

Storytelling and Teacher Preparation

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Presentation Topics

- Storytelling at the “*San Jose Normal School*”
 - Historical perspective
 - Rationale and story types
- Storytelling and Teacher Preparation today
 - Connections to Curriculum and in action
 - Pedagogy in history classrooms
 - Engaging children in storytelling

State Normal School at San José

- Founding purpose of SJSU was as a “normal school” for teacher preparation
- Oral storytelling was a major pedagogical method...
 - “an art, and to be effectively used must be studied as an art” (Christian Science Monitor, Dec. 14, 1914)

Why Oral Storytelling?

- “geology, zoology, botany and even physics are taught by means of more or less happily constructed narratives based on the simpler facts of these sciences...” (Sara Cone Bryant, 1905)

Why Oral Storytelling?

- “The message of the story is a message of beauty, as effective as that message is marble or paint. Its part in the economy of life is *to give joy*. And the purpose and working of the joy is found in that quickening of the spirit which answers every perception of the truly beautiful in the arts of man. To give joy; in and through the joy to stir and feed the life of the spirit: is not this the legitimate function of the story in education?” (SCB, 1905, pg. 3)

Why Oral Storytelling?

- “relaxation of the tense school room atmosphere, valuable for its refreshing recreative power...”
- “storytelling is at once one of the simplest and quickest ways of establishing a happy relation between teacher and children, and one of the most effective methods of forming the habit of fixed attention in the latter.” (SCB, 1905 pp.5-6)

What stories were told?

- Folk, fairy, legend and myth
- Ethical and bible stories
- Tales of historic deeds (American and “Classics”)
- Nature stories
- Nonsense stories

Teacher Preparation Today

- Limited attention to oral storytelling in our curriculum
- May be used in literacy instruction in the early grades to promote connections between oral and written language outcomes
- Not explicitly mentioned in the Teacher Performance Expectations but...
- Storytelling is well aligned with state content standards for K-8 English language arts

Storytelling in Action

- Randy Mitchell
 - Chaboya Middle School 8th grade social studies
 - SJSU Adjunct Faculty -- social studies methods
- First Person Narratives
 - Stories of history told in character of historical figure
 - Period clothing and artifacts included in the tales



Civil War debate

Storytelling in Action

- Castro Elementary School
 - Annual storytelling festival
 - Teacher Nell Douglas and professional storyteller Olive Hackett-Shaughnessy
- Unit on genre of oral tradition (myths, folktales, fables, fairytales and legends)
- <http://www.castro.mvwsd.org/cc.htm>

Resources

- Cone Bryant, Sara (1905) “How to tell stories to children”, Houghton Mifflin Co. NY, NY.
- “Story-telling is method used in San Jose School” Christian Science Monitor, Boston, MA. December 14, 1914.
- <http://www.castro.mvwsd.org/cc.htm>
- <http://www.sjsu.edu/reading/storytelling.htm>