

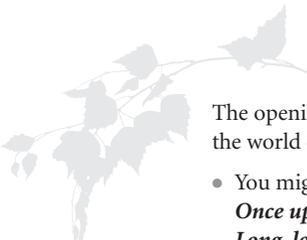


Storytelling With Our Students has so far detailed some of the ‘telling techniques’ that I hope will make a big difference to your confident and successful storytelling. These techniques are briefly included alongside all the stories in the activities throughout Part B and the suggested classroom procedures.

Remember that all the techniques for storytelling overlap. Many of them are applicable much of the time, but some of them are particularly relevant to a specific story – and this will also allow you to focus on each one more specifically.

But first, before you tell *any* story, decide how you might open the story – to capture your students’ full attention and achieve the storytelling atmosphere you would like to create.

And then, of course, you need to choose how you will close the story.



Opening

The opening of a story sends an important signal to the listeners – a ‘transition’ between the world of the classroom and the world of the story.

- You might say:
Once upon a time ...
Long, long ago ...
or
There was once ...
- You might start with a sound, a song or a piece of music.
- You might show a picture, reveal an object or do a mime.

There are so many openings available – we can make up our own, or we can borrow them from different languages and cultures.

Below are just a few of my favourites – in storyteller Sam Canarozzi’s fabulous collection of openings and endings from around the world: *When Tigers Smoked Pipes* (Society for Storytelling Press 2008).

- Arabic:
Kan ma kan, fiqadim azzaman ...
It was, it was not, in the old, old times ...
- Japanese:
Mukashi, mukashi ...
Very, very long ago ...

Imagining and improvising

A telling technique

Before you tell students a story, they can do improvised drama roleplay based on information you give them about characters and events.

Aldar Kose Tricks the Bai is the best-known Kazak folk tale about the popular legendary hero, Aldar Kose. Kazak student Assiya Omarova delighted her international student friends by telling it at a storytelling evening I recently hosted at the University of Exeter.

To rehearse this tale, try miming the actions expressively – such as throwing open your coat, exchanging coats, taking the purse of gold and climbing onto a horse.

Before telling

Say: *Imagine you are freezing cold in the snow, wearing a thin old coat full of holes. You meet someone rich who is wearing a thick warm coat. You really need it. Unfortunately, you have no money and nothing of value. What could you say to this rich person to get the coat?*

Write all the ideas that the students come up with on the board, so they are clearly displayed. These may include examples of begging and pleading, offering to return favours in the future, blackmail, etc.

Say: *Now stand facing a partner. Use words, no physical contact.*

- *One of you is really cold, and you are going to try to get your partner's coat – using as many different ideas as you can.*
- *Your partner is going to refuse and make an excuse every time.*

3–2–1 Action!

While telling

Mime the actions as you tell the story – so that your students will easily be able to act out the story in mime themselves afterwards.

After telling

Ask pairs of students to compare the strategies used by Aldar Kose with the strategies *they* used in the improvised drama roleplay they did earlier.

Invite the students, in the same pairs as before, to act out the whole story – this time in mime.

- You might retell the story at the same time as they do this.
- They will not be speaking, so they can be encouraged to act with a lot of physical expression: the clever trickster Aldar Kose and the rich self-important Bai need to show or hide how cold they are, describe their horses, make and refuse offers, etc.

Next, the same pairs can act out the story, this time with actions *and* dialogue together.

A few pairs can show their version of the story to the whole class. Before they do this, ask the other students to notice differences from *their own* version, and to be ready to tell the pair afterwards what they enjoyed about their performance.

To follow on, ask the students to remember a time they tricked someone, or a time someone tricked them. Tell them to think about the following:

When and where did it happen?

Who was involved?

What was the trick?

What was the result?

How did it make them feel?

When a third of the class have a story to tell, put all the students in groups of three, with two students who don't have a tale in mind. These students need to listen and ask questions and check details, in order to be able to retell the story as well as they can – in the next stage.

When all the groups are ready, ask the students to leave their groups and form new groups of three. Each student should retell the trickster story which was told in their former group.

There are thousands of comic tales about tricksters like Aldar Kose in folk tales and jokes all over the world. The students might know some examples of trickster tales – or they can research and prepare to tell one in the next class.

Aldar Kose Tricks the Bai

A story from Kazakhstan

It was deepest winter on the Steppes of Kazakhstan, and clever Aldar Kose was on his poor old horse, trudging slowly through the snow.

His old coat was full of holes, seventy in total, and kept nothing of the cold out.

Riding toward him, Aldar Kose saw the Bai, the rich landowner, dressed in his thick fur coat and hat, seated proudly astride his fine horse.

Aldar Kose threw his coat open, and sang a song in praise of sunshine.

‘Why, Aldar Kose, do you hold your coat open when it is so cold? Aren’t you freezing?’ asked the Bai.

‘This coat keeps me too warm. It is a magic coat. The cold air comes in one hole and out another, so all the heat stays in.’

‘A magic coat? How did you get this magic coat?’

‘My father gave this enchanted coat to me, so that I should never be cold.’

The Bai looked closely at the coat.

‘My coat is made of the finest fur, and yet I will offer it to you in exchange for your magic coat.’

‘If I could exchange it, perhaps I would. But did I not tell you that it was my father who gave it to me himself? This magic coat would be hard to give away.’

‘I’m not asking you to give it away,’ said the Bai.

‘You can have my hat as well as my coat. Here, feel the thickness of the fur.’

Aldar Kose had one eye on the Bai’s coat, but the other was on his fine strong horse.

‘My father told me on his deathbed that this coat should stay in my possession. He warned me about the coat ... but now I forget what exactly he warned me ...’

‘You are trying my patience. I will have the coat. Take my coat, my hat, and my horse as well, in exchange for yours. This is my final offer.’

‘But my father ...’

‘How dare you refuse me? I’m the richest man in the land! Take this purse of gold coins as well, and give me the coat!’

Aldar Kose finally agreed, and climbed down from his poor old horse.

He removed his coat and hat, and quickly put on those of the Bai, which quickly warmed him through.

He took hold of the heavy purse of gold coins, and climbed onto the Bai’s magnificent horse.

As Aldar Kose rode away, he looked back to see the Bai standing in the deep snow, pulling on the old coat with seventy holes.

The Bai looked confused.

‘I’ve just remembered my father’s warning about the coat,’ called Aldar Kose as he rode off.

‘The magic only works for me.’