

Using Storytelling in the Classroom

Richard Martin

Full workshop handout with 31 story skeletons

Skeletons (No. 1 - 12 also suitable for younger listeners)

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| 1. <i>Strongest of Them All</i> | 17. <i>Collecting Sins</i> |
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| 13. <i>Clever Cook (Mayan)</i> | 29. <i>One innocent farmer</i> |
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| 15. <i>Reason to Beat your Wife</i> | 31. <i>Tanzanian Sunlight</i> |
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1. The Strongest of Them All

Winter, icy cold, Jack was cold, had no wood for the fire. Took axe, went to cut down a tree. Looked at tree. Smiled. Swung back with axe but foot slipped on ice, fell, banged his head on ice. Jack spoke to the ice, "Ice, you are strong."
 "Yes, Jack," said the ice. "I'm strong."
 "But I know someone stronger than you - the sun. When he comes out, you go away."
 "Yes, Jack, the sun is stronger than me."
 Jack spoke to the sun. "Sun, you are strong."
 "Yes, Jack," said the sun. "I'm strong."
 "But I know someone stronger than you - the cloud. When he comes he covers you up."
 "Yes, the cloud is stronger than me."
 "Cloud, you are strong."
 "Yes, ..."
 "But I know someone stronger than you - the wind. When he blows he blows you away."
 "Yes, the wind is stronger ..."
 "Wind, you are strong."
 "Yes, Jack."
 "But I know someone stronger ... the mountain. You can't blow through him, you have to go around him."
 "Yes, the mountain is stronger ..."
 "Mountain, you are strong... But I know someone stronger - the tree. Because the tree can grow on top of you, but you can't grow on top of the tree!!!"
 "Tree, you are strong... But I know someone stronger - me! Because I have got an axe, I'm going to cut you down.
 I'm stronger than you, I'm the Strongest of Them All. HA, HA!"
 Swung back with axe but foot slipped on ice, fell, banged his head.

2. The Ghost with One Black Eye

Baby's favourite drink – apple juice
 No apple juice on table
 Baby: I want my apple juice, and I want it NOW!
 Father: I'll go to cellar for your apple juice
 Went down – was dark
 Opened cellar door – was darker
 Heard voice: I AM THE GHOST WITH ONE BLACK EYE
 Ran upstairs: I don't want to go down there any more!
 Baby: I want my apple juice, and I want it NOW!
 Mother – same
 Big brother – same

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Big sister – same
 Baby goes down – it is dark
 Opens cellar door – is darker
 Hears voice: I AM THE GHOST WITH ONE BLACK EYE
 Baby: Well, I'll give you two black eyes if you stop me getting my apple juice!
 Ghost was never heard again.

3. Frightened Mouse

Small mouse - frightened of bigger mice.
 One day heard two men talking about a magician - lived across the river - could change people.
 Mouse went to magician. "I want to be a BIG mouse."
 Magic words - mouse changed into a BIG mouse. Proud. Didn't say *thank you* to magician.
 Next day big mouse frightened by cats. Mouse went to magician. "I want to be a BIG cat." Magic words - changed. Proud. Didn't say *thank you*.
 Next day big cat frightened by dogs. Mouse went to magician. "I want to be a BIG dog." Changed. Proud. Didn't say *thank you*.
 Next day big dog frightened by horse. Mouse went to magician. "I want to be a big tiger." Magic words - changed into small mouse.
 "That's because you didn't say *thank you*!"

4. The Old Woman who Lived in a Vinegar Bottle (a *very* small house, 2 rooms on top of each other)

Old woman, unhappy – only place to live was in a “vinegar bottle”.
 “Oh, if I had a proper house to live in, I would be happy.”
 Fairy: “If you want a proper house, you can have a proper house.”
 Old woman stood in front of a proper house. Was happy – for a few days!
 Unhappy – “I’ve only got one chair. Now if I had two chairs, then I would be happy.”
 Fairy: “If you want two chairs, you can have two chairs.”
 Was happy – for a few days.
 Haven’t got a (Fill in as many things as *you* want, until at last she wants everything in the world.)
 Fairy says: “You want everything in the world. But no one can have everything. And you haven’t said thank you even once. So all you will have is a vinegar bottle!”
 And that was all she had.

5. The Old Woman and her Pig (on *The Wife’s Letter and other Tales*, Richard Martin)

Old woman found a crooked sixpence – “I’ll buy a pig.” Went to market, bought pig.
 But leading pig home, came to a hedge with a stile. Pig too heavy to lift over.
 “Pig, jump over – or I won’t get home before midnight.” But pig wouldn’t!
 She went a little farther, came to a dog.
 “Dog, pig won’t jump over stile, and I won’t get home before midnight. Dog, bite pig!” But dog wouldn’t.
 She went a little farther, came to a stick.
 “Stick, dog won’t bite pig, pig won’t jump over stile, and I won’t get home before midnight. Stick, beat dog!” But stick wouldn’t!
 Fire. “Fire, stick won’t beat dog, dog won’t bite pig, pig won’t jump over Fire, burn stick!” But fire wouldn’t.
 Water – quench fire.
 Ox – drink water.
 Butcher – kill ox.
 Rope – hang butcher.
 Rat – gnaw rope.
 Cat – catch rat.
 And the cat said, “Yes – if you bring me a saucer of milk from the cow.”
 Cow – may I have a saucer of milk for the cat?
 Yes – if you bring me a handful of hay from the haystack.
 So she went to the haystack, took handful – gave it to the cow.
 Cow gave her milk. She gave it to the cat who:

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Started to catch the rat
 Rat started to gnaw rope
 Rope started to hang butcher
 Butcher started to kill ox
 Ox started to drink water
 Water started to quench fire
 Fire started to burn stick
 Stick started to beat dog
 Dog started to bite pig
 So the pig did jump over the stile, and the old woman did get home before midnight.

6. The Noisy House

Old woman – bed – heard clock ticking, wind in trees. Couldn't sleep.
 Next day, told neighbour. "Get yourself a cat – will help you to sleep".
 Bed – heard cat purring, clock ticking, wind in trees. Couldn't sleep.
 Next day thought cat might be wrong animal – bought dog.
 Bed – heard dog barking, cat, clock, wind. Couldn't sleep.
 Next day bought pig.
 Next day – cow.
 Next day – elephant.
 Next day "Perhaps all are too big." Bought mouse.
 Bed – elephant saw mouse, jumped on chair!
 Chair broke, all animals made their noise.
 "Stop! This is stupid. Get out of my house!"
 She lay in bed. Could only hear a very quiet tick from clock. Very gentle wind in trees.
 "Oh, my house is so quiet!" And she went to sleep.

7. The Leprechaun and the Red Scarf

Ireland – green fields, golden buttercups. And leprechauns – each with a pot of gold!
 Boy – red scarf – saw leprechaun, and caught him: "Take me to your pot of gold. Promise I'll let you go if you do."
 Middle of field – full of buttercups. "Here, under this buttercup, is my gold. Now let me go."
 Boy needed a spade to dig down to gold. "If I let you go, will you promise not to take your gold away while I get spade?"
 "I promise."
 Boy tied red scarf around buttercup to mark it. "If I let you go, will you promise not to take my scarf away while I get spade?"
 "I promise."
 Boy let leprechaun go. Ran for spade.
 Returned to field full of buttercups.
 Each and every buttercup had a red scarf tied around it.

8. Giant Turnip

Farmer – field of turnips. Wanted to pull up a big one (was very big).
 But so big, he couldn't pull it out.
 Called for wife. But was so big they couldn't pull it out.
 Called for son.
 For daughter.
 For grandma.
 For dog.
 For cat.
 Still couldn't pull it out.
 Then little mouse came by. "I'll help you."
 "You? You're too small."
 "I'm small, but I'm very strong."
 So one last try. They all pulled – and at end of line the mouse pulled. At last the turnip came out.
 All had turnip for dinner!
 CHORAL: *Now pull together, pull together, pull together – pull!*

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9. Woman's work (*Virago Book of Fairytales*)

Norwegian farmer - farmhouse against hillside - flat roof, grass growing on it.

Always cross with wife. "Only woman's work".

She fed up - said, "Let's change jobs."

Next day she went to fields. He stayed home to do *woman's work*.

Churning butter - thirsty, went to tap new barrel of beer in back corner of kitchen.

Heard pig in kitchen, pig drinking cream from butter churn.

He ran (with tap in hand) and wild with rage, kicked pig dead.

Remembered tap in hand - beer flooding over floor.

Got more cream for butter, churning.

Remembered cow still in shed. But couldn't leave cream - baby crawling on floor.

So put churn on his back (rucksack).

Crossing yard, saw the well - stopped to draw water for cow - forgot cream was on his back - bent down for full bucket - tipped cream into well.

Too far to take cow to grass in meadow, but saw flat roof with grass. Made bridge from steep hillside to roof. Pushed cow onto roof - cow eating grass.

Thought cow might fall. So that nothing could happen, tied rope round cow's neck. Put other end of rope down chimney, into kitchen - tied it round his leg.

Nearly dinner-time, and no butter. Better boil potatoes. Pot of water on fire.

Cow fell off roof, man dragged across floor, pulled up chimney until he stuck fast.

Wife had finished man's work, came home. Saw cow hanging. Cut rope. Husband in chimney fell down head-first into pot of hot water.

She looked at spilt cream, dead pig, beer on floor, husband in pot. "So that's how you do Woman's Work!"

He was never cross again.

10. Big Toe

Poor boy, worked hard in fields all day - so poor was never any meat to eat. Mother only had beans to eat, every day.

Birthday. Digging in field, thinking of meat, meat, meat.

Spade cut something in hole in ground - heard a cry, saw something disappearing into the ground.

Found a Big Toe was left in the hole - "MEAT!"

Kitchen - when mother wasn't looking, dropped toe into beans. Meat for his birthday after all!

Night - bed - heard a moaning sound - came closer - closer - louder - closer!!! "Where's my toe..."

Boy hiding under blanket - but sound LOUDER and CLOSER!

Sound coming across floor to his bed - LOUDER AND CLOSER - "WHERE'S MY TOE?"

"YOU'VE GOT IT!!!" (*As you say last line, JUMP onto pupil in front row!*)

11. Free Melons

Old storyteller - people didn't believe his tales. Went home to think of a story everyone would believe. Swore he would only leave that room when he had such a story.

Disturbed by children's noise outside in street.

Decided he's play a trick on them to get peace.

"In market at other end of town - they are giving away free melons"

Children ran, leaving storyteller in peace to think.

As children ran others asked why. More started running - children - adults ran - whole town soon ran.

Old man ran by storyteller - told him. So storyteller thought "Perhaps there really are free melons."

He ran, too.

Shows that the only people who can tell really good stories must believe them themselves!

Two variants from STORYTELL

A Nasruddin tale added by Ofra:

in the Mediterranean countries we eat seeds: melon seeds, watermelon seeds, sunflower seeds, pumpkin seeds. salted, grilled we crack them between the front teeth eat the seed and spit the hulk almost compulsively. it took many years of training and now the cinema theaters and the inside of the buses are no more carpeted with deep layers of seed hulks .

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So when Hodja Nassar A din tried to rest one hot day at noon under a fig tree and a swarm of street urchins played noisy games around His tree he sent them to the other side of the village : " what are you doing here didn't you hear that Mohammed is giving away seeds to honour the birth of his first son? ' the kids scattered and Hodja went back to sleep but he could not sleep ... the thought of the seeds kept him awake. Maybe it is true it is possible , why not ? May be Mohammed is married, maybe a son is born. And Hodja ran all the way not to miss the (maybe last) seeds.

Shalom ofra

Added by Mark Wilson

I'm sure there are many variants of the tale type. Here's one from the mining camps of the American West:

An old gold prospector who never ran in luck died and went to heaven, but the place was so crowded he couldn't get in. St. Peter told him to hang around awhile and there might be room. After pondering the matter, the old fellow called an angel and whispered to him that there had been a gold strike down in hell; and at once there was a pell-mell rush of angels, and soon heaven was empty. As the horde fled downward, the prospector gazed after it hungrily and then turned to Peter, "You know," he said, "mebbe there was some truth in that rumor."

The above collected by B.A. Botkin. I imagine that Nasruddin must also have told such a tale, probably other tricksters too...

Best, Mark

12. Clever Cook (Grimms)

She was a cook, wore shoes with red heels, skipped this way and that - happy as a lark. "Oh, you are pretty" would say to herself - then go home and drink her master's wine out of sheer delight. Wine would give her appetite - take the best of what she was cooking - "Cook must know what she's cooking!"

Master, told her a guest was coming, "Prepare two chickens - as tasty as possible."

Prepared them, over fire to roast. Beginning to brown, but guest not there. Called master, "Soon I'll have to take them off fire. Shame, chickens are at their juiciest."

Master said "Then I'll run and fetch guest myself."

She put birds to one side, "If I stay by fire I'll get hot and thirsty." Went to cellar - drink of wine. (Did taste good!). So took some more. (Tasted even better!)

Back to kitchen, put more butter on birds, smelled so good, but perhaps something missing, better taste - tried with her finger. (Did taste good!). Shame not to eat them at once. Looked out of window for master - not coming. Looked at birds, one wing getting too brown, better eat it. (Did taste good!). Better eat other wing to even things up, or master would notice something was missing. (Tasted even better!). Looked for master again, still not there. Thirsty now - cellar - master's wine. (Did taste good.)

Sudden thought, perhaps they've stopped to eat along the way. Looked at the birds - shame to waste them. "Cheer up, you've already had a good chunk. Have another drink and eat it all up. There'll be no reason to feel guilty when it's all gone."

So ran to cellar, good honest drink. (Did taste good!). Back to chicken. Ate all of the first. (Did taste good!). Master still not back. Wine started her feeling sentimental, looked at other chicken.

"They grew up together, shouldn't be parted now. Where one is, the other belongs. What's right for one is right for the other. And if I took another drink, it wouldn't do me any harm." Cellar, wine. (Did taste good!). Ate other bird. (Tasted even better!).

Master returned. "Hurry, Gretel, guest here soon."

"Yes, sir, I'll get everything ready."

Master checked table, started sharpening carving-knife on steps in hallway. Guest arrived, knocked on door. Gretel opened. "Shhh, be quiet! Get out of here fast. If master catches you you're done for. Wants to cut off your two ears, listen to him sharpening the knife." Guest heard sound - and ran.

She said to master, "What kind of guest is that? He snatched both chickens as I was bringing them to the table and ran off." "Both?! At least he could have left one for me!"

Master ran after guest, "Come back, come back, I only want one!" Guest ran all the faster. And Gretel, well she just took another little drink, put on her shoes with the red heels, and skipped around as happy as a lark.

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13. A Mayan version of Clever Gretel

An e-mail from Allan Davies, Blackridge, Scotland.

Dear Richard,

The version of clever Gretel that I am working with is, I think, moderately different to the norm. I found it in a book of Mayan Folktales, collected near Lake Atitlan in Guatemala.

It's set in a Spanish Colonial context (which I have discarded in my telling), and runs roughly as follows:

Man and Wife share same birthday, and realise that they've never got round to having a proper celebration of it. Decide to remedy matters (it's coming up in a day or two). Decide to roast their two ducks, for the feast. Argue about suitable guests (Husband proposes whole list, wife dismisses them for one reason or another) - the only one they can both agree on is the Priest.

Day of birthday: wife kills and roasts Ducks, whilst Hubby goes off to fetch the priest (who lives quite a way away).

When Ducks are cooked, wife puts them on table to rest - dog sneaks through kitchen door and nicks one Duck - woman chases dog, runs into her lover in the street, invites him back for a while.

Pause for wife and lover to do their stuff.....whilst wife is resting, lover comes out of bedroom, smells duck, decides to satisfy more than one appetite, and slopes off with the remaining duck.

Wife comes into kitchen to see the two empty plates - but the whole house still smells of roast duck. She slaps covers on the two plates - just as husband arrives back with priest.

They all go through into parlour - table laid etc. covered plates placed in position of honour on table.

Wife send husband back into kitchen to sharpen knife - whilst he's gone, she tells the priest 'He thinks we've been having an affair - he's really sharpening that knife to cut your balls off !'

Priest hares of down road in fright.....

Wife tells husband that that greedy slob of a priest has stolen both their ducks, shows him empty plates as evidence - husband runs off down road after priest, waving knife and shouting 'Look father, I'm not a greedy man - I'll settle for one, you can have the other !' (or something similar)

That's basically it - I've actually never heard the Grimms' Clever Gretel, but I've been told that this is somewhat different.....the 'take' on the thing that I'm developing is that the wife has been unfaithful to her husband with just about everyone in the village except the priest (hence her arguing over the guest list in the first place), and the final image I end with is of the wife, leaning in the kitchen door, drinking the rest of the wine, watching the two men running off into the distance.....and I finish it by saying something like

'I don't know what happened to the Husband, or the Priest, for that matter.....but I'm pretty sure that the Wife didn't go hungry.....'

14. Girl from Heaven

(African, told by Elfriede Gazis. *Frame: Do we always recognise our good fortune?*)

Man, rich, had many cows. But one morning went to milk them, cows were dry - no milk. Next morning same. Decided to stay awake next night to watch.

Midnight, rope came down from heaven, many girls climbed down and milked cows.

Each girl was carrying a small basket

He caught one of the girls (so beautiful; eyes, teeth, skin as dark as a lake at night).

The other girls escaped up the rope, and the rope disappeared.

Man said she was to be his wife. She agreed (couldn't escape any longer).

But made him promise never to look into the basket she had - said if he did his fortune would change.

Happy with her, beautiful, good wife, worked well, children. He prospered.

One day he forgot his promise - looked into basket. Laughed aloud - he saw there was nothing in the basket!

Wife came in. Told her the basket was empty!

She told him that he had broken promise - now his luck would change; in the basket were all the gifts she had brought him from heaven - and he was too blind to see them.

Rope appeared from heaven, she climbed up - and he never saw her again.

15. Reason to Beat your Wife (*Virago Book of Fairytales Vol. 2*)

A tale in which someone knows the secret of a happy marriage

A man was married - very happy because wife was perfect. One day met a friend he'd not met for years; "Oh, I'm so happy, I've a perfect wife."

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Friend asks, "But have you beaten her yet? Every man must do this once to have a happy marriage. If not, she won't know who is boss!!"

"But I have no reason, she's perfect."

"Then make a reason. Bring home fish for dinner - say important guests are coming. Run out of house without saying if fish should be fried, boiled or baked. So whatever she does is wrong - you can beat her."

Man does this - takes home fish, tells wife, runs out of house. But she watches him go - thinks, "What's his game? Hasn't told me what he wants." So she cuts fish into three pieces - one she fries, one boils, one bakes.

Evening - everything ready- 3 pots with the fish. Baby comes crawling around - makes a mess on floor [*don't say "shit", just make a noise to indicate it*].

Before she can clear it up she hears husband coming. Puts another pot over baby's "mess".

"Where's fish?" She shows him pot with fried fish.

"I wanted it boiled" - gets ready to beat her.

"Oh, it's boiled fish you wanted." She shows pot with boiled fish.

"No, wanted it baked:" - gets ready to beat her.

"Oh, it's baked fish you wanted." She shows pot with baked fish.

"No, no. Oh, shit!"

"Oh, it's shit you wanted!" She shows pot with the shit.

And from that day on, she had a very happy marriage indeed.

16. Nasruddin and the Scholar

Hodja Nasruddin was working as a ferryman, crossing a river with a scholar. Hodja made a grammatical error, and the scholar said, "Have you ever studied grammar?" Hodja said, "No, I've never had the time." Scholar said, "Then half your life has been wasted."

A few minutes later, Hodja said, "Have you ever learned to swim." Scholar said, "No, I've never had the time."

Hodja: "Then all your life has been wasted. The boat is sinking."

17. Collecting Sins

I just read a story of Syrian origin about a rabbi who was visited by two women before the start of the Jewish New Year, which is a time of soul-searching and repentance. One woman was overwhelmed by some unforgivable sin she had committed and for which she was truly sorry. The other woman said that she had come to support her friend; she didn't have anything on her conscience. The small infractions or hurts she might have caused during the year were of little consequence, and she didn't see any reason to fret over them.

The rabbi sent the two women outside to bring him some stones. He told the first woman to bring the biggest, heaviest stone she could find; the other woman was to fill her apron with small, light stones. When they returned, the rabbi told them to return the stones to the exact place where they had found them. The woman with the large stone had no trouble at all, whereas her friend had no idea where she had picked up each small stone. They returned to the rabbi--one with her hands full of stones, the other empty-handed.

18. Land where no one ever dies (*Italienische Märchen*, Rowohlt, 1992)

Young man who was afraid of Death. "I want to find the land where no one dies". Left home to find it. Asked everyone, but no answer.

- At last at foot of mountain met an old man, beard, pushing a wheelbarrow of stones. "If you are afraid of Death, stay here. As long as I am still carrying this mountain away, you'll not die." How long? "100,000 years or more." "And then I must die?" "Of course."

"No, I want to find land where no one *ever* dies." - walks on.

- Comes to a forest, old man, longer beard, knife, cutting branches. "While I'm still cutting, Death won't come. 200,000 years to cut down all these trees." "No, I want to find land where no one *ever* dies." - walks on.

- Sea, old man watching a duck. "When my duck has drunk all water. 500,000 years." Walks on. "No, find land where no one *ever* dies." - walks on.

- Comes to a palace - old man, beard even longer - to feet. "I can understand you well - and here is that land, as long as you stay here you won't *ever* die." "At last I've found it, but are you happy here?" "Of course, and especially if you keep me company."

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Stayed in palace - lived like a lord. Years passed - he didn't notice.

At last said - "Life is good here, but I'd like to visit my old friends and family." "Why, they will all be dead." "Then at least I want to visit my old home."

"If you want. But do as I say. Take my grey horse from stable - runs as fast as wind, faster than Death. But don't forget, never leave saddle - or Death may find you." "I won't - don't want to die!"

Journeys home - sea all dry - no old man - only bones on shore. "Look, I did well not to stay."

Forest now no trees - desert. "I would have long been dead."

Mountain is levelled.

Home - all so changed he recognises nothing. No one knew his name. Sad at heart. Time to return to old man.

On road - meets a poor man with a wagon of old shoes. "Wheel broken - help me." "In a hurry, can't help." "Oh, have pity - am alone, is evening, without help will never get home."

Young man swung leg over saddle, but as foot touched ground the poor man grabbed his arm, "At last I've got you. Don't you know who I am - Death. All these shoes I've worn out looking for you, but now you fell into my trap. Sooner or later all must come into my arms - no escape."

And young man crumbled into dust.

19. Rabbit and the Moon (Bushman)

When world was young, one dawn, just before sunrise, a rabbit stepped into field, found grass was wet.

Heard crying, it was the moon, and moon's tears were making grass wet.

"Why cry?"

"I want to be like man; man never dies."

"But man dies. Come, I'll show you." Rabbit took moon to hut, showed moon old man dying on bed.

"See, man dies."

But moon showed rabbit another bed; woman, man and baby. "See, they are together, so there will always be birth. But I am alone; when I die there will be no more moon. That is why I cry."

Climbed back into sky. Is crying still, as you can see at dawn, when the grass is still wet with his tears.

20. Tiger's Whisker (Korean)

Wife - loved husband, but after he returned from fighting in the war he became difficult to live with, never happy with her.

She asks a magician if he can help.

"Yes, can make magic powder, this will make husband love you again. But I need a tiger's whisker for this. Can you bring me one?"

Woman frightened - but loves husband so is determined to get whisker.

Jungle, looks for tiger.

At last finds one asleep. Very frightened, but pulls out whisker, takes it to magician.

He burns it before her horrified eyes.

"But now you can't make magic powder to make husband love me!"

"You no longer need a powder. The cleverness, courage, skill and cunning you used to get the whisker - use those on him, you'll have things just as you want them."

21. Clever Farmer / Stupid Wife (or tell as Clever Wife / Stupid Husband!)

Farmer - stupid wife, always gossiping

Day in April, found gold buried under a tree - "Problem: wife talks, king will get to hear, will claim gold for himself!"

Idea: he re-buried gold under tree, went to town, bought loaves of bread, a fish, a rabbit

"Wife, let's look for mushrooms" "But it's April, husband!" "Wife, it's my lucky day, anything can happen!"

First they found a tree, bread hanging from branches.

"Husband, I didn't know that!" "Can find anything on your lucky day, wife!"

Next, found a fish, swimming in the long grass in middle of field. "Can find anything ..."

Next found a rabbit, swimming in river. "Can find anything ..."

Next found gold. "Can find anything ..."

"Wife, you mustn't tell anyone about this." "Me? Course not!"

Of course, gossiped, soon everyone knew about gold - also the king.

King came to claim gold.

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Farmer stood behind his wife.

King: "Did you find gold?"

Wife: "Yes – found it on our lucky day last week – when we found mushrooms"

King: "In April?"

Wife. "Oh, yes. Can find anything on a lucky day. Bread tree - fish in grass - rabbit in river. Then found gold"

Farmer behind wife, tapped his head to king by way of explanation

King: "Understand - Queen is just the same!"

22. Sea Woman (a selkie version of *Girl from Heaven*)

Seals – known as selkies in Scotland. Tales tell of how they sometimes shed their seal skins and are revealed as in form of people.

Poor fisherman – lived alone. Returned late from sea, beached boat, saw seals shed skins and dance on sands.

He took skin of most beautiful girl, hid it in hole in wall of an old barn behind beach, returned to watch.

Seal people saw him, skins on and swam away – all except the girl. "You stay as my wife."

Years passed, had two children.

Children playing in old barn behind beach, found seal skin. Puzzled – showed it to mother.

She grabbed it, ran to beach, put it on, dived into sea.

Children called, father joined them, called to seal.

Seal's head appeared above waves – disappeared, never seen again.

(*British Folk Tales*, Kevin Crossley-Holland)

23. Death in a Nut

While his mother lies dying, Jack meets Death heading for their cottage.

He grabs Death's scythe and uses it to beat him over the head until he is small enough to be stuffed into a walnut shell. Jack throws the shell out to sea.

He finds his mother well. While she lights the stove he heads off to town to buy some bacon for a celebration breakfast.

But the butcher is unable to slaughter any animals. He fears his business is ruined. Jack has to go home without the bacon.

On the way he tries to pull a cauliflower from a field to be some sort of breakfast. But none of the crop can be taken out of the soil.

He finds his mother ankle deep in matches: she hasn't been able to light the stove.

Jack tells his mother about his meeting with Death.

She tells him that everyone has a time to be born and a time to die, that he has deprived her of that moment. That without death in the world nothing can change, nothing can be born. She says she has taught him all her stories and wise things, and it's time for him to make his own way.

Jack retrieves the shell and releases Death. He returns to find his mother dead. He fetches their friends and neighbours and they have a meal at which they tell stories of all the happy and some of the sadder times they had with Jack's mother.

Then they bury her in the earth.

Jack takes the little money they had saved and walks out into the world, to other adventures and other stories.

(Based on a skeleton posted on Storytell. The story is also in *A Thorn in the King's Foot*, Duncan Williamson.)

24. Jack goes Hunting (sent to Allan by Pete Keal, with information by Chuck Larkin)

Jack's lazy – in winter sits by fire all day – warms backs of hands & rubs them together; warms fronts of hands and rubs them together; warms brains (which he keeps in his bottom!); then picks his nose & flicks bits into the fire.

Wife meanwhile finds kitchen cupboard bare and demands that Jack goes out and doesn't return until he can bring back flesh, fish or fowl. Jack protests but has no choice.

J thinks "If I'm to bring back food need a gun ... where can I get gun ... borrow one from vicar."

Vicar ("Haven't seen you in church for a long time Jack") lends him muzzle-loading shotgun and

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shows him how to use it – powder, wadding, shot, wadding & don't forget to take ramrod out before firing!

Jack goes to ice-covered lake & sees 2 ducks waddling on ice; loads gun, thinking hard trying to remember what to do next ... as he's ramming down 2nd wadding ducks fly off and J aims gun & fires ...

Force of blast sends J falling to ground – he'd forgotten to take ramrod out before firing – finds himself sitting on something warm ... he had squashed a rabbit as he fell – he'd got the flesh; looked around for ramrod – saw it sticking in the ice, skated over to it and found it had skewered both the ducks ... flesh and fowl!

End of ramrod was stuck in ice, J chipped away to free it and found ramrod had pierced a salmon! J had got flesh, fish and fowl "Aren't I a lucky man!"

Jumps up & down on ice in celebration ...

Ice breaks and J falls into water where great sheet of ice rears up & slices J's head off. J feels around for head puts it back on shoulders – its so cold, head freezes into place.

J climbs out of water and runs home, where wife celebrates J's success (at first not believing J). While she gets on with preparing meal J goes & sits by fire – warms fronts of hands, warms backs of hands, warms brains ... but when he goes to pick nose, flicks his head right into fire.

As a result, J finally got to go to church; Mary didn't have to look at J's ugly face any more and there were far fewer arguments in that house ever afterwards.

Hope you enjoyed that - I've heard versions told by Ben Haggarty and Taffy Thomas before it came into my repertoire.

Pete Keal

Story history (sent by Chuck LARKIN): The first set up story, A Beeboy variant, can be found in Baron Munchausen's writings in Germany about 1742. The primary story of one bullet shot that, terminates without prejudice, about 56 fish, birds and various varmints includes every variant image I've read or heard over the past 30 years of this old traditional story stuck into this variant.

25. Well of the World's End

Once upon an time, and a very good time it was too, though it wasn't in my time, nor in your time, nor anybody else's time, there was a girl.

Father re-married, stepmother cruel – hated her because she was so beautiful. At last thought to get rid of her – gave her sieve: Go fill it at Well of the World's End, bring it back full. (Thought girl would never find it, and if she did could never bring water back in a sieve.)

Girl started, asked everyone, no one knew where. At last a little old woman, bent double, told her where it was, how to get to it.

Did as told – arrived at last. Dipped sieve, water ran out. Tried and tried. Sat down, cried as if heart would break.

Croaking voice, frog with great goggle eyes. "What's the matter, dearie?" Told him. "If you promise to do whatever I bid you for a whole night long, I'll tell you what to do."

"Stop it with moss and daub it with clay,

And then it will carry the water away"

gave a hop, skip and jump, flopped into the well.

She did this, turned to leave, frog popped up its head from well, Remember promise. She agreed,

What harm can a frog do me?

Stepmother angry, but said nothing. Evening, tapping at bottom of door. Heard:

"Open the door, my hinny, my heart, (hinny is dialect word for honey)

Open the door, my own darling

Remember the words that you and I spoke

At the World's End Well but this morning."

Stepmother asked, girl explained. "Girls must keep their promises", glad she'd have to obey a nasty frog. "Open door this instant." Frog hopped to girl.

"Lift me up, my hinny, my heart,

Lift to you knee, my darling,

Remember the words that you and I spoke

At the World's End Well but this morning."

Girl wouldn't, till stepmother ordered. So lifted frog onto her lap. After a time sang

"Give me some supper, my hinny, my heart,

Give me some supper, my darling

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*Remember the words that you and I spoke
At the World's End Well but this morning."*

Fed frog bread and milk.

"Take me to bed, my hinny, my heart,

Take me to bed, my own darling

Remember the promise you promised to me,

At the World's End Well but this morning."

Girl refused, stepmother ordered harshly. So took to bed, kept as far away as could. Well, just as day was beginning to break,

"Chop off my head, my hinny, my heart,

Chop off my head, my own darling

Remember the promise you promised to me,

At the World's End Well but this morning."

At first wouldn't for she thought of blood and pain. But frog repeated and repeated, pleading voice. At last took axe and chopped. But instead of blood and mangled body – a prince. Told her of enchantment by wicked magician, could never be unspelled till some girl did as he asked a whole night, and chopped off head at end of it.

Stepmother surprised, not pleased to hear she would live with prince at his father's castle, think she had caused it all.

26. Nasruddin's Shirt

Nasruddin walked into a village where there had been no rain for months. "Nasruddin, we have hardly any water left. Can you help us?"

"Yes. Bring me your remaining water, and watch."

To their horror, they saw him tip the last of their precious water into the village wash-tub and start washing his filthy shirt.

"What are you doing? That is the last water we have?"

"Just watch."

And as he finished washing it, the sky darkened, and the rain poured down.

"It's always the same. I've only got one shirt, and every time I hang it out to dry, it always rains!"

27. Mr Fox

Lady Mary, seven brothers, and many suitors. Rejected all, until she met Mr Fox. No one knew who he was, nor where he came from. He told her about the house where they would live, but never took her there.

She wanted to know. Day before the wedding, rode through the forest to find it.

Came to a wall, above the gate: *Be bold, be bold*. She was – went through the gate.

Came to the house, above the door: *Be bold, be bold. But not too bold*. But she was bold – went in.

Staircase – went up. Small door: *Be bold, be bold. But not too bold – lest that your heart's blood should run cold*. But she was bold – opened the door.

Hanging from hooks on the wall, row upon row, bodies of young women, white wedding-clothes stained red by their own blood.

She screamed, ran down stairs. Saw through window Mr Fox coming, dragging yet another woman, her white wedding-clothes stained red with her own blood.

Lady Mary hid as Mr Fox dragged woman up stairs. Young woman with last strength put out her hand to hold onto banisters. He saw the diamond ring. Drew sword, cut off hand. Hand flew through air, landed on Lady Mary's lap.

Next day, wedding feast. "My dear, you seem so pale."

Bad dream.

"Oh, dreams are always the opposite. But tell me your dream."

I dreamt I rode to look for house – wall – gate – *Be bold, be bold*.

"It is not so, and it was not so."

Door – *Be bold, be bold. But not too bold*.

"It is not so, and it was not so."

Small door – *Be bold, be bold. But not too bold – lest that your heart's blood should run cold*.

"It is not so, and it was not so."

Bodies.

"It is not so, and it was not so. And God forbid that it should be so."

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You – dragging another young woman.

“It is not so, and it was not so. And God forbid that it should be so.”

Diamond ring.

“It is not so, and it was not so. And God forbid that it should be so.”

But it is so, and it was so. Here’s diamond ring I have to show.

Mr Fox cut into a thousand pieces!

28. *The Wife’s Letter* (download at http://tellatale.eu/b_page.html)

A woman was clever – she could read.

Her husband wasn't – he couldn't.

But her lover was much more interesting anyway.

And she did so want to be able to spend the whole night with him!

So she dressed him up as a woman – long grass skirt, brought him to the house and told her husband that this was one of her sisters from the country who had come to spend the night with them.

So the husband had to sleep alone. And the other two – ooh-ooh – they had a *wonderful* time!

The next morning the wife went to market, lover left in bedroom – get some sleep at last! Lay on top of bed with legs wide apart.

Husband saw this “sister”. Ran to market to beat wife. She saw him coming. Pulled a “letter” from her basket. “Husband, can you believe this letter? Says all my sisters in the country have been turned into men.”

“Well, yes, I can believe that because that sister who came last night, she’s been turned into a man, too!”

29. *One innocent farmer*

Chinese, 10 farmers planting rice, each wearing round straw hat.

Thunderstorm, they ran for shelter in ruined temple.

Lightning all around.

Farmers terrified. “The gods must be angry with one of us. One of us must be a sinner.”

To find out which one was guilty, they all held their straw hats out of door. “Let the gods show us which one they are angry with!”

One hat was hit by lightning, burst into flames.

“He is the guilty one! Throw him out!”

Man is thrown out into the storm.

Immediately the storm ends with an explosion of thunder. The walls of the temple crash down – killing the nine men inside.

The man outside was the only innocent one!

30. *Death and the Gardener*

King famous for wisdom and beautiful gardens.

Gardener saw Death lying beneath rose tree.

Ran to king: “I must escape – to summer palace.” Gardener left.

King went to Death: “Why frighten my gardener?”

“True – his hour has come. But was surprised to see him here while resting – was told to find him at summer palace – will now continue journey.”

31. *Tanzanian Sunlight*

Two chiefs in Tanzania, lived either side of a mountain.

Land to west was always night, but chief to east had box with lots of sun in it – so was light when he wanted.

West chief, Lugeye, sent man with 100 cowrie shells to east chief, buy some sun.

Walked up mountain, down mountain – to east chief’s village.

Chief sold some sun: “Take it, but don’t look back or it will go.”

Man left village. Girl saw him go: “Hey, man. Look at east chief singing!”

East chief sang – with voice, arms, feet – man had to look back – sun disappeared out of hand.

Told Lugeye, who called a woman to go – 200 shells.

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Same happened.

Called a dog to go, 300 shells – dog held sun in mouth, didn't look back. So Lugeye also got sun.

This is my version based on a tale told by Margaret Read MacDonald, and used here with her kind permission. It is in her *Look Back and See: Twenty Lively Tales to Tell* (pub. H.W. Wilson). The tale was first recorded told by a woman named Ma Kalenze.

Workshop task

The tale itself is a very simple narrative, yet by using movement, rhythm, chant, singing, audience participation and bringing children onto the stage, Margaret makes it a dynamic and highly memorable listening activity.

In a small group, discuss how and where you can bring the following into this story:

- movement
- rhythm
- chant
- song
- audience participation
- participation on stage

Margaret has published many books of stories. Some are picture books of a single story, others are collections containing a great number of short and easily learnt stories.
www.margaretreaddmacdonald.com

For more tales, visit www.tellatale.eu

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A handout of reminders

(for a much fuller discussion of practical and methodological matters, see the *Teacher's Handbook* which accompanies my video, *The Strongest of Them All – Tales and Music for Young Learners* (http://tellatale.eu/recordings_video_strongest.html))

If you want to become a storyteller, tell stories.

If you want to become a better storyteller, tell more stories. (Papa Joe)

Above all, storytelling is a skill to be experienced and worked on practically. Just as you cannot learn to swim by reading a book, the only way to improve as a teller is to tell. So the intention of this handout is not to tell you how to tell tales because you have already learnt that during the workshop. Rather it is to remind you of a few of the points you have come across, and above all to give you more skeletons of stories to use.

The stories

Choice of what to tell

Choose stories which *you* enjoy, which somehow *speak* to you: only those will have authenticity.

Learning stories

Do not learn the text by heart, but find its logical structure.

Use a skeleton, or bubble diagram, or visual the scenes of the story.

Rehearsing the story – putting the flesh on the bones

Telling a story implies a listener. You may find rehearsing a story by telling it to a friend is the best way for you. But if you prepare it alone, imagine an audience, and *tell the listener!*

Descriptive detail

A feature of traditional stories is that descriptive details are very few, and only included if the logic demands it. So beware of the literary temptation to overload!

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Making mistakes

Mistakes are a natural part of spontaneous communication, so do not panic.

Knowing the inherent logic of the story will help you remember what happens next.

If you suddenly realise that you have forgotten to include an important part, simply add it in; *Now what you don't know, because I haven't told you yet, is that ...* Your listeners will rarely notice!

A tip: first line / last line

Although the tale should not be learnt by heart, it may help to learn the first and last lines. Knowing how to start, and knowing how it is going to end, gives a lot of confidence.

One golden rule

Never tell with a copy of the text: You will lose touch with the listeners.

The telling

These are some of the points I hope you will have seen during the workshop:

- Your responsibility is to the listeners
- Believe in your tale
- Para-language
- Remember the difference between the bus-stop mode and the performance mode
- Be grounded
- Create characters
- Tempo – slow down
- Eye contact – another way to take responsibility for the audience. Use it *personally*.

In class

Prepare the listeners

If learners are to gain the most from listening to stories, ensure that they experience it as being very different from most of their work in school.

Beware of squeezing a story to extract its full pedagogical possibilities

The greatest value in stories is simply the listening. Not all storytelling needs “exercises” after.

Finding more stories

From storytellers

- The best source is always a storyteller. Find out who tells in your locality. (But remember: when you see a storyteller you are hearing just one version of a story. The way you tell it may be different.)
- For a website introduction to the German storytelling scene, visit Martin Ellrodt's site at www.ellrodt.de. Martin is based in Nürnberg.
- Follow these links: www.tellatale.eu/resources_links.html

From books

Many, although not all, of the stories in the world's oral tradition have been written down. But it is essential to remember that *the written text is not the story* – it is only what someone has written after hearing that story.

From tales around you

Another feature of the oral tradition is that it is very much alive, as you can hear in any playground or during any school trip. Jokes, ghost stories, urban legends (those amazing stories about “What happened to a friend of the boy who lives next door....”). All these are part of the oral tradition, and offer plenty of stories you might like to use in class.

From the internet

The storytelling resources on the net are immense: my links page is one way to start: http://tellatale.eu/resources_links.html

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And now?

I hope that after this workshop:

- You have discovered that a storyteller is more than a mere narrator of the story.
- As you learn to co-ordinate your body and voice and words, you find that you are able to live your story, and your listeners are part of that creation.
- As you tell *to* the listeners, you find that they are giving you their trust that you will carry them safely through the story.
- As you recognise that trust, you find your control as a teller enables you to carry them.
- As control increases, you find that you are also able to observe your own performance.
- As you observe, you find this self-evaluation leads further improvements.
- As you tell that story again, you find it also grows.
- And more stories will come to you.
- And as the process of improvement is never-ending, you find more opportunities to tell those stories again, and again, and again!

The old tales

A final few words, which I often use to close a performance:

*The stories you have been listening to are very, very old;
many centuries, even thousands of years old.
Today those stories have been alive – because you have been here to listen to them.
Now it is your task to keep those stories alive by going out into the world,
and telling them to other people!*