

Study Guide for Teachers

David Gonzalez
Aesop Bops
presented by
Young Audiences New Jersey & Eastern PA
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ABOUT THE PROGRAM
A zoo full of animals comes alive in this fast-paced performance that teaches children about sharing and friendship. Featuring such stories as “The Lion and the Mouse” and “Why Turtle Has a Checkered Shell,” Aesop’s Bops has ample amounts of audience participation and offers positive lessons for social and psychological growth.

- LEARNING GOALS**
- To acquaint youngsters with the art of storytelling.
 - To encourage cooperation, friendship, and sharing.
 - To increase awareness of forms and uses of nonverbal communication.
 - To encourage storytelling, dramatic play, acting, and fantasy in young children.

BACKGROUND INFORMATION FOR STUDENTS

Every culture in the world has a tradition of storytelling. For some non-literate societies it is the principal way for people to pass information and knowledge to one another and between generations. Storytelling maintains and sustains the body of shared beliefs of a community and thus serves to keep it alive. The children of traditional societies absorb the wisdom, knowledge, and love of their culture through storytelling.

The storyteller is a master communicator who works to suspend the "real" world so that messages can be transmitted through imagery, sound, and emotion. By using language, voice, and body movement the storyteller can infuse a printed story with the rhythms and music of life. Careful attention is always given to the content and message of the stories so that they are appropriate to the specific audiences who will hear them.

Multiculturalism teaches children to recognize their own cultural background while giving them the kind of exposure to other people that will foster respect and kinship. Storytelling is an effective and stimulating way to learn about other people because it is universal form of communication. Stories from different cultures illuminate these universal aspects of human life and thus help us to honor and celebrate the diversity of world cultures.

BEFORE THE PROGRAM

Discuss storytelling with the children. What are the differences between reading and telling a story?

Pick one or more of the following activities to explore with your students:

1. Ask the children to tell a favorite true animal story. This can be about a family pet, a bird or squirrel in the park, or an imaginary animal. Ask them if they ever learned something from an animal.
2. Ask the children to tell a favorite make-believe story about an animal.
3. Play "twenty questions" using only favorite or exotic animals.
4. Ask the children to make a body gesture for the following animals: turtle, rat, lion, mouse, and fish. How do these animals walk, run, and dance? If these animals could speak, how would their voices sound?

AFTER THE PROGRAM

1. Spend time reflecting on the performance by talking to students about it. What did the children learn from the animals in the show? Which animals did they like best and why? If they were an animal in one of the stories, would they have acted in the same way and/or made the same choices?

Practice these activities to prepare you and/or your students to tell stories, or just to experiment with storytelling techniques.

1. Explore the range of gestures for each body part.
2. Explore the range of facial gestures. Exaggerate them.
3. Explore the range of vocal expression. Use emotions (i.e. angry, surprised, scared, delighted, confused, etc.).
4. Explore vocal opposites such as high–low, loud–soft, fast–slow.
5. Experiment with different animal sounds in the classroom.

Try these activities to go along with a story that you or your students tell

1. Tell a story but leave out its conclusion. Allow the children to write, recite, or dramatically render their own invented ending.
2. Make sock puppets to go along with a particularly well-liked tale.
3. Hand out a variety of photographs and tell the children to make up stories that go with them. Dramatize these stories.

ARTIST INFORMATION

David Rafael Gonzalez is a master storyteller, musician, and radio host. He has a doctorate from New York University's School of Education, where his research examined the use of stories in education and rehabilitation. Over the career he has performed for hundreds of thousands of kids.

David grew up in the Bronx with his Puerto Rican mother and Cuban father and has traveled in the Latino world, regularly performing and teaching in Spain. For eight years David was the host of *New York Kids*, an award-winning radio program for children.

STORYTELLING TECHNIQUES/TOOLS

These are some things you may have noticed during the performance that you, as a teacher, can incorporate into your storytelling.

Gesture and movement: Use your body to create pictures of a story, changing your position from sitting to standing to create emphasis, using imaginary objects, etc.

Voice: Use different "voices" for different characters and for the narrator, changing tones of voice, using silence when appropriate.

Audience participation: Have the children act out a certain part, repeat a line or a repeated chant in the story, complete a sentence, do a repeated movement, sing a repeated song, etc. As children become more familiar with your story, they can help you tell it more and more.

RESOURCES

Augusta Baker and Ellin Greene, *Storytelling: Art and Technique*.

Norma Livo and Sandra Rietz, *Storytelling: Process and Practice*.

Vivian Gussin Paley, *Mollie Is Three*. How children use fantasy and story to construct their reality, and how a teacher entered a child's world through storytelling.

The National Storytelling Network. Listings of festivals, resources, and local events. Many links to collections of stories and tales:

www.storynet.org.