

Telling Experiences for The Classroom: The Story String



There are many traditions of keeping objects that carry stories: from the carvings of a totem pole to the ornaments of a charm bracelet.

With the following activity, you can bring the exploration of objects and the stories they tell into sequencing and story recording.

MATERIALS: Yarn or string

PREPARATION: Cut a length of yarn or string (approx. 1yd) for each student.

SKILLS & CONCEPTS: Sequencing, time-line, personal story, oral traditions.

ACTION: Use the yarn as a diary or journal by tying objects into it that serve as “mementos” for each thing you do in a day. (The period of time selected for the activity can vary with the teacher, from a brief nature walk, to a 24 hour period, to several days.)

INTO: Discuss the way objects can remind us of stories. Demonstrate by telling the story of some article of clothing, or object in the room, such as a wedding ring or a favorite coffee mug. Introduce the idea of a charm bracelet and the way charms are mementos of experiences.

Incidentally, the word “charm” comes from the Latin “carmen” for song or incantation.

THROUGH:

1) Students collect and build their “Story String” looking for an object that will remind them of a given moment. The object does not need to be unusual. Any ordinary thing can be useful (a food wrapper from lunch, a blade of grass from the playground, etc.) *Objects should be tied along the string in the order that they happened, forming a string time-line.*

2) Students share their Story String in story swap groups. Tell the stories from the objects in sequence.

Note: if students swap their stories in teams of two, they can repeat the story many times over with new partners. Such a rotation allows for mass practice and gives the student the opportunity to rehearse before a number of classmates before sharing with larger groups.

BEYOND:

- 1) Tell the stories to other classes.
- 2) Tell stories from another student's string.
- 3) Invent a story from another string.
- 4) Write one or a series of the stories.
- 5) Create a story string for a story the class is reading as a form of "string book report".
- 6) Hang all the strings about the classroom as a showing of the many things that happen to us!
- 7) Make stories on a shoestring as outlined on the next page.
- 8) Learn more about the use of string for storytelling by reading *Knots on a Counting Rope* (by Bill Martin Jr. and John Archambault) or learning to play and tell cat's cradle stories. (String game books are referenced in the bibliography.)