

# The Importance of Storytelling to Growing Children

By Benjamin C. Batalla

**H**AVE you ever tried to tell stories to your class? Or do you take pains of reading stories for your children, then telling the same in the best way you can?

I think that quite a number of teachers have almost forgotten that very interesting and effective device of creating children's appreciation of literature. There are some who feel that they are too old to read stories about pets, folktales, simple adventures, bundles of surprises, and pretty plots of childhood games and fun. Some others believe that storytelling is a waste of time and effort that could be better spent to other important phases within classroom activities. These wrong opinions of some teachers need attention and correction. Telling stories to growing children is a phase of teaching that should have a definite phase in the rather over-crowded reading program. No teacher should deny the importance of this feature nor should be too busy to neglect the phase of work because well told serves the pupils much more than merely giving them rich and wholesome entertainment.

1. Storytelling enriches and expands the pupils experience.
2. It introduces them to stories that have true to life worth.
3. It arouses in them the desire to read stories as interesting as the one they heard.
4. It sets for them, a pattern for effective storytelling.
5. It makes them appreciate the value of well-chosen words, good pronunciation, and proper expression in storytelling.
6. It makes them feel that the teacher is a close friend, just like a mother, and elder sister, or an aunt.

Many, indeed are the benefits derived by children from the teacher's storytelling, it becomes the latter's business to read children's literature. Select good stories, and practice telling them well. Have it painted in mind that a story well told will live in the pupils memory long after lessons and preachings, threats and warnings have been forgotten. How many

of our grown-ups and even our young graduates of today take the pains in reminiscing over their school-days, ever so fondly repeat the incidents, in the stories, my teacher told us. I think only a few or none at all can recall the stories or incidents their teacher or teachers once told them.

## Guides in Selecting a Story to Retell:

1. Select a story that is personal and is true to life and is related to schoolroom activities.
2. Select a story that is suited to the interest to the class you are teaching.
3. Choose one that is rich in sense impressions. Stories that are full of action and rich in surprises are appealing to children.
4. Choose a story that is really good both in plot and in style. Your story often serves as an appetizer to make children hungrier for more stories, hence they would read more books.
5. Select stories that are simple in structure. Children get mixed up and confused listening to stories with complicated plots.
6. Select a story that has a fascination of newness. Never attempt to retell a story that had been read by many of the pupils.

## Presenting the Story:

These guides are adapted from the English Handbook for teachers in the elementary school published by the New York State Education Department.

1. Know the story so well that each part can be visualized.
2. Open the story with a statement that arouses the interest and appreciation of the hearers and audience.
3. Tell the story simply, but use action words, color words, sound words — words that help the children see, hear and feel.
4. Strive for a pleasing voice.
5. Use the voice for many dramatic effect needed.
6. Place emphasis on the action and omit unnecessary detail.
7. Use direct discourse whenever possible.

8. Use repetition frequently. Young children enjoy it.
9. Pause to give the children to enjoy any clever turn in the story.
10. Show by your voice and facial expression that you are enjoying the story too.

The story telling should be followed with some activities as means of checking-up pupils understanding and appreciation. Various devices may be employed to give variety to the follow-up work. The following may be done:

1. Discussion:

- a. Why do you like the story?

- b. Which character do you like best? Why?
- c. Have you read another story with the same plot?
- d. Have you had an experience similar to the one told in the story?
- e. Is the ending satisfactory? In what other way may it be ended?
- f. Could the story actually happen in real life?

2. Dramatization — Dramatize the story told.
3. Writing another ending for the story told.
4. Retelling the part enjoyed most.
5. Pantomiming a certain part and calling a classmate to tell the part pantomimed.