

Program 7

Hannah L. Baker

Description of the Program

Where do storytellers come from? They come from all over the country and all over the world. You don't have to be born any place special to be a storyteller. All you need is the ability to imagine and have a love for the language. Storytelling is truly an art. To be able to tell a tale requires not only inventiveness, but the ability to entertain. This program's guest is Hannah Baker who has been a storyteller for 10 years and works for the South Carolina Writing Improvement Network. She believes in and has promoted the power and importance of storytelling.

It is the simplest of ancient devices: the well-told tale. Yet no matter how modern we are; when we listen to a story we become part of the ageless tale.

The Storyteller's Story

"One Eye" is from **Grandfather's Tales**, a collection of tales retold by Richard Chase. This is the story of an old woman who was very rich but she did not live as if she had any money. She lived in a two room log cabin and since she didn't trust banks, she kept her money under the floorboard in the cabin. Every evening she would sit in the cabin and quilt until she got tired. She would always yawn three times, then she would get a knife and go over to the fireplace where she kept a large fish that she called "one eye" and cut off a piece. She would eat the piece of fish then go to bed. Once three robbers came to town. The first was a one-eyed guy called "the brain", the second was a skinny guy and the third was a big guy. They heard about the old lady and her money. They sent the skinny guy to watch the old lady. He watched her quilt, then yawn the first time. When she yawned she looked at the fireplace which was next to the window where the skinny man was hiding and said "that was the first of three to come and two more and I'll be getting me my knife". The skinny man ran back to the other robbers and said that we had better leave her alone because she was a witch. He told them that she knew he was there and that he was one of three. The others did not believe him so the big guy went to watch the old woman. When she yawned the second time and looked at the fireplace which was next to the window where the big guy was hiding, she said "that was the second of three to come. One more and I'll be getting me my knife". He ran back to the other robbers and agreed that they had better leave her alone because she was a witch. The leader, the man with the one-eye went to see for himself. When she yawned the third time, she said "that was the third to come, now it's time to get my knife and cut a hunk out of you, one eye." When she went and got her knife and walked toward the fireplace next to the window where the robber called one-eye was hiding, he turned and ran back to his friends and they left town as fast as they could. The old woman cut the piece out her one-eyed fish, ate it and went to bed.

Questions and Answers

1. *Do you use stories to get children interested in reading a book?*

Yes. It's easier to get younger students to read, but the older ones are harder to get to read. If you tell them a story from a book then they may get interested in the book and read it. They may even look for other books like that one.

2. *Do you have a favorite story to tell?*

I have a favorite kind to tell...My favorites are scary stories which children always like. Here in South Carolina there are lots of scary ghost stories from the Low Country and other scary tales from Louisiana.

3. *Is storytelling easy?*

Can you talk? If you talk, storytelling is easy. What's fun about it learning the stories and telling them, once you tell them again it gets easier every time.

4. *What is your process for learning a story?*

If it comes from a book, you need to read it over several times, then read it aloud to get the rhythm and see which quotes works, and how to make the conversation sound right. Then you play with it and get someone to listen to you tell the story. Hopefully, you will find someone who will be honest with you and tell you how you told the story, where they got lost, and what you need to improve it. Then you practice, practice, practice.

5. *Do you think everyone should try storytelling?*

Definitely, because it is so much fun. It is also a way to make sure that stories, such as the one retold by Richard Chase, live on as they are told and told again.

6. *Do you research your stories?*

Sometimes, especially the South Carolina tales I like to find out where the story came from, if it is a version of another story, and who was the first to tell it.

7. *How do you learn to tell stories?*

By telling them...just like you learn to read by reading. You learn to tell stories by telling them.

Suggested Activities

1. Ms. Baker said she was a local storyteller because she liked to tell stories from her state and from other nearby areas. Let the children search for and read local stories from their state. Ghost stories are always local favorites.

2. Ask students to do research about stories that comes from the local community. The public library may have such tales available, but there is always someone in the community who is known as the local historian or the teller of tales. Students can ask older relatives or neighbors to tell them local stories. They can write them down or tape record them as they are told. Let the students retell the tales.