

## TRADITIONAL STORY TELLING and PONT BOOKS

### WHY SHARE STORIES WITH CHILDREN?

- ❖ Stories are how we learn about the world. Every culture has its own stories which are storehouses of belief and tradition.
- ❖ We use stories to represent the world to ourselves and to others.
- ❖ Stories consist of sequences of action with causes, effects and consequences. They are an important means of understanding how people tick.

### WHY **TELL** STORIES RATHER THAN READ THEM?

- ❖ Story tellers can create a very special atmosphere and bond with their audience. There is no book to get in the way of this relationship.
- ❖ Listeners have to create their own visual images, rather than relying on illustrations to do it for them.
- ❖ Story tellers tailor the story to each particular audience, adjusting pace, length and complexity to the level and patience of their listeners.
- ❖ Story telling increases the capacity of children to listen attentively.
- ❖ Telling a story lets you use eye contact, pauses and gesture to create drama.
- ❖ Without a book to hold, it is easier to use artefacts and sound effects to create atmosphere. Some story tellers use drums or percussion instruments.

### HOW DO TRADITIONAL TALES HELP THE STORY TELLER

- ❖ They usually have a strong structure or pattern which is easy to imitate. Things happen in 3s or 7s which are special numbers: in *The Lady of Llyn y Fan* there are 3 life events, 3 types of bread and 7 sisters.
- ❖ The repetition within the tales makes them easy to retell.
- ❖ Choruses or refrains help the teller to remember, and help the audience to join in at special moments.
- ❖ There are language patterns such as *Once upon a time...the very next day...And they all lived happily every after* which help the teller – and which provide instant connectives for young tellers and writers.
- ❖ Characters are often stereotypes – although this may need to be questioned and explored, it is helpful to the story teller to have a set of stock characters and descriptions on which to rely, for example *the beautiful princess with the long golden hair*.

## I DON'T HAVE ANY STORIES. WHAT CAN I DO?

- ❖ Read lots and decide on one you would like to retell.
- ❖ Find a written version of the story that you particularly like and read it to yourself a number of times.
- ❖ Find a way of representing it to yourself. There are lots of ways of doing this:
  - Make a list of key events using visual symbols.
  - Make a story map, that is, draw a map of the geography of the story and plot key events onto the map.
  - Reduce the story to a set of key words. Put the key words onto prompt cards.
  - Use a paper plate to draw key events: the Willow Pattern story is a good example of one where everything can be recorded visually.
  - Draw a graph or a shape to represent the movement of the story and annotate it with key words.
  - Use the five finger technique. Decide on the five key moments in the story and assign each moment to one of your fingers. If necessary, draw around your hand onto card, cut it out and use each finger to record a chunk of the story – use symbols or words whichever you find easier.
  - Create a filmstrip set of cartoon images.

These techniques will work for the children too. It is important to use the 'recordings' to practise retelling the story orally. Don't worry if you forget an event or if the story takes a different turn. It is easy enough to return to the storyline. Incorporate the forgotten bit into the next part of the story. 'Perhaps I should have told you this earlier, but the princess had one very important gift...' 'Did I tell you what happened when...?'

## HOW SHOULD I PREPARE THE CHILDREN FOR STORY TELLING?

- ❖ Make the atmosphere special. Ask the children to sit in a circle away from their usual chairs and tables. with nothing in their hands to distract them.
- ❖ Light a candle or use a listening device, such as clicking fingers or a tap on the drum to signal that the story session is under way.

## WHAT ACTIVITIES CAN THE CHILDREN UNDERTAKE?

- ❖ Instant retelling – in pairs (sharing the story).
- ❖ Telling the story around the circle (taking turns until the story is complete) – it's helpful if there is a 'buck', e.g. a large shell, to pass.
- ❖ Prepared retelling, using the techniques listed above.

❖ Re-writing the story or using its structure to make a new one.  
NB Writing activities should ONLY be undertaken after oral activities.

Once children are familiar orally with a range of traditional tales, they will appreciate looking at different versions of the same tale. This is a very good way into discussions about the differences between speaking and writing, and, at a more sophisticated level, it can lead into examination of an author's individual 'voice' or style.

#### RESOURCES

Richard Eastwood	<i>Seven Welsh Folk Tales</i>
Julie Rainsbury	<i>Spellmakers</i>
Helen Emanuel Davies	<i>Fabulous Celtic Beasts</i>
Daniel Morden	<i>Weird Tales from the Storyteller</i>
Daniel Morden	<i>Dark Tales from the Woods</i>

Look out also for the series *Legends from Wales*, all illustrated by Jac Jones. These are all single-legend picture books, where a traditional tale is retold by a well-known author.

Malachy Doyle	<i>The Changeling</i>
Malachy Doyle	<i>Lake of Shadows</i>
Jenny Sullivan	<i>Sion and the Bargain Bee</i>
Jenny Nimmo	<i>Gwion and the Witch</i>
Jenny Nimmo	<i>Branwen</i>
Daniel Morden	<i>The Other Eye</i>