

# Artsource

*The Music Center's Study Guide  
to the Performing Arts*

TRADITIONAL

CLASSICAL

CONTEMPORARY

EXPERIMENTAL

MULTI-MEDIA

ARTISTIC PROCESSES

1. CREATING (Cr)

2. PERFORMING, PRESENTING, PRODUCING (Pr)

3. RESPONDING (Re)

4. CONNECTING (Cn)

TRANSFORMATION

ENDURING  
VALUESFREEDOM &  
OPPRESSIONTHE POWER  
OF NATURETHE HUMAN  
FAMILY

## Title of Work:

*El Anciano* from the "Cuentos de la Familia" show

## Creators:

Producer: We Tell Stories

Artistic Director: Carl Weintraub *b.* 1946

## Background Information:

The seeds which began the storytelling troupe, We Tell Stories, were sewn in 1974 when founder Carl Weintraub decided to perform some stories for his three-year-old's pre-school. Seven years later, he had formed a company which was creating shows for the Los Angeles County Museum of Art, inaugurating new exhibits by crafting participatory drama experiences for children. The opportunity then arose to tour We Tell Stories into Los Angeles schools, a practice the company continues today. Artistic Director Carl Weintraub serves as producer, director, writer and actor, but thinks of himself first - in his own words - "as a father and a storyteller." He has amassed a fascinating library of rare and antique children's books of folk tales, fables and fantasies from all over the world. A charismatic and versatile performer, Carl's stage credits include the Old Globe Theatre in San Diego, the Mark Taper Forum in Los Angeles, and many starring roles in prime-time television series and movies. He is a recipient of the Professional Artists in Schools Award (PASA), and is the only artist (as opposed to educator) to ever receive the Los Angeles Music Center's Bravo Award.

## About the Artwork:

*El Anciano* is one of the stories from We Tell Stories' Cuentos de la Familia show which is performed bi-lingually and is comprised of Latin American stories dealing with the family. But versions of the story pop up in many other cultures as well. We Tell Stories is a multi-ethnic troupe which reflects a range of races and

cultures. A trunk filled with colorful, and sometimes wacky, costumes and props is the solitary set and helps create the magic as the tales unfold. This drama experience has an extemporaneous style and is designed so that children participate as listeners and as performers on stage. The audience is encouraged to seek out books and stories in similar genres as those seen in the show and to read them with active imaginations.

## Creative Process of the Artist or Culture:

The essential elements of We Tell Stories' creative process are the stories and the art of improvisation. The work begins with one of the storytelling troupe simply telling a story to the others. Next, the actors get up and in pairs retell the story. Once the story's plotline and characters are mastered, the company discusses their performance objectives and devises ways to incorporate audience participation. In trios, the actors next improvise the tale on their feet; evaluate their progress; and continue to rehearse. Carl Weintraub then writes a story script honoring the story's language and 'thru-line' and incorporating the actors' creative contributions. The script is just a guide for the actors. Carl firmly expects and encourages the troupe to continue, in performance, to improvise around the story and make it their own. Lastly, he and the company make selected props and costumes from found objects, transforming ordinary things to support extraordinary tales.

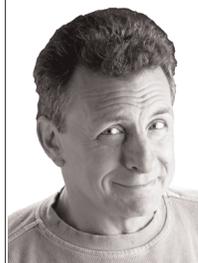


Photo: Michael Papo

*"Stories can touch a place in you that is childlike, awakening that part which communicates on an essential level."*

Carl Weintraub



## Discussion Questions:

### After the video has been viewed:

- What was a favorite moment from the performance, something that surprised or delighted you?
- Was it easy for students to participate on stage and help tell the stories?
- Did you notice anything unique about the language of the stories?
- How did the We Tell Stories company creatively use props or costume pieces?
- What words would you use to describe their storytelling trunk?
- Would you like to be a storyteller? Try telling one of your favorite stories at your family dinner table!

### Audio-Visual Materials:

- *Artsource*® video excerpts courtesy of Carl Weintraub and We Tell Stories. Video features three stories from three different shows showing how children are selected from the audience and how they interact on stage. Excerpts also include teacher and student workshops in the We Tell Stories Process.

### Additional References:

- Spolin, Viola. *Improvisation for the Theater*. Northwestern University Press, Evanston, IL: 1999.
- Tolkien, J. R. R. *Tree and Leaf*. Houghton Mifflin, Boston, MA: 1989.
- For more information on We Tell Stories: [www.wetellstories.org](http://www.wetellstories.org)

### Sample Experiences:

#### Level I - Basic Skills/Space Work

- \* • **Tossing the Ball:** With the students in a circle, create an imaginary ball for them to play catch with. Vary the exercise by either trying to maintain the ball's size or by varying its size and weight.
- **Handling Imaginary Objects:** Using only air, or "space," students in turn manipulate an imaginary object in a way that shows its size, form and weight so the class can guess what the object is.
- **Transforming Imaginary Objects:** Beginning with the manipulation of one imaginary object, the student alters the motion being used to animate that object until his new motion suggests to him another object.

\* Indicates sample lessons

Suggested alterations include: changing the speed, size, direction, energy or rhythm of the motion.

- **Action in a Room:** A student establishes the environment of a certain room in a house through specific actions that would take place in that room, e.g., making the bed in a bedroom.

#### Level II - Trust and Support

- \* • **Mirror Game:** In pairs, students face each other, one mirroring the other's abstract movements. It is the task of the student initiating the movement to ensure his partner's success by moving clearly, slowly and continuously with each motion gradually blending into the next.
- **Walk, Turn and Fall:** For three minutes the class breaks into pairs, each pair devising a way to demonstrate a walk, a turn and a fall. Then, each pair performs its interpretation for the class.
- **Build a Help Machine** comprised of four to five students: One student begins a simple, repetitive motion. One at a time, students step up to support and sustain that student's motion with actions that will, in their turn, require additional support.
- **Describe Mr. So and So:** Two students, in front of the class, are given the name of a make-believe character whom they must tell the class about by building on each other's ideas and descriptions.

#### Level III - Turning a Story into a Play

- \* • **Group Retelling:** After the students have read, been read to, or told the selected story, they retell it all together. They should firmly grasp the sequence of events, embellishing the story as they go.
- **Character Walk:** Walking in a large circle, students take on the physical attributes of each character.
- **TV Talk Show:** With the teacher as moderator, students sit before the class as characters (or the friends or parents of a character) of the story and field questions from the class related to the character.
- **Shared Narration:** In pairs, students tell portions of the story to the class as if it were a movie they had seen together.
- **Turn a Story into a Play:** Using improvisation, students act out the story.

# BASIC SKILLS AND SPACE WORK

## TRANSFORMATION

### LEVEL I Sample Lesson

#### INTRODUCTION:

The purpose of the We Tell Stories Process is to create a safe atmosphere of trust and support in which the children will feel free and empowered to exercise their creative instincts. The Basic Skills exercises are designed to get children to start paying attention, both to each other and to the group process. A sense of being an ensemble should ensue in which they will begin, in effect, to “make each other’s work their own.” In the later storytelling exercises found in Level III, they will be working together to make the story their own. Students should, through these exercises, develop a sense that there is no such thing as failure in this process. The teacher’s task in this process is to “make the children right.” So much of a teacher’s everyday job is to correct children when they are wrong. In this work they are never wrong. And it is the teacher’s job to find the rightness of every choice that every child makes while “in the process”. Think of this as an opportunity to exercise and develop an underused “teaching muscle.”

#### OBJECTIVES: (Student Outcomes)

Students will be able to:

- Participate in group improvisational theatre games that develop cooperative skills and concentration. (Creating & Performing & Responding)
- Use the vocabulary of theatre such as space work, focus, attention, communication, pantomime, ensemble, transformation. (Responding & Connecting)
- Describe, discuss, analyze and connect information and experiences based on this lesson. Refer to Assessment at the end of this lesson. (Responding & Connecting)

#### MATERIALS:

- Enough space for students to move easily.

#### PROGRESSION:

The following is a suggested progression of exercises that develop basic focus and attention skills.

##### 1. Tossing the Ball

- Have the students sit in a circle and toss an imaginary ball to each other.
- Remind students to pay attention because the ball may come to any one of them at any time.
- This will be their first experience in sensing that there is no failure in this process because you can’t drop an imaginary ball.

- If a child inadvertently changes the size of the ball, the teacher can laud him for doing such a creative thing and even make the exercise about doing just that: changing the size and/or weight of the ball (e.g. beach ball, medicine ball, baseball, balloon).
- As the students become more proficient at this exercise, changing the size and/or weight of the ball or concentrating on maintaining one specific size and/or weight can become the object of the exercise.

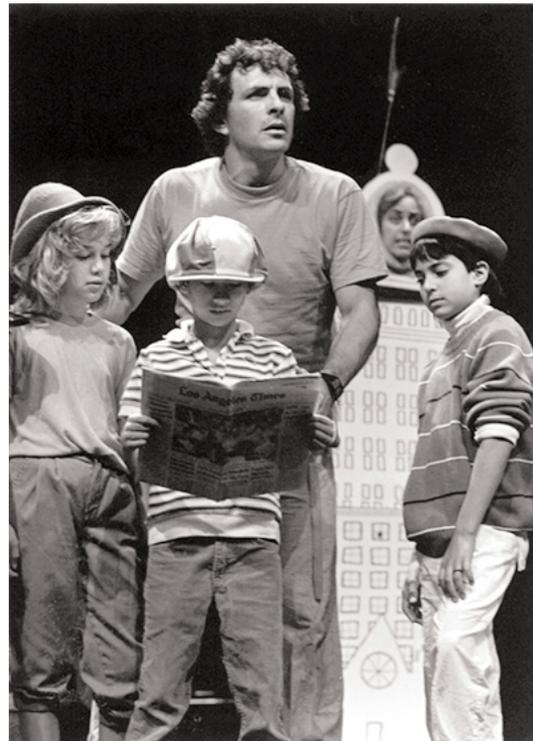
## 2. Handling Imaginary Objects

- One by one, each student pretends to be manipulating an object.
- What they are doing is creating an object out of air, or space, thus the title, Space Work.
- Students should pay attention to leaving space for the object in their hands (i.e. they wouldn't be able to close their fist completely if their hand was holding a cane or a rope).
- The rest of the class guesses what the object is.

**Extension:** We call this exercise, What Do I Have?, focusing on the object. All guesses from the class must be nouns. An extension of this exercise is What Am I Doing?, focusing on the action. All guesses from the class must be verbs. Another extension is What Am I? where students move or act like an animal or a person who does something specific like a ballet dancer or carpenter.

## 3. Transforming Imaginary Objects

- While manipulating an imaginary object as in the last exercise, the student begins to generalize the movement, i.e. forgetting about the object and just continuing a repetitive movement.
- He then begins to gradually alter the movement by changing its speed, size, direction, energy, rhythm, etc., until the new movement suggests to him a new object.
- He then focuses on making the new motion specific to that new object and the class guesses what that object is.
- A new student starts with the former student's last object and goes through the same process to create a new object.



We Tell Stories in action.  
Photo: Craig Schwartz

#### 4. In a Room

- A student pretends to be in a specific room in a house by enacting something that would be done in that room, such as making the bed in the bedroom or washing dishes in the kitchen.
- The class guesses what room is being depicted.
- An extension of this exercise is to have other students join in by entering the same room and doing something else that could be done there until four or five students have truly created an environment.

#### **EXTENSIONS:**

The extensions for each of these exercises are incorporated in the exercises. The point is to find slight modifications in each, as they progress, that will add dimension. Ideally, students should be seated in a horseshoe so that they have visual access to each other and the teacher has physical access to each student. Choose students to go up for an exercise by starting at one end of the horseshoe and moving around the circle. This way, children aren't picked because of greedy hand raising or by virtue of guessing, for example, what the imaginary object or room was. Because, in the We Tell Stories Process, the children are always right, it would be counter productive to reward them for a "right" answer. If a child is reluctant to get up, skip over him and come back to give him another chance. Shy children should be allowed to participate at their own speed. When they begin to see how safe and fun the process is, they will be more inclined to participate. In the beginning, their participation may consist of just the guessing part.

**VOCABULARY:** Space work, focus, attention, communication, pantomime, ensemble, transformation

#### **ASSESSMENT: (Responding & Connecting)**

Since there are many exercises to develop basic skills, the following assessment questions are samples of the types of questions to ask that progress in difficulty and use different cognitive levels (Bloom's Taxonomy).

**DESCRIBE:** Describe the way you showed and manipulated an imaginary object, such as the ball.

**DISCUSS:** Discuss the importance of paying attention to your classmates when you are performing these exercises.

**ANALYZE:** Discuss the way you began with a specific object and a movement that showed how it was used and then how you were able to let the movement change so that a new object and movement was created.

**CONNECT:** Identify other ways that you work cooperatively with others to do a job.

**Emphasis on: Common Core - CA State Standards for Language - Reading; Writing; Listening; Speaking**

# TRUST AND SUPPORT EXERCISES

## TRANSFORMATION

### LEVEL II Sample Lesson

#### INTRODUCTION:

We now move from working as an ensemble to the more specific one-on-one work that will be necessary when turning a story into a play in Level III. Trust and support are both the tools and the product of improvisational theatre. They are reciprocal. The more one gives support, the more he will be trusted. The more one feels supported, the more he will trust. The more one trusts, the more inclined he will be to offer support. In order to perform improvisationally, actors must support and trust each other. Improvisational actors are constantly taking chances, throwing out ideas and creating situations. They must trust their fellow actors to support whatever they do. They must also trust their fellow actors to come up with ideas of their own. As they perform together, using these tools, they grow to trust and support each other more. As students perform these exercises, an atmosphere of trust and support should be engendered in the classroom that may very well spill over into the rest of a day. Wouldn't that be a wonderful atmosphere in which to learn?

#### OBJECTIVES: (Student Outcomes)

Students will be able to:

- Work in a trusting and supportive way with a partner and in small groups, identifying where support is needed and jumping in to provide that support. (**Creating & Performing & Responding**)
- Come up with creative ideas of their own and build on the ideas of their partners. (**Creating**)
- Describe, discuss, analyze and connect information and experiences based on this lesson. Refer to *Assessment* at the end of this lesson. (**Responding & Connecting**)

**MATERIALS:** None.

#### PROGRESSION:

The following is a suggested progression of exercises that develops Trust and Support and offers opportunities to experience these concepts.

#### 1. Mirror Game

- In pairs, students face each other, one mirroring the other's abstract movements. (Note: If one group has to be composed of three students, two of them may mirror one.)
- It is the task of the student initiating the movement to insure his partner's success by moving clearly, slowly and continuously, with each motion gradually blending into the next.

- Abstract movements are easier to follow than, for example, brushing teeth or combing hair original scene.
- **Extension:** When the students have become adept at being both the mirror and the initiator, have them experiment with the idea that they are both the initiator and the mirror. This means that the leadership flows back and forth naturally without specific roles.
- After this experience, the class as a group should be asked what made this exercise work or not work. Encourage them to be specific in their answers. (The objective is for them to gain a sense of how to give and take.)

## 2. Walk, Turn and Fall

- The class breaks up into partners and is given three minutes to devise a way of portraying a walk, a turn and a fall.
- There are no rules to this game, however here are some of the most frequently asked questions:
  - Do we both have to do all three movements?
  - Do we have to do them in that order?
  - Do we both have to do the same thing?

The answer to all these questions is, “I don’t care. Just show us a Walk, a Turn, and a Fall.”

To insure safety, it is sometimes wise to require the Fall part of the exercise to be done in slow motion.

- After each demonstration, the teacher must talk about what was done, finding the “specialness” of each solution. This is a great opportunity to exercise that teaching muscle by “making the students right.”
- **Extension:** Have one of the partners be the director or have a third student direct a pair.
- **Extension:** Come up with other movements (e.g. twist, reach, and dart or roll, wiggle, and lunge). As an advanced exercise, substitute three emotions for the movements (e.g. sad, angry, afraid). This may, but does not have to, include dialogue.

## 3. Build a “Help Machine”

- One student begins a simple repetitive motion.
- One at a time, students step up to support and sustain that student’s motion with an action that will, in turn, require additional support. (Four or five students participate in each machine.) You can help keep the machine visually interesting by helping them find variety in such things as levels, positioning, and using different parts of their bodies.
- The object of this exercise is for students to discern where support is needed and to jump in to give that support. The student receiving that support is able to sustain the action because of the support provided. You can offer support through a technique called “side coaching,” i.e. offering suggestions as

the exercise is in process.

- **Extension:** Build machines inspired by real ones ( e.g. a car where students become the wheels, the seats, the pistons, the headlights, the windshield wipers, etc.). Make believe machines are fun too, e.g., a “homework machine,” a “room cleaning machine,” or a “dog washing machine.”

#### 4. Describe Mr. or Ms. So-and-So

- Two students, standing in front of the class, are given the made-up name of a character they are supposed to know. Fun names that give them a starting place are best, e.g. Mr. Harry Toes, Mrs. April Fool, Ms. Rose Garden, Mr. Rock Undroll.
- By building on each other’s ideas, they describe this character to the class.
- This is the first exercise in which verbal skills are employed to engender trust and support.
- Students should be encouraged to actively listen to each other and expand on each other’s ideas instead of simply creating a list of unrelated traits. They should share, as equally as possible, the dialogue. One should neither attempt to dominate the conversation nor remain passive. Both should support each other by contributing and by giving each other space and time to contribute.
- This is the first opportunity for the teacher to model the critiquing process called “Two Likes and a Wish.” (Responding & Connecting) Remark on two things you liked about the way they completed the exercise, e.g., how equally they shared the description, how interesting a certain choice was, or how one supported the other when the other was at a loss for ideas. Then offer something you wish had happened, e.g., that they had spoken louder so that the class could have heard, or commenting on a place where an opportunity to provide support had slipped by.

Critiquing is a dynamic exercise that should be incorporated into each exercise from here on out. After a pair or group sits down, the teacher says, “Two Likes and a Wish” and takes two or three responses from the class. Impress upon them that if they are going to raise their hand they have to first state two things they liked about what they saw, and then one thing they wished the participants had or hadn’t done. Don’t let anyone get away with one like and a wish or two likes and no wish. They will have to think hard if they are going to participate in this exercise. This is constructive criticism. The third answer is not “something I didn’t like.” It’s “something I wished I’d seen happen.” It’s more about the observation that the performance.

Some students who are not inclined to get up in front of the class, may be very lucid in their critiquing abilities. This becomes their way of participating and often emboldens them to actually try performing later.

- Have them pay special attention to:
  - any new wrinkles they added to the story
  - how well the participants helped and supported each other
  - specific times they could have helped but missed the opportunity

#### **EXTENSIONS:**

The extensions for each of these exercises are incorporated in the exercises. The point is to find slight modifications in each exercise as they progress that will add dimension. When working in pairs, students may be most comfortable in the beginning, working with their friends. This is a good thing. As they become more experienced in each of the exercises, working with new partners will be a way of offering new challenges.

**VOCABULARY:** improvisation, director, character, dialogue, action

**ASSESSMENT: (Responding & Connecting)**

Since there are several different exercises in this level, the following questions are samples of the types of questions to ask after each exercise. They are designed to begin at the lower levels of thinking and progress to more complex levels of thinking (Bloom's Taxonomy).

**DESCRIBE:** Describe the things that helped you to be a good leader in the mirror game. What were the things that helped you to be a good follower?

**DISCUSS:** Discuss how it felt to trust and be trusted; to support and be supported.

**ANALYZE:** Discuss the concept of "Give and Take" and analyze why both are needed in working with a partner or ensemble.

**CONNECT:** In everyday life, we all have some issues surrounding giving and receiving. Discuss times in your life when you have had problems either giving or accepting gifts or compliments.

**Emphasis on: Common Core - CA State Standards for Language - Reading; Writing; Listening; Speaking**

# TURNING A STORY INTO A PLAY

## TRANSFORMATION

### LEVEL III Sample Lesson

#### INTRODUCTION:

A storyteller's job is to make the story his own. As the students examine the story, expand on it, and even change it to suit themselves, the story will become theirs. You may be starting with a story the students have read but ideally it would be great to keep this in an oral process. Paying attention is such an important part of this process that it is good to start with students having to pay attention as a story is being told out loud. Telling the story is more desirable than reading it because, first it will show the students that you have committed yourself to the process enough to have learned the story yourself. Second, they will pay more attention if you are maintaining eye contact with them as you tell the story. And third, speaking from memory allows you the opportunity to make mistakes. If you do, students will feel more license to make mistakes themselves. This process is so much about taking chances. If we never make mistakes, it can only mean that we never take chances. We learn by falling down. It is our job, through this process and all the exercises we have done up to this point, to provide a safe place to fall - and to get up again.



We Tell Stories in action.

Photo: Craig Schwartz

Tell the story as simply and concisely as possible. The less you make it yours, at this point, the more they will be able to make it theirs. Any brilliance on your part will certainly be imitated later and what we want is for them to conjure their own images in their minds.

#### OBJECTIVES: (Student Outcomes)

Students will be able to:

- Sequence the plot line of a story. (**Responding & Connecting**)
- Examine the characters of the story by exploring their physical characteristics, their history and motivations even outside the limits of the story. (**Responding & Connecting**)

- Become all the characters themselves and act the story out. (**Creating & Performing**)
- Engage in the constructive critiquing of each others work using the “Two Like and a Wish” method. (**Responding & Connecting**)

### **MATERIALS:**

- The story is your material. Choose stories that have a good through line, where a character or characters begin in a certain place and progress to another place or return to the original place with episodes along the way. Episodes will allow you to break the story up into smaller sections that can be worked on one at a time.

### **PROGRESSION:**

The following is a suggested progression of exercises that develop the story from a simple narrative into a piece of theatre.

#### **1. Group Retelling of the Story Using "The Five W's."**

- This is done with the class all contributing without the necessity of raising hands and being called on. The teacher should acknowledge every response by repeating everything s/he hears.
- This exercise is best done with the class sitting in a large horseshoe so that they can see and hear each other easily and so that the teacher can move closer to shy students who may contribute very quietly if you are there to hear.
- Begin by asking, "**WHO?**, **WHERE?** and **WHEN?**". "**WHO?**" is about, of course, the characters. "**WHERE?**" focuses on all the places the story goes making sure to define the starting place. "**WHEN?**" can be present or distant past and can be changed from one to the other. In other words, the students may decide to change a story from the distant past to the future. (When can also be the time of day or night.)
- The next question is, "**WHAT?**". This is the plot. The first objective of this element is to establish a firm grasp on the story points and the sequence of events. Start by asking, “How did the story begin?” and continue with, “And then..?” Don't put anybody on the spot and never use the word, “No.” If they skip a point, say, “Yes, and just before that...?” Be especially responsive to answers that embellish the story. Say, “See? That wasn't in the story as I told it, but you are making the story your own.”
- The second objective is to begin to flesh out the story through details and questions/inquiry. Ask questions, as you go along, that probe the characters' motivations. Get tactile descriptions of the scenery. Help them to establish the mood and the atmosphere of the story.
- "**WHY?**" is the last question. Is there a moral? How many things can this story tell us? Is there something that the story doesn't tell us that we wish it did and is there a way to make the story do so?

## 2. Physicalization of Characters

- This exercise is best done directly after the Group Retelling because after all that "brainwork," kids need to be physical.
- Walking in a large circle, have the students walk on different parts of their feet--first, on the outside, then on the inside, the heels, the toes, flat. As they do each one, ask, "Who walks like this? What walks like this." Repeat and validate every appropriate answer you can hear. Encourage the more generic responses over those that name TV characters, specific teachers or fellow classmates. Occasionally, when a particular response clicks, have them turn their walk into that character. Return them to walking naturally after each specified walk.
- Continue this exercise, getting students to lead with different parts of their bodies -- toes, knees, hips, stomach, chest, chin, nose, eyes, top of the head.
- When they have seen how simple physical changes can define a character, continue the exercise with each character in the story.

NOTE: The Group Retelling and the Physicalization of Characters is plenty for younger children. They may proceed directly to Acting Out the Story. Older students need to go deeper, so follow the next steps.

## 3. Intellectualization of Characters

- Interviewing the Character: Using a TV talkshow format, with the teacher as moderator, students sit before the class as characters of the story (or as friends or parents of the characters) and field questions about the character from the class.
- Describing the Character: This is exactly the same exercise as Describe Mr. So-and-So in Level II.

## 4. Shared Narration

- This exercise brings the one-on-one element - listening to and supporting one another - to the story.
- Divide the story into "beats" - sections of the story that have an integrity and continuity of their own. Get two students up to tell the first "beat" of the story. Use the word, "Good" or "Alright," to stop each pair after they have finished the beat. Don't end the exercise too soon to save them if they are having trouble and don't let them go on extra long if they are doing great. They should get through one and only one beat. It is good to have several pairs tell the same "beat" before moving to a the next.
- Although this exercise is more about narration than acting, if the students begin to add dramatic elements such as dialogue and conflict, you should certainly tout these additions as heralds of things to come. Let yourself get excited if, for instance:

- they begin to finish each other's sentences
  - one person begins to tell one character's story and the other person tells the other's
  - they speak as the characters, using dialogue instead of narration
- Extensions: Have them tell the story as if it were the funniest story they had ever heard, or the scariest, or saddest, or goofiest or cutest or most gossipy or mysterious. As absurd as the results will be as a whole, several unexpected moments may be discovered that actually will work for the story. Your job is to point them out.

## 5. Improvising the Story

- Select the number of students needed to play each of the characters for the "beat." Get them up, briefly state the beat, then let them act it out. They are free to incorporate ideas that have been discovered in previous exercises and to add anything new.
- Remind them of the physical attributes they found for the characters in the Circle Walk.
- With younger children, it is a good idea to stay on your feet and in the fray with them, helping them to stay on track and in the story and even to keep them from turning their backs to the audience.
- The same beat may be repeated several times with different actors before going on to the next.

### Extensions:

- For greater sophistication and challenge, have the students try to make the scene go on as long as possible before getting to the end. The players will have to invent ways to keep the improvisation going.
- If the class were going to perform the story for parents or another class, stay with the process. Perform it just as you have worked it, getting different sets of actors up to do each beat. This way no one child becomes the "star" and the story still gets told in an interesting fashion. Plus parents will get to actually see the process the children went through. Even some of the preliminary exercises could be demonstrated. Some of the text of James Thurber's "Many Moons" was so fun or poetic that We Tell Stories actually wrote out his exact words for the audience participants to read when they got on stage.

### EXTENSIONS:

The extensions for each of these exercises are incorporated in the exercises.

- One of the reasons We Tell Stories likes to work without a script is that if we really know the story yet have no lines to memorize, we lessen the chances to fail. Sometimes working from a script can become an exercise in remembering the words rather than telling the story. That being said, for some people and for some classes, a script can actually serve as a safety net, providing the security of a structure. You could write a script incorporating all the discoveries the students have made through the previous exercises, cast it and perform it. All of the exercises that have lead up to this point will certainly inform the quality of the performance.
- If the story you are using comes from a book the students have read, turning it into a script can be a very useful

exercise for studying Person and Tense. Everything must be changed from third person to first and from past to some form of present tense. The task is to put everything, even the narration, into the mouths of the characters. Make the author's descriptions of the scenery be things that the characters see and talk out loud about. Let descriptions of how they feel turn into soliloquies or asides.

•As the story takes the shape of a play, either through improvisation or performing a script, you are the director. It will be your job to:

- Pick and choose from what the group comes up with.
- Suggest ways of clarifying their intentions.
- Make sure the story points are made.
- Make sure each character is identified as he enters.
- Encourage the development of characters and remind the students to stay in character.
- Add your own ingenious touches.
- And the two most important things: "Always Make the Children Right and Expect the Magic!"

**VOCABULARY:** Beat, improvisation, who?, where?, when?, what? and why? (as they pertain to a dramatized scene)

**ASSESSMENT:** (Responding & Connecting)

Since there are several different aspects of the storytelling experience included in this lesson, the following questions will serve as examples of the types of questions to ask that encourage students to think at different levels. Begin with questions which are simple and move to more complex levels of thinking.

**DESCRIBE:** Describe how you were able to add details to the story that weren't there when the story was told to you.

**DISCUSS:** Discuss why a storyteller should take a story and change it to make it more his own.

**ANALYZE:** Discuss how using "Two Likes and a Wish" adds to the process of turning a story into a play.

**CONNECT:** Get together with some friends and act out a story you have read or a chapter of a story and perform it for your class as a book report.

**Emphasis on: Common Core - CA State Standards for Language - Reading; Writing; Listening; Speaking**

# STORY TIPS

## Why Tell Stories?

The purposes of storytelling are many. Here are a few:

- Telling a story is a gift - a shared experience that should bring people closer together.
- Storytelling introduces books and hopefully motivates the audience to read and explore literature.
- Through storytelling, the audience can gain insight into motives and patterns of human behavior.
- Storytelling can help teach language skills.
- Storytelling is a way to keep cultural heritage alive.
- Hearing stories gives the listeners practice in visualization, the basis of creative imagination.
- Storytelling brings dramatic joy to the teller and the listener alike.

## What Makes a Story Worth Telling?

A good story for telling is one that, like a good book, has something to say and says it in the best possible way. It is a story that has vision as well as integrity and that gives the listener something to hold. There should be sound values - compassion, humor, love of beauty, resourcefulness, kindness, courage, kinship with nature, zest for living - but they should be implicit in the story, because a good one is not didactic.

## Characteristics of a good story are:

- A clearly defined, single theme
- A well-developed plot – A brief opening introduces the main characters, sets the scene, arouses anticipation, and then, almost immediately the story plunges into action. Action unfolds through word pictures, maintains suspense, and quickly builds into a climax. Each incident must be related in such a way that it makes a vivid and clear-cut image in the listener's mind. One event must lead logically and without interruption to the next. There should be no explanations or description except where it is necessary for clarity. Avoid stories with flashbacks, subplots, or long descriptive passages that interfere with the flow of the story. The essential movement of the story must depend on events, not on attitudes. The ending resolves the conflict, releases the tension, and leaves the listener feeling satisfied.
- Style – Look for vivid word pictures, pleasing sounds and rhythm.
- Characterization – The characters are based on realistic personality traits, or in the case of traditional folktales, they represent qualities such as goodness, wickedness or beauty.
- Faithfulness to source material – Beware of the emaciated adaptation and the vocabulary-controlled tale.
- Dramatic appeal – Children need and enjoy a perfectly safe edge of fear and sadness.
- Appropriateness for the listener