions in stories, performances, and electronic media.

Benchmark 2: The student identifies and reflects upon personal meanings and emotional responses to performances and applies ideas to self and society.

Benchmark 4: The student demonstrates responsible audience etiquette.

Pre-visit suggested activities

- Discuss the art of storytelling.
 - Did any of the kids attend preschool story time at the public library when they were little?
 - Did the librarians tell stories or read aloud, or both?
 - Do their parents or grandparents tell stories of "the olden times"?
 - What stories do they know already?
 - Is there a student in the class who is known as a joke teller?
- Ask the students to retell a familiar story, such as Little Red Riding Hood.
 - Have them act it out, draw pictures of it, tell the story from another point of view, or tell what happened after the story was over.
 - Did Little Red grow up to be a famous zookeeper? Did she become a singer in a rock band or raise money to help the endangered timberwolf?
- Discuss what makes a good story or joke.
- Explore world folktales.
 - Read picture books of folktales aloud and/or tell them without the book. Find the countries on a globe.

Here are some suggestions (these are **not** stories Priscilla will tell):

- *Lon Po Po* by Ed Young (China)
- *Rumpelstiltskin* by Paul Galdone (Germany)
- *Borreguita and the Coyote* by Verna Aardema (Mexico)
- *Iktomi and the Ducks* by Paul Goble (USA)
- *Pecos Bill* by Steven Kellogg (USA)
- *Momotaro, the Peach Boy* by Linda Shute (Japan)
- *Traveling to Tondo* by Verna Aardema (Zaire)
- *Anansi and the Moss Covered Rock* by Eric Kimmel (Ghana)
- *Strega Nona* by Tomie DePaola (Italy)
- *Lazy Jack* by Tony Ross (England)

Need help? Ask the librarian! You'll find many more folktales in the library in the 398.2 Dewey Decimal section. Tour this section in the library. There's hidden treasure there!

Post-visit suggested activities

- Find out which were the favorite stories told. Why?
 - Did everyone remember the names of the stories?
 - Was there anything in the stories that seemed unusual?
- What is the difference between storytelling and reading aloud?
- Make comic books of the stories. Add word bubbles for dialogue and thought.
- Map out the setting, with labels. Draw the scenes.
- Describe the characters and setting using at least five descriptive words.
- Write a different story with the same characters.
- Mix up characters from different stories—for example, put Goldilocks into the *Three Billy Goats Gruff*.
- Write poems about the characters or the setting.
- Write headlines and newspaper reports of that story.

- Write a letter to a character, telling that character what they would have done differently. How does the character respond?
- Act out one of the stories Priscilla told. What was the sequence of scenes? How do the facial expressions, voice and body movements portray emotions and moral character?
- What happens when the class changes the ending, gender, setting or time period?
- Try doing the story like an old-time radio show, complete with sound effects.
- Make it into a puppet show.
- Pass a tale around the room: each student adds a line or just a word to the story.
 - Pass a ball of yarn around as the story goes around: the person beginning the story holds the end, and passes the ball to the next teller, who passes it on, and so forth.
 - Pass a story stick around; whoever holds the stick tells while the others listen.

Books on Storytelling for Teachers

Writing as a second language: from experience to story to prose by Donald Davis. August House, 2001). Donald Davis is one of my favorite storytellers, as well as the author of *Telling your own stories*, a fabulous book for prompting stories for telling or writing.

Storyteller, storyteacher: discovering the power of storytelling for teaching and living by Marni Gillard. Stenhouse, 1996. Not a how-to book, but a wonderfully warm "learner's journey," this is one storyteacher's tale, encouraging us all to tell stories.

Children tell stories: a teaching guide by Martha Hamilton and Mitch Weiss. Richard C. Owen Publishers, 1990. If you've ever wanted to teach kids storytelling, this book will guide your way.

Storytelling: process and practice by Norma J. Livo and Sandra A. Reitz. Libraries Unlimited, 1986. (See *Storytelling activities* by the same authors.) Nuts-and-bolts advice on storytelling.

The storyteller's start-up book by Margaret Read MacDonald. August House, 1993. This is a very good how-to book for beginning storytellers. Also check her *Parents guide to storytelling* and her many collections of stories to tell.

The Storytelling Classroom: Applications Across the Curriculum by Sherry Norfolk, Jane Stenson, and Diane Williams. Libraries Unlimited, 2006. Lesson plans and inspiration for K-8 teachers, librarians and storytellers.

The grammar of fantasy: an introduction to the art of inventing stories by Gianni Rodari, translated by Jack Zipes. Teachers and Writers Collaborative, 1996. A quirky, funny book, full of ideas on how to play with stories in unusual ways.

Internet resources

<http://www.storyteller.net>

<http://www.storynet.org/>

<http://falcon.jmu.edu/~ramseyil/storyhandbook.htm>

<http://www.storyarts.org/>

<http://www.timsheppard.co.uk/story/index.html>

<http://www.twu.edu/cope/slis/storytell.htm> (Storytell listserv info)