To Tell A Story

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BIOGRAPHIES
I have a M. Ed. from the University of North Carolina: Chapel Hill, where I was selected as a Morehead Fellow in Planetarium Administration and Education. Currently at Fernbank Science Center, part of the DeKalb County School District, I’ve been fortunate to work at Adler Planetarium in Chicago as well.

ABSTRACT
Would someone remind me of this, please?

INTRODUCTION
Storyteller Betsy Doty notes that, “If the history of the world were condensed to 24 hours, there would be 13 minutes of oral tradition, and .2 seconds of the written word.”

Section I: Storytelling is important
Humans are social animals, and we’ve been telling stories for tens of thousands of years. Human brains love stories, rhythm, rhyme, and song. Mnemonic devices help us remember the order of the planets in the solar system, phases of the Moon or the bones of the skull.

We use stories to pass along values and ideas, to teach, to entertain. Story telling is important.

Research indicates that when one reads a story in print, the parts of the brain that decode and make sense of language light up. But when one listens to a story, other parts of the brain are engaged, as well. A phrase like “the singer had a velvet voice,” stimulates the sensory portion of the brain.

We’ve all told stories under the dome - stories in the stars. Many of us have researched mythology and stories from different cultures, to share with our audiences. Conferences are great places to hear sky stories and share them with colleagues. IPS offers resources on our web site.

At Fernbank Science Center, we’ve partnered with local storytelling groups. Members tell stories in our dome. We provide the science - they tell the stories.

Section II: Rules for finding and telling stories
Are there any rules about telling star stories?

In the United States, artists with stories in print or recorded media can copyright their work. They can claim ownership of an original personally created story, and register the work as theirs. Permission to use the story in print, online, or for personal gain requires permission from the author.

According to Heather Forest, “Teachers, librarians and educators working within the context of their jobs in an educational setting are free to use material that has a copyright without asking permission of the author.” This is referred to as “fair use.”

In telling stories from other cultures, it’s important to do some research, particularly since many stories are part of an oral tradition. Some Native American stories are told only at particular times of the year, or by a particular teller. There are men’s stories and women’s stories in other cultures. Being sensitive to those cultures may mean choosing different stories to tell at different times or to different audiences.


Section III: Mythology
Carl Wenning, then director of the Physics Department Planetarium at Illinois State University in the U. S., shared some good points about storytelling. He pointed out that studying myths can be important on several levels.

Mythology can help modern day folk understand how the ancients relied on the earth/sky relationships for calendars and time –keeping. The sky can be used for direction finding; it is awe-inspiring and useful for recording events.

Myths are unique stories of unique cultures, and should not be thought of as “cute” or “meaningless.” They explain relationships between creator and created
(creation story), explain personal duties and provide role models (teaching tales), help to pass along tribal customs and moral truths, and can serve to continue oral history.

And they’re simply good entertainment. Share some with your audiences.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS
Carl Wenning, Physics Department Planetarium, Illinois State University, USA. “Understanding Sky Lore”

REFERENCES
Australian stories.

The science of telling stories: how stories affect our brains.

Storytelling or reading and brain development.

Patterns and changing technology.

TED (Technology/Entertainment/Design) talks by storytellers:
The dangers of a single story:
https://www.ted.com/talks/chimamanda_adichie_the_danger_of_a_single_story?referrer=playlist-how_to_tell_a_story#t-1104723
The politics of fiction:
https://www.ted.com/talks/elif_shafak_the_politics_of_fiction?referrer=playlist-how_to_tell_a_story#t-1163778

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