

# CURRICULUM to TALE

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Story, because it first and foremost engages the heart and imagination of the listener, has the power to draw them through a tale that can teach facts and engage them sympathetically in new perspectives on old ideas. There are many ways to create a story that teaches. As a starting point, I will offer you a single model.

1. **State clearly what you want your listener to learn**, There is a form of Buddhism in which the practitioner chants for what they want. It enjoys a high rate of success. Knowing what you want puts you half way to getting it. This is also true with a story that teaches. List the facts or theory that you want to impart. **Be specific and detailed.**

-If you want to teach students about the water cycle, outline that cycle and the terms, facts, and sequence that you want your students to know.

-A place, event, or character from history should be accompanied by all the details you feel your students needs to learn about them/it. Also significant is a sense of the era , it's physical realities and economic, social, political, and philosophical beliefs. Rosa Parks would not have made history in 1990, and she would not have survived her act of defiance in 1910. Meaning does not exist outside of the immediate world that defines it. \*

-A mathematical concept or process in the sciences must be completely delineated, as the process will usually become the plot of the tale.

2. **Create a story frame.** Stories come in many packages. How might your objectives best be arrayed?

-A first person sharing of something that happened to you.

-A third person telling of a 'true' tale

-A fairy tale motif that uses archetypes to carry themes

-A folk tale that allows you to use animals and the natural environment to carry the tale.

-Polymorphism is a blessing to storytelling. Allowing the elements of the tale to become their own characters can bring alive systems that would otherwise confound the young learner.

-A resetting of the facts into another reality:

For instance, if you want to teach about notes you could choose to have a family

living in one house. Grandpa note has a slow voice. Father's voice is just a little faster, because he has to get more done each day, and Mother's voice is twice as fast as his because we all know that women have twice as much to do.....

I am sure you can think of other story styles that might better suit your material.

### 3. **Create your main character.**

People are drawn into stories because they can relate to the primary character. Create a character that will engage **your** listeners. Only you know your students. Create a primary character that will be a mirror of their of their concerns, issues, relationships, and life struggles. What is the physical and verbal style of their communication?

For instance:

A character that would draw pre K-1 students would be someone mastering basic self care, newly venturing into the world beyond their home and family, attempting new friendships. A character for a story that you want to appeal to grades 6-8, will be knee deep in peer pressure, and newly aware of community standards as established by peers, gangs, church, school, or neighborhood. Create a character your students will want to identify with. Then that character can take them on a journey of knowledge.\*

-If you want to teach about the water cycle, your character might be a girl drop of water, happy in a great bucket of other girls drops. Wendy, and all the other water drops sway and splash together. They all sport the same pale look. They are physically very adaptable....but Wendy has a few special details that make her stand out, and will follow her through the cycle she is about to enter. Possibly she is the only drop that actually asks about those that came before and wonders where they went.

-If you want to teach about the development of labor unions at the turn of century, create a character their age, whose hopes and issues might parallel theirs. This character lives in Lawrence MA 1912, and her family all work in the woolen mills.

-If teaching a math concept, create a character that can draw them through the entire operation from the heart of it. For instance: "All the kids on the playground got nervous when Fractilious Fraction came near. Her wild red hair, like her limbs seem to be in constant movement. She just couldn't keep her hands to her self. Poor Robert Roundbottom was never fast enough to get out of her way and...."

#### 4. Shape the Tale

Draw your character through the facts you want your students to learn, creating drama, whenever possible from the actual dynamic of the situation. Create new characters to help explore facts and heighten drama.

-“Wendy Water Drop had ever really thought about herself. She'd always been part of the pond, then the barrel. The last thing on earth she wanted was to stand out or be different.

'I'm one of us.

We are me.

All the drops make the water

That you see.'

“Wendy knew the words that the drops chanted morning noon and night. Hadn't she heard the others chant it? When she was still in the pond and they were in the barrel? What ever happened to them?”

This is a thought she kept to herself, until the hot June sun began gazing into the barrel.....”

-Amanda could never pull back the soft hair that fell continually into her eyes. If her hands lost their relentless pace, pressing the shirt sleeves through the machine, the needle would surely, as it had before, find its way into her thumb.

“Now dear” Mr. Bonanno, the foreman, pressed his thick belly against her back, his smell always preceding him. “You don't want to loose your pace. I wouldn't want to have to dock you pay.” His wheedling voice simply covered the fact that he was much too close to Amanda.....(the needs for labor unions can be well described)

-Usually the kids stayed away from Fractilious. Getting fractioned wasn't much fun. Samuel Square wasn't watching where he was going, and only yesterday Fractilious whacked him right down the middle into two triangles! (This tale will need outside drama. A threat to the school yard could make Fractilious into a heroine as she fractions all the shapes to create a protective army! Felt board characters could demonstrate the shapes breaking apart or being 'fractioned'.)

#### 5. Ending the Tale

Leave your students with a full experience, a problem solved, a time in history circumscribed, a full symphony created. These types of stories are about traveling through a problem or challenge on the side of someone we identify with, and resolving it.

For instance:

As the hard, immovable ice started to warm in that late March sun, Wendy felt herself stretching, growing, coming alive again, and when she listened carefully she

could hear it. It was slow, but it was the chant from the others as they all began to melt:

'I'm one of us.

We are me.

All the drops make the water

That you see.'

Enjoy this limitless way to teach.

\* For complete guides on creating History Stories for and with students:

<http://www.storiesalive.com/Education/CurriculumGuide.html>

Creating History Stories

First Person Telling

Creating Historic Fiction With Your Students

**\*\*Hell For A Picnic**, a story about an 11 year old boy who joins the USS

Constitution in the year 1812 is a good example of this and can be found at:

<http://www.storiesalive.com/orderform.html>