
The telling of stories has been a fundamental part of human culture since times prehistoric. It is how we pass on history and knowledge. Tales of myth and legend hold the seeds of truth of our past history and are the fairy tales we all love. Storytelling is important, from the travelling bards who were the news reporters of ancient times, to the bedtime stories of today, everyone loves to hear a good story, and children of all ages love being read to. However, many of us - parents, teachers and library staff - can feel it is a chore to be undertaken rather than an opportunity to be enjoyed with our children. This book helps bring us back to the place where storytelling is fun for both the reader and the listener and explores ways to make everyone a participant.

The author is well qualified and respected by her peers, with many years of experience as a storyteller, teacher of storytelling, lecturer, presenter and advisor on subjects related to children’s literature and storytelling. She has co-authored two picture books which have won the Anne Izard Storytellers’ Choice Award. Using her own experiences and discovery of storytelling as ‘performance art’ rather than just a literary exercise, the author combines reading and drama to produce fun.

Folktales aloud reads as a narrative, explaining why storytelling is so confronting for many librarians and offering the shared experiences to demonstrate that ‘we are not alone’. The author then breaks the book down into four developmental age groups, identifying the characteristics and needs of each and offering suggestions for how storytelling can be offered to both appeal and engage each group. Each section offers a ‘story coaching’ based on a sample fairytale with ‘scripting’ and strategies for engaging the audience.

Each section concludes with a list of other suggested tales and two or three ‘storytelling scripts’. The end result is an easy-to-follow lesson for the storyteller on how to develop his or her own storytelling session that includes information about how the narrative should be developed, the important elements that help the story to flow, the way to read, modulate and improve the delivery so that each age group is both engaged and participating. This comprehensive storyteller’s manual concludes with a comprehensive list of resources that includes story titles, story collections, further research and training resources as well as web-based resources.

For librarians who work with children, and even those who are interested in community storytelling to older people in their communities, this book will offer ideas and inspiration to get you started or reignite your passion for sharing stories with audiences of all ages. I recommend this book to librarianship and teaching students, public and school libraries and parents to learn and be inspired.

Corrinne Hills