

# The Importance of Storytelling

We often think of stories as entertainment, but there's more.

Stories are important in classroom learning. Students read, discuss, and write about novels and plays in English classes. A history class is all about stories, with textbooks sometimes having "story" in their titles. Science has its stories which tell about important moments of discovery. In recent years a popular book has told the story of how Fermat's famous mathematical theorem was formally proven.

Many theorists, educational researchers, and professional storytellers believe that stories are "hard wired" into the human brain. Human communication seems to have started with stories. When young, a child thinks in images and events. In fact, after studying mythological traditions in cultures worldwide, past and present, the great psychologist Carl Jung believed that all humans share at birth a "collective unconscious," a mind populated by characters and narratives which he calls "archetypes." The hero and the villain are two common characters, and the hero's journey is a common narrative.

Stories provide an opportunity to practice language, not only through reading and listening but also through writing and telling. Unlike reading and listening which tend to be passive, writing and telling are important because they require active linguistic creativity. Telling a story publicly is especially important because it adds the requirement of face-to-face, personal communicative confidence.

