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The Creative Art of Storytelling: Breathing New Life into History and Ecology

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Abstract

Storytelling is the universal language of understanding. We shape our collective cultural understanding through the stories we tell. Crossing all age, race, cultural and at times even language barriers, creative storytelling is a wonderful way to open up your interpretation and education programs to a diverse audience.

Keywords

Storytelling, diversity, multiple intelligences, Yosemite, education

Introduction

Storytelling is a direct link to our history, heritage and culture. To weave a new world through the oral tradition, to create community through laughter and entertainment, to lift an audience out of their day to day tasks and into a different, colorful world—this is the art and magic of the storyteller. Through storytelling, the interpreter creates a personal, human connection with their audience, while still educating, informing, and enlightening a diverse range of participants.

Why tell stories?

- Inclusivity and diversity
 - Multi-modal education/engagement of multiple intelligences
 - Cross-generational appeal (engagement of youth and adults alike)
 - Cross-cultural relevancy (accessible content across cultural/language barriers)
- “Subversive” education and “Edu-tainment”
 - Collateral learning
 - Digestible packaging of complex material
 - Pure fun
- Stories shape our world
 - Interpretation/education IS storytelling
 - Compelling stories can change the world (John Muir and beyond)
- Thematic focus
 - A story can function as a thematic focus for classes, interpretive walks, etc.

- Weaving together your lesson/workshop/etc. through a narrative
- Stories as a traditional educational form
 - The deep history of “the campfire”
 - Cross-cultural relevancy of educational style

Bringing It Alive! (how to tell effective stories)

- Find your voice(s) as a storyteller
- Work with volunteer “actors” or characters
- Read aloud
- Physical storytelling

The Story of Tu-Tok-A-Nula (examples of collateral learning)

- Ahwahneechee culture
- Natural history of the Sierra Nevada (plate tectonics, animal tracking, etc.)
- Yosemite big wall climbing history
- “Slow Power” (the strength of diversity and non-obvious power)

Conclusion

Tell a story. Right now, to anyone who will listen. The gift of a story is priceless, and is valid currency in any economy—stories to teach, stories to entertain, stories to celebrate, stories to bring a family together, stories to send a child towards good dreams—tell your story, loud and clear.

References

La Pena, Frank, Craig Bates and Steven Medley. *Legends of the Yosemite Miwok*. Yosemite National Park, CA: Yosemite Association. 1981.

YouTube Videos available at www.youtube.com/naturebridgevideo