



# Personal Stories

## Lesson 1:

### Choosing a Story to Tell

“When I was a child I hated writing! I felt I had no imagination, no creativity, and no ideas. No one showed me that I had within myself all the material I would ever need for telling and writing stories.”

(Master Storyteller Donald Davis)

**Grade Level:** 9-12

**Instructional Time:** 20-30 minutes

**Materials:** (See Resources section near end of this document)

- The POPS Introduction to Storytelling CD, or a recording or video from a professional storyteller on YouTube. (Carmen Deedy, Kim Weitkamp, and other storytellers have age-appropriate stories available online for free.)
- A copy of the related Lesson 1 handout.
- Pencil

**Objectives:**

Students will identify in their minds an anecdote from their own lives sparked by the and/or personal anecdote shared by the teacher. They will draw a scene or symbol related to the story, and share at least part of the story with a partner.

## STORYTELLING

“Storytelling can be an effective component in creating lifelong learners who have the ability to use creative problem solving, context, and experiential learning to work through complicated situations.”

Donna Washington  
*Storytelling Magazine*, June/July 2014

## CORE CONCEPTS

Help your students recognize that they have many stories that other people are interested in hearing.

## TEACHING PROMPTS

### PROMPT 1: PROVIDING AN EXAMPLE

- Teacher says: “Many of our best stories are stories that happened in our own life. Has anything like this ever happened to you?”
  - ◇ Teacher plays “The Ducktail” by Donald Davis (Track 2 on the Introduction to Storytelling CD) or “My Father the Whiz: A Cuban Refugee’s Response to Jim Crow” by Carmen Deedy (found on YouTube).
- Teacher asks again: “Has anything like this ever happened to you? Or does it remind you of something that’s happened to you or someone you know? Take a moment and share that time with someone sitting by you.” (Teacher allows them to briefly share for 30 to 60 seconds and then redirects the attention back to herself/himself.)
- If desired, teacher says: “Before you tell me about any of those times, I want to tell you a story from my life.”
  - ◇ Teacher tells a quick incident from her/his own life that relates to having a problem or getting into trouble. It can be lighthearted (like the Donald Davis story) or more serious (like the Carmen Deedy story).
  - ◇ [Modeling is important, because it helps the students feel comfortable and safe to share stories of their own—but not necessary. There are many stories available on the CD or online that can be used as models if Teacher is not comfortable.]
- Teacher asks: “Anybody else want to share? We don’t have time for the whole story, but give a quick overview.”
- Teacher allows two or three students to share a bit of their own stories.
  - ◇ [Allowing the students to share stories will prompt other stories from other class members, creating “I remember when” moments for others listening.]
- If desired, Teacher uses Prompt 2 to create additional ideas. If not, Teacher distributes handout, and reviews the instructions with the students. Teacher reminds students to show respect to each other and their experiences and stories.

## CORE CONCEPTS

Core Concept Continued:  
Help your students recognize that they have many stories that other people are interested in hearing.

## SAMPLE STORY PROMPTS

*Write down three times you got in trouble and underline the time when you got the worst punishment.*

*Write down a time when you helped someone even when it was hard.*

*Write down three times when you did something you knew you shouldn't do.*

*Write down a time when you did something that hard just because you knew it was the right thing to do.*

*Write down a time when a haircut went bad.*

*Write down any problems you ever had with fire, water, pets, or wild animals.*

*Write a special gift you gave to someone else and why it was important.*

## TEACHING PROMPTS

### PROMPT 2: STORY IDEA LISTS

- [Note: If needed, another way to prompt students to tell stories is to show them how many different story ideas they may have. This activity is helpful if you are interested in showing your students there are many different themes and ideas they can write about or if they had a hard time relating to theme of the first prompt or if the students can benefit from exploring additional story prompts.]
- Teacher instructs students to pull out a blank sheet of paper.
- Teacher uses as many of the sample story prompts or more of his/her own until the students have multiple lists on their paper.
- Teacher instructs students to pick a story from their list that they want to share or develop.
- Teacher instructs: "Take a moment and share that time with someone sitting by you." (Teacher allows them to briefly share for 30 to 60 seconds and then redirects the attention back to herself/himself.)
- Teacher asks: Is there anyone who would like to quickly share with the whole class? Not the whole story, but just a small interesting part of it?
- Teacher allows two or three students to share a bit of their own stories.
- Teacher explains: "These seem like great stories. Did anything that was shared remind you of other stories? Take a moment and write those down."
- Teacher says: "It sounds like everyone has some good options. Take a moment and decide which one you would like to work on today."
- Teacher distributes handout, and either reads or instructs students to read and follow the instructions.

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## ASSESSMENT

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- Teacher listens and observes if stories are being shared, and if listening behavior is occurring.
- Teacher refocuses those who need to be reminded or encouraged, and praises appropriate and exceptional behavior.
- Teacher walks around the classroom and looks at handouts in order to review if anyone did not understand or complete the assignment.
- Teacher instructs students to keep the handout for future use.

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## WRAP UP

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- Teacher explains that the students will continue to work on their stories. The teacher shares that the students in the class will share their finished stories with each other or, for those schools that are doing it, explains details about a school-wide storytelling festival or other intended outcome (personal narrative writing assignment, etc.).

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## RESOURCES

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### *Storytelling Resources:*

If you would like to share an example of a professional storyteller that use personal experiences as the basis for larger stories, here are a few examples you can find on YouTube:

“My Father the Whiz: A Cuban Refugee’s Response to Jim Crow” by Carmen Agra Deedy (Click [here](#) for the link.)

“The Orange” by Joel ben Izzy (Click [here](#) for the link.)

“The Lap” by Kim Wietkamp (Click [here](#) for the link.)

Many of these storytellers have presented on the art of storytelling and why storytelling is important, here are a few of those presentations:

“Call of Story” by BYU T.V.—PBS Documentary on Storytelling (Click [here](#) for the streaming link.)

“Once Upon a Time, My Mother...” by Carmen Agra Deedy—TED Talks (Click [here](#) for the streaming link.)

“What’s a Story and Why Teachers Should Care” by Syd Lieberman—TEDx Talks (Click [here](#) for the streaming link.)

“How the Story Transforms the Teller” by Donald Davis—TEDx Talks (Click [here](#) for the streaming link.)

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