



Power of Storytelling: 7 Reasons to Incorporate Stories in Your Classroom

Stories do so much more than merely entertain; they can boost brainpower, build bridges, and even impart a little wisdom. If you need a reminder about the power and promise of storytelling, here are seven wonderful—and maybe even surprising—reasons to make stories part of your teaching toolbox:

1. **Instill values.** We all know the phrase “the moral of the story.” That’s because it’s so much easier to convey values—anything from the virtues of hard work to the need to respect others—through stories. And this educational technique has been around forever—from the Bible to Aesop’s Fables to fairy tales and nursery rhymes.
2. **Make writing easier.** If students get in the habit of telling stories, which require a sort of composition in the brain, they are likely to find the act of writing easier. They will be used to searching their memories for relevant details, organizing the narrative, and thinking about how and what they want to communicate to their audience.
3. **Nurture empathy and understanding.** By sharing our individual stories and personal histories, we tell other people who we are. And by listening to others’ stories, we learn who they are. In the classroom, listening to each other’s stories helps us see each other in new ways, to understand where other people are coming from, and what makes us all unique or the same. In this way, stories have the power to foster empathy and new connections among different groups of students.
4. **Help them make mental connections—and maybe even do better in math?** There’s a reason we use “story problems” in math class. A new study suggests that preschool children’s early storytelling abilities are predictive of their mathematical ability two years later [<http://www.nationalliteracytrust.net/Pubs/oneill.html>].

This study echoes other recent research on the value of storytelling to teach the “whole brain” using the multiple intelligences and the integration of thinking in the left and right brain.

5. **Boost critical thinking.** We all know there are two sides to every story, and what better way to help students truly comprehend that than through storytelling. Just as one student's version of an event may be quite different from another, so one nation's perspective on history might be very different from ours. By exploring different versions of one event or story, you can open students' minds to new ways of thinking.
6. **Pass on new language.** Just as they do in reading, listeners pick up new words and language patterns through stories. They learn new words or new contexts for already familiar words. The more stories they hear, the more they pick up on narrative patterns and start to make predictions about what will happen. That experience helps readers at all levels tackle new and challenging texts.
7. **Banish boredom.** It may seem obvious, but stories are simply so much more fun than lectures, workbooks, and the chalkboard. When students' minds start to check out—or their bodies start to slump—reenergize the mood in the classroom with a storytelling lesson or activity.

For more ideas and resources on storytelling in the classroom, visit racebridgesforschools.com and racebridgesvideos.com