

Emily Valenza
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"The Pen is Mightier than the Sword, but not the Mouth."
-Charles Schultz

"...So she gathered the orange flowers too, singing to herself all the while: 'Kum-kwa, khi-wa, kum-kwa, khi-wa-' when SUDDENLY- up rose the Gunniwolf!"

Children around the room giggled and sat at attention to see what would happen next, entirely fixed on my mom as she continued her story again, now in a deep gruff voice:

"He said, 'Little Girl, why for you move?' Tremblingly she answered 'I no move.' The Gunniwolf said, 'Then you sing that guten sweeten song again!'" (Harper 11).

I sat listening to the rest of my favorite story until I fell asleep along with the other children soon to be carried out by their parents to drive home and go to bed. The pajama-story nights were a weekly event for me at the Lawncrest Free Public Library in Philadelphia, and storytelling continues to be part of my family now. Storytelling however reaches many more than the children who attend bedtime story hour at their local libraries. Storytelling is a versatile and powerful tool and medium of expression, which spans many disciplines, time periods and cultures.

Storytelling is a practice and an art that reaches far beyond just reading and telling and listening. It is a tool used in business, politics, education, psychology, religion, writing,

or any area in which effective or powerful communication is essential. The scope and effects of storytelling are worthy topics of research because of their critical impact on public, family, and university life. Storytelling is a traditional and important learning tool; it is a tool for persuasion; it is a tool for communication and relationship building. An understanding of the power of storytelling and the skills of the storyteller can shed light more effectively on communication in all walks of life.

There are approximately 3,500 people in the United States who consider themselves storytellers. That is, they can tell a story from memory or invent one as they go along, and that these stories draw an audience (Boss np). Training, different voices, mime, gestures, posture, and the use of facial expressions, enhance a storyteller's presentation.

East Tennessee State University currently offers a master's degree program and the University of Illinois offers a graduate program in storytelling (Boss np). In addition, university training local guilds, story-swapping groups, and the National Association for the Preservation and Perpetuation of Storytelling (NAPPS), are leading a national movement to support the practice of storytelling (Moore 9). The storytelling profession is by no means a large market, but there are many areas in which a storyteller may work, depending on the types of stories they tell. "Stories can be folk tales, urban legends, straight fiction, personal experience, or ...'autobiographical but not really true', such as fisherman tales in which the quarry gets

bigger with each retelling" (Boss np). Organization and government agencies recognize the demand and value of storytelling. "Professional storytellers supported by grants and commissions, are hired to tell stories at libraries, museums, theaters, and schools, and also lead workshops for others interested in storytelling"(Boss np).

Storytelling is at the same time straightforward and elusive and public and personal. Stories, like Cinderella, for instance, exist in a wealth of variant forms. The act of storytelling is a challenge, both for the storyteller to reach their audience and for the audience to fully comprehend the storyteller. "It is the oral medium itself, which sets up the strongest barrier between the observer and the performance. Any listener can hear the words spoken but not every listener hears these words in the same way" (Edwards 3). Given that storytelling has so many uses and motivations, it is important to consider the history of storytelling, why storytelling is important, the scope of storytelling, and future uses for storytelling.

The Mediterranean area is credited as the main source of the oral tradition, boasting such impressive examples such as the Iliad and the Odyssey, commonly attributed to Homer, and dating back to at least 2000 BC. These works were transcribed to a written form around the seventh century BC. Lyric Poetry from the ancient Greeks, such as Sappho, Archilochos and Pindar, added to the roots of oral literature (Edwards, 4). In addition to ancient Greece, creation stories from many cultures began with Homer called them "winged words." Creation stories, and stories which

explain natural phenomena, are found in religious contexts, such as the Old and New Testament, the Qu'ran, Buddhist sutras, and other such revered texts. These stories include morals, guidelines for behavior, and possible explanations of the unknown, told from person to person as the reach of each religions spread. When we began to write our stories down, the skill of the storyteller was watered down, because the ability to memorize and perform a story was no longer as necessary when everyone could have access to text stories.

Today's storytellers have a rough job trying to build up a following beyond library story hours, because of the stereotypes that only librarians can be storytellers, the ease of access of television programs geared towards children, and the larger literate population. To this, Viv Edwards, a researcher of oral traditions, asks "Must humankind give up the heritage of a rich oral culture from the past because the modern world requires an irrevocable step into literacy? Has literacy already tarnished beyond repair the oral traditions of the modern world?"(Edwards 6). At first glance it seems as though storytelling is an endangered practice, yet with deeper examination, it is evident that the impact of storytelling is so widespread that there is no danger of its extinction.

Storytelling is not simply the act of reading a story aloud to someone else. The act of storytelling is no easy task demanding a certain charisma and a special voice. Storytelling, like any type of performance, requires a skilled storyteller, who alone conveys a story, which can transport the listener to a

different place, time or state of mind. There is an imperceptible connection, which is formed between the storyteller and their audience, which can take the listener beyond what they know.

From the moment the storyteller begins to speak, our attention is focused by his or her presence and voice and by the beginning of the story. We hover half in and half out of our world, longing to find out more about the world of the story. If the voice is trustworthy, we shift our attention seemingly outward, while setting the ground for an inner visualization. (Simms, Laura 63).

The storyteller has an almost hypnotic or magical ability to hold our attention and take us to other worlds. This is no ordinary talent, yet it can be overlooked and seen as something frivolous, to entertain children.

Although I will later discuss how storytelling can be important in many different fields concerning the adult world, the influence of storytelling on children is undeniable. Aside from the entertainment value of storytelling, in the case of children, it fosters love of reading and language in its audience, who are spurred on by the stories told to go and read more stories. Stories also have a huge impact on our moral development in early childhood, where we learn good deeds from bad ones, courage, and also to beware of unsafe situations.

In the invisible world of our inner drama we have killed our only conscious vehicle of travel, our sweetest companion, and passed over the threshold of death. Here, in the exercise of imagination, we murder the safe path, killing our own limited vehicle of travel. What is most terrible or feared must be done in the mind in order to meet our terror and contain it in our waking lives. The vastness of listening contains all the fear of the universe (Simms, Laura 65).

Stories help us understand life from a different point of view, they help us see the world through a new perspective, helping to instill tolerance. They inform us of our commonalities and celebrate our differences. "The oral story is soft and malleable. It yields to the pleasures and needs of its audience" (Livo 15). Storytelling unites people, and does so in a way that teaches and entertains. Listeners immediately become part of a group in their shared experience of the story. This skill, the ability to unite an audience, is valuable in almost any profession, especially those dealing with public relations, and sales. It would be difficult to imagine a profession, which would not value employees skilled in the areas of entertainment, persuasion, and group dynamics.

The business world is the perfect environment to apply storytelling, with its values on effective communication and group work to accomplish common goals. Personal stories seem to have the greatest impact on reaching people to motivate or convince. Stories tend to form a bond between the worker and the client, or people within the organization. Stories with morals or life lessons illustrate quickly and powerfully the qualities that are desirable to an organization, such as overcoming odds, accomplishing seemingly impossible tasks, and being faithful to one's principles. Using storytelling in the workplace can be a less critical and more welcome way of getting a message across, as well as inspiring new ideas and confidence (Lauer 21).

Storytelling can be a powerful and persuasive tool used in political movements and for social change. In the Soviet Union,

folktales captured the essence of communism and spread its ideals throughout its target audience.

That folklore belonged, first of all, to working people, had far reaching implications. As if by magic, it opened the eyes of the party leaders to the possibilities that folklore would have for the advance of communism. And from that time on, we can follow the conscious use of folklore for social and political purposes (Oinas 78).

Folklore was a favored tool of the CCP in the People's Republic of China, where leaders of the CCP "found socialist support for the idea that the oral tradition of the people must be known in order to understand the true history of the laboring classes," therefore the oral traditions were studied, and consequently reformed after studying them in order to mold a new communist folklore (Oinas 176).

Usually people do not see storytelling as something dangerous, but storytelling can be wielded for social and political change, both constructive and destructive. During WWII, the Nazi's used storytelling, speeches, even published storybooks to promote their ideals and plant the seeds of hate for those they were against, in all areas of society.

Storytelling, though sometimes used to manipulate its audience, also helps people cope with personal problems and live through difficult times. It gives us characters to relate to, to empathize with. In a "land of complex reality, story is king. Story makes sense of chaos and gives people a plot. One of the ways that story influences people is that a story can reframe frustration, suffering or extra effort as meaningful"(Simmons 37). In the same way that stories help people deal with problems,

artists can tell stories using their medium, to externalize a visual story. When painting, the artist can incorporate ideas on many levels, which each tell a story, so that they may convey some of the complexity that comes about when a story is read from a painting. Visual stories can, just like the morals or main point of a story, be obscure or clear-cut, or both at the same time. Just as a listener may infer different meaning into a story, which is read aloud, so will a viewer when they experience a piece of art. A storyteller's voice must be appropriate and unique for a story, or in my case, a painting to speak itself. A storyteller's proverb from Turkey, which states that, "'The voice is half the wisdom.' And the tale itself slowly seduces our minds into wanting to know what is going to happen next...." (Simms, Laura 63). A rhythm exists between the actual material and content of the story. No one storyteller will tell a story in the exact way another will, and no two stories can be exactly alike, which makes for an inexhaustible supply of new perspectives and meanings for each story ever told.

The generation of stories by storytellers can spur written literature, as in China, where it has often shaken up the stale literati classics with new styles and themes to explore.

Every new form, every innovation in literature, had never come from the imitative classical writers of the upper classes, but always from the unlettered class of the countryside, the village inn, and the market-place. I found that it was always these new forms and patterns of the common people that, from time to time, furnished the new blood and fresh vigor of the literature of the literati, and rescued it from the perpetual danger of fossilization (Oinas 169).

Storytelling can be viewed as an art form of the people, a way to leave ones mark to be passed down from generation to generation. Even the plots of Shakespearian plays, accepted as high literature, have roots in folktales which came from various countries and cultures, therefore being reincarnated to be told again, only this time performed on stage or read in a book. "Its language is not the precise and unchanging form of the written story, created by a single author, but the evolving, flowing language of the community"(Livo 15).

Storytelling has been part of my life since I was born, from bedtime stories, growing up with "daycare" in a public library, to exploring stories from family members I've never met and those I never knew well enough. Storytelling is a constant and natural thing in my family, at the dinner table each night I would hear tales of library discord and office woes, as well as legal dramas and debates about religion and ethics.

Now I have become a storyteller in my own right as an artist, I create narratives through images. Stories played an integral part in both my emotional and intellectual development, they served as refuge when I was sad, as friends when I had none, even psychologists to help me sort through the craziness in my head. The stories I heard as a child made me excited to read for myself, and as a result I love reading, this love has helped me academically and intellectually. Where will storytelling take the next generation of children, what doors will it open and what will it teach them as they move into the world of adults?

Storytelling can have countless applications in the future, used to bring about social change politically and culturally. It may be used more heavily in education as a way to condition children for learning, and studied by more in the university, as the need for storytelling expands in different fields. As storytelling is woven more and more into our daily lives, it also becomes less recognizable as storytelling, like the messages in a television commercial, or magazine advertisement.

Storytelling has an undeniable affect throughout history and it touches everyone's life in some way, be it in his or her family, at school, the work place, through the media, travel, and just relating everyday to the people around them. "You don't have to amputate part of your soul to be influential, In fact, your soul tells the most moving story of all. Go tell your story, the world needs it" (Simmons xviii).

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