

Program 3

Anne Pellowski

Description of the Program

For generation after generation after generation, for almost as long as man has existed, stories have been told and retold. The storyteller in this program is Anne Pellowski, a former storytelling specialist at the New York Public Library and the founder and former director of the Information Center on Children's Cultures of the U. S. Committee for UNICEF. She is also an author and has told and collected stories throughout the world.

There are many ways to tell a story. In Asia a storytelling cloth is used as storytellers tell their stories. The Buddhist of the Far East use palm leaf storytelling books. In Asia the visual is considered very important to the oral story. Drawing story are told in Korea, Japan and China by older children to younger children. Ms. Pellowski draws and tells a story using western numbers. She then shows how the children ask questions and lets the listener find other things in the drawing.

At the end of the program, Ms. Pellowski tell a story using a string to make the images as she tells the story.

Drawing Story Visual

The Storyteller's Story

Once upon a time there was a big mother six who had a right handed little six and a left handed little six. They had a best friend, eight, who was always late because he was always lying down. One day right handed six had to do his math homework and he couldn't find his triangle ruler. He walked over to left handed six and asked to borrow hers. Hers was cracked so he went to borrow eight's, then he went back to do his homework. As he was working the ruler cracked and the all of the O's popped off and he said, "Oh, what a clown I am".

Questions and Answers

1. *How many different countries have you traveled to studying storytelling?*

Ms. Pellowski has traveled to 112 countries and listened to stories in all of them. She tries to listen to at least one story everywhere she goes.

2. *Are stories very different in other countries?*

Yes, stories are very different in other countries. Our traditions and therefore many of our stories come from Europe, which in turn came from Ancient Greece. In Africa there is a lot of movement and dancing in storytelling. The most unusual storytelling she has seen is by the Aborigines in Australia. There in the evening by the light of the fire, women draw stories in the sand in a dance storytelling combination. Some of these stories are over 10,000 years old.

3. *In non-western countries is there one type of person who is the storyteller?*

No, most countries have many different types of storytellers. In Africa there are praise singer storyteller who sing the praises of some great tribal chief, there are common, ordinary family storytellers, and central myth storytellers who tell stories for the whole tribe. In Japan, there are at least 12 different types of storytellers from the very dramatic to children doing the drawing stories.

4. *Is it important to research stories before you tell them?*

You definitely must research stories before telling them. Fortunately, most countries have people who have done this type of research and have written their stories down for others to enjoy. The best way to learn a story is by hearing it done by the people who started the story.

5. *How long have you been studying the history of storytelling?*

Ms. Pellowski started studying storytelling with Augusta Baker when they worked at the New York Public Library. August Baker believed that it is important to learn stories about your own people first and then learn stories about other people. This is what Anne Pellowski has been doing for over 40 years.

Suggested Activities

1. Let the students practice telling the number story that Ms. Pellowski told at the beginning of the program. They can share this story with students in kindergarten or first grade if they learn to tell it well. The younger children will enjoy looking for the numbers in the drawing.

2. Do you or any of your students know any other type of drawing story that can be shared with the class? Let the children try to create a drawing story similar to the one told in the program.

3. Ask parents or grandparents to come to the class and share stories told to them as children. Try to get people from different cultures to share their stories.

4. There are books about string designs. Let your students try making up stories to go with the different steps of making a design.

5. Since research is so important in recording stories, let your students ask grandparents or older relatives /neighbors to tell them stories that they can record and bring to the class. Are any of the stories similar? Let some students research stories from different cultures in the school media center or on the Internet.