

OVERVIEW

Jim Cogan-Storyteller presents a variety of storytelling styles for students to model, to use as guides for their own ideas and practice to improve their oral expression. His program also employs stories: adapted, original, retold classics, whose themes provide material and ideas for creative teachers to make new lessons from. This short study guide outlines some ideas and exercises for classroom use. It is divided into several sections: the first a general guide for primary and secondary elementary grades, the second a more detailed model of a character education assembly and ideas for its incorporation into the classroom.

ELEMENTARY SCHOOL GUIDE: (K-3)

Jim uses his own adaptations of fairy tales, folklore and fables, often with a participatory style to engage primary learners in many of the basic characteristics of stories. Jim will often demonstrate how creative characterization, vivid descriptions of places, use of repetition and/or predictive phrases and expressions will engage students into “seeing” a story in their heads. Jim’s frequent use of sound, facial expression, body movement and gesture animate stories to complement the words and enable even the youngest child be able to “see” how a story comes together...learning new story vocabulary all the way.

Fairy Tales:

- Use other stories to show how each fairy tale solves a problem.
- Show how problems are rarely solved on the first effort: persistence is needed.
- Introduce “magic” as a storyteller ‘device’ to students.
- Help students understand the idea of a protagonist: identify each.
- Ask the students what makes them like the story.
- Practice stories with repetition, colorful expressions, chants, mimicable phrases.
- Have the students find their own Fairy Tales in the library.
- Ask students to draw a scene of the story that they remember most vividly.
- Draw a story map as a series of cartoons that tells the story.

Folk Tales:

- Explain how stories get handed down “by word of mouth” and help students
- Understand why “family talk” is important.
- Describe a variety of colorful characters in these and other folk tales.
- Help students understand a sense of place or setting and how it helps a story.
- Folklore usually focuses on a single event, character or family going on.
- Create ideas by having the students make up stories about a variety of American folklore characters or about silly events such as “the worst meal I ever ate?”
- Discuss how there is always something truthful about folklore.
- Talk about why it folklore gets passed on through generations.

Fables:

- Read Aesop or Kipling's "Just So" stories to the students and compare them.
- What is a moral and why do fables have them at the end?
- Have students make up their own fable.
- Let the students draw posters of Anansi.
- Why did people make up stories where animals talk and act like people?

EXERCISES:

Story Map

Draw a story map of one of Mr. Cogan's stories. Fold a piece of paper twice then lay it out seeing the 4 squares. Divide the story into 4 scenes...draw what happens in each square/scene...tell the story by making some simple drawings of the tale. Use the drawings to have students retell part or all of one of Mr. Cogan's stories.

Person/Place/Plot (Memory is tied to people and places)

On one side of a piece of paper draw a place where stories could happen (fiction or real). Take just a few minutes but draw a scene. Then, pair up the students and have them describe their place to each other (30 sec). Now, have the students turn the page over and draw a character that belongs in this place. Then, pair them up; have them describe their character to each other. Lastly, have the students look at their "setting" and their "character sketch" and have them think of things that could happen "storywise" with that character in that place.

Draw a story map of that idea. Then, tell that story to your partner.

Some Social Studies Applications

Focus on the person, place, event of time of the story presented and ask students to brainstorm what it would be like living during the story told. Ask them to use library resources to find some facts about the one aspect of the story (person, place, time, action, circumstance). Direct students to create a brief story of their own using the information they researched.

Tell one of Mr. Cogan's stories, another story you learned in class or a family story learned at home to a partner. Take a famous time, place, person, action or event, invent a character and tell the story of that famous moment using a story map, outline, or whatever else helps you to develop a story that has a clear beginning, middle and finish.

The Language of Character

Notes on stories to be presented by Jim Cogan – Grades K-3

The Flying Head: This old legend from the Iroquois of the Eastern Woodlands tells the story of how parents tried to keep children obedient by using cautionary legends to instill what was important. In “The Flying Head”, disobedient children wander and get lost during food gathering time creating a crisis. After the children are found, the village sits in the longhouse and listens to the storyteller revive an old legend describing an ancient menace...The Flying Head...to cure this disobedience. The children become so afraid they now won't go anywhere...the story backfires. A young woman who is not afraid takes her baby out into the forest as an example of courage and responsibility (you gather food every fall or you don't eat). She sees the Flying Head coming, warns the village, who find all the children safe and run to a cave. The Flying Head almost catches the young woman and her baby as they get to the longhouse but using courage, creativity and wisdom, the mother and her child rid the village of the Flying Head, forever. This highly animated and humorous (not scary) legend is full of animation and highlights how obedience, courage, responsibility and wisdom are traits common to all cultures; human characteristics of high value that help in living a honorable life.

Anansi and His Children: The fabled “Anansi the Spider” is a West African/Caribbean creation who always gets in trouble because of his insatiable love of food and his lack of a moral compass. Anansi leaves his six sleeping children safe in the “bush” to go steal some food from the village across the river. En route he is easily seen swimming across the river in the moonlight and is swallowed by a fish. His children, who are all quite different, combine their uniquely different but compatible skills in a cooperative effort to save their father. Of course, they succeed and a much humbled Anansi learns a great lesson about how special every one of his children is and how, when they cooperate, they can do anything.

(If time) **The Boy Who Ate Too Much:** Listening is the key to learning...in Inuit lore...where most all wisdom is passed on through action, modeling and stories. This wildly told Eskimo tall tale is a classic about a boy who will not listen to hunters, the magic woman (angokok) or anyone as he eats up half the world...saving nothing for the village. When hunters bring back food for the village after a winter of near starvation, the boy's antics send him into the stars where people still talk about him today...as a lesson to boys and girls about the importance of listening and sharing.

The Language of Character

Notes on stories to be presented by Jim Cogan – Grades 4-6

One Day, One Night: A Nez Perce (Idaho natives) fable filled with the folly and wonder very typical of humans. This instructive story tells about how, after creation, Wolf helped the animal people by putting night in a bag so the people had more warmth, more time to visit. Cousin Coyote, also a trickster, played a trick on Wolf and night was let out of the bag in such a flood that it covered the whole sky; light was gone forever. How the animal people moaned! “How are we going to fix this?” Grizzly Bear bullied everyone to accept 6 months day/6 months night. The animal people didn’t want to agree...but who would argue with a bully! He was so big. Frog, the littlest animal, quietly suggested “One day, One night.” Grizzly Bear screamed and shouted in such opposition that he lost...his voice. He wasn’t so fearsome, now that little Frog had stood up to him...quietly. How did this new balance of day and night come? Everyone remembered Mallard Duck had once been a valued member of the community...called the day every dawn...but flew away when it was day all the time...no one needed him. Mallard Duck was found, brought back, and with everyone working together, the animal community called the daylight back. How long should it stay? “One day...One night,” said Frog. Duck agreed and that’s the way the world has been ever since...a tribute to dealing with a bully through quiet courage, standing up for yourself, cooperating with friends and learning that inclusiveness gets everyone working together.

Three Ends: Slave folklore from the Carolinas tells about a slave named John who won his freedom by using wisdom, courage and timing...valuable skills in life. John proves to an unbelieving master that a slave can be as smart as any man...plantation owner, farmer, anyone. The master bets John to prove it. John bets his life for a chance at freedom and in a perfectly timed, ingenious bit of courageous wordsmithing, John becomes a free man. Powerful tale about hopes, dreams, the courage to believe in an ideal and act upon it...and in that ever renewing gift of education that leads us to wisdom.

Isla de la Santa Cruz: True story of the Spanish discovery and naming of La Isla de La Santa Cruz (Santa Cruz Island) off the Central California coast...the Island of the Holy Cross. Heartwarming story of the instant friendship that sprouted between a Franciscan Monk and a Chumash native during the Potola Expedition. How one act of kindness led to another...and to the naming of the Island; a name that still stands today...a testament to the endurance of kindness, respect and honesty.