

# The Art of Storytelling

BY CARLA M. PACIS



Last year, I had the privilege of judging two children's storytelling competitions—the Alitaptap 7th Annual Storytelling Competition and The Children's Library Inter-school Storytelling Contest. Storytellers from Grades 2 to 7 came up on stage and enthralled both children and adults with their stories, told with great confidence, enthusiasm and energy that were admirable and contagious. As the children came up on stage one by one, I realized that they could easily have been contestants of Starstruck Kids or Star Quest Kids. Instead, they chose books and stories written for children by Filipinos to show off their talent. Get your own students started on storytelling. Here's how:

## Storytelling How-to's

- Choose an appropriate story for the age and interests of the audience. Look for an enjoyable story with a strong plot, as well as words that sing and jump off the page. These elements will grab your listeners.
- Storytellers must remember that the story is the star, not them. The storyteller is the medium by which the story is told and shared.
- Storytellers should read the story several times. They need to understand and connect with the story to successfully relay it to others.
- Introduce the story by giving the author's and illustrator's name. The storyteller can start off by asking a question related to the story to get audience attention (for example, when telling the story of Sleeping Beauty, she can ask "can you imagine what it would be like to sleep for 100 years?")
- Maintain eye contact with the audience. This helps them keep their focus on the storyteller.
- Use both voice and body to represent different characters. Storytellers can change vocal pitch, tone, and volume. He can also use hand gestures or change his posture.
- Use the book or parts of the book as props (for exam-

ple, show pages with very interesting artwork, or flip pages and read from the book as you go along).

- Feel free to use other small props or wear an appropriate costume to bring the story to life.

### WHY STORYTELLING?

When children tell stories, they...

- Gain confidence
- Improve verbal and communication skills
- Learn to think inventively
- Develop a love of language and stories
- Learn to be self confident
- Are able to share themselves with others

### What not to do

- Don't change the story or add scenes to the story.
- Don't overdo the ad libs. These are a good way to connect to the audience, but must be within the context of the story and must be just enough to keep the audience interested, otherwise the story may be lost.
- Don't be OA (over-acting). Too much drama, screaming and crying will make the audience focus on the storyteller, not the story.
- Don't make your props the focus of the storytelling. They are there to only aid the storyteller and should not distract the audience from the story.
- Don't force moral lessons. Many storytellers think that they need to conclude their stories with a list of lessons learned or a question about the lessons learned (for example: "What about you? Are you respectful to your parents?"). While the question may be valid, it only serves to perpetuate the untrue belief that a story is good only if it has a moral lesson.

*(Adapted from Through the Eyes of a Child by Donna E. Norton)*

**Teachers should model storytelling to their students to encourage them to follow suit. Storytelling boosts self confidence, improves communication skills, and also develops relationship-building skills.**

**The Children's Library Storyteller of the Year Mark Cyrus Yncierto masterfully brings to life his chosen tale, entitled "Ang Tagal ng Mommy Ko," at Interschool Storytelling Grand Finals in Robinsons Galleria last December 2004. Mark Cyrus is from Christ Life Learning Center, Cavite.**



### ABOUT THE WRITER:

Carla M. Pacis has written several award-winning books for children and young adults. She is also a Senior Lecturer at the UP Diliman and at De La Salle University, and a Resident Fellow of the UP Institute of Creative Writing. Ms. Pacis is a founding member of Kwentista ng Tsikiting or Kuting, an organization of writers for children and young adults.

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