

Robin ~

Storyteller What to expect of a storytelling session

When a storyteller comes to school it is not always easy to know what exactly might happen. This is because there are as many different approaches and many different tellers. I hope that these general notes might help.

My first concern is to engage the audience with the stories as closely as possible. It is important that any adults join the children as part of the audience. This models to the children the importance of careful listening. Many teachers also say that it gives them a valuable opportunity to observe their class, besides which I often include jokes especially for the grown-ups and it is a shame to miss them!

Unlike hearing someone read, listening to live storytelling is a very interactive process and children will respond in various ways; this may involve some spoken contributions. This is perfectly normal and adds to the children's appreciation of how stories develop. I do not expect children to sit in serried silence - their ideas and involvement are a significant element in the development of the session so please avoid 'shh-ing' the children. It quickly becomes clear if a child is making genuine contributions or is 'playing-up'. If I feel that someone *is* disturbing the audience I will stop and ask them to go and sit by a teacher. It is important that staff are vigilant about the children. It is very rare that there are problems (such as nose-bleeds) but obviously I am in no position to deal with serious disciplinary or safety matters.

There should be as few distractions as possible during the storytelling. One of the critical elements to telling a tale is the alterations of voice. These include timbre, speed and loudness. The same is true for the music and moments of silence are very important parts of the art of storytelling. So please try to arrange a quiet space. Please resist the temptation to sit marking work, not only does this diminish the value of the storytelling itself in the ears(!) of the children but also means that teachers cannot appreciate the responses of the children. (Or the jokes.)

While it might seem a good opportunity to ask a TA to put up a display or staple hats together at the back of the room this is very distracting and spoils the effect. (Both of these things have occurred (and more) while I have been trying to tell tales!)

The session will begin with me briefly introducing myself and mentioning a few 'rules' such as not speaking when I play music. Even though storytelling has no barriers there do have to be some boundaries! Depending on the nature of the activities it may be appropriate for children to have writing materials available so that they can make notes, again I will make clear how this is to be done as we proceed.

If we have agreed to hold some workshop activities I may have some material to hand out for the children to use. The involvement of staff in the workshops is equally important, particularly in supporting learners with difficulties of special needs obviously I do not have sufficient knowledge of your children to provide adequate support.