

CWL Storytelling Project 2020

It's time to tell a story! Pick a story you have already written about in class and want to develop further, or think of one we have not heard yet. You will prepare a story and then tell it to the class on one of the Moth Mondays after Spring Break. This story may be about a turning point in your life, the first time you did something or something happened to you, or a significant conversation. It should be engaging to your audience—that's us—and should have a beginning, middle, and an end. Your story should be 5-6 minutes (be sure to time your story in advance!).

From NPR's "The Moth"

What to do	...and what not to do
<p>Be forewarned</p> <p>Moth stories are told, not read. We love how the storyteller connects with the audience when there is no PAGE between them! Please know your story "by heart" but not by rote memorization. No notes, paper or cheat sheets allowed on stage.</p> <p>Have some stakes</p> <p>Stakes are essential in live storytelling. What do you stand to gain or lose? Why is what happens in the story important to you? If you can't answer this, then think of a different story. A story without stakes is an essay and is best experienced on the page, not the stage.</p> <p>Start in the action.</p> <p>Have a great first line that sets up the stakes and grabs attention</p> <p>No: "So I was thinking about climbing this mountain. But then I watched a little TV and made a snack and took a nap and my mom called and vented about her psoriasis then I did a little laundry (a whites load) (I lost another sock, darn it!) and then I thought about it again and decided I'd climb the mountain the next morning."</p> <p>Yes: "The mountain loomed before me. I had my hunting knife, some trail mix and snow boots. I had to make it to the little cabin and start a fire before sundown or freeze to death for sure."</p> <p>Know your story well enough so you can have fun!</p> <p>Watching you panic to think of the next memorized line is harrowing for the audience. Make an outline, memorize your bullet points and play with the details. Enjoy yourself. Imagine you are at a dinner party, not a deposition.</p>	<p>Steer clear of meandering endings</p> <p>They kill a story! Your last line should be clear in your head before you start. Yes, bring the audience along with you as you contemplate what transpires in your story, but remember, you are driving the story, and must know the final destination. Keep your hands on the wheel!</p> <p>No standup routines please</p> <p>The Moth loves funny people but requires that all funny people tell funny stories.</p> <p>No rants</p> <p>Take up this anger issue with your therapist, or skip therapy and shape your anger into a story with some sort of resolution. (Stories = therapy!)</p> <p>No essays</p> <p>Your eloquent musings are beautiful and look pretty on the page but unless you can make them gripping and set up stakes, they won't work on stage.</p> <p>No fake accents</p> <p>If your story doesn't work in your own voice, or that of your people of origin, please consider another story. In our experience, imitating accents from another culture or race rarely works and often offends.</p> <p>Please use our stage to practice civility and respect.</p> <p>Please don't include racism, homophobia, misogyny or any form of hate speech.</p>

Timeline

Mon 3/9: Roll out project, pick a story

Mon 3/16: Work time (using stepping stones, story map, mini-structure); Practice your story + give feedback x1

Mon 3/23: Refine your story, practice, and give feedback x1

Evaluation

	100-90	90-80	80-70	70-60
Energy / Expression	<p>Storyteller always uses vocal and physical expression to communicate emotion.</p> <p>Storyteller uses posture, gesture, facial expression, and has a lot of energy when telling their story.</p>	<p>Storyteller often uses vocal and physical expression to communicate emotion.</p> <p>Storyteller uses posture, gesture, facial expression, and has energy when telling their story.</p>	<p>Storyteller sometimes uses vocal and physical expression to communicate emotion.</p> <p>Storyteller sometimes uses posture, gesture, facial expression when telling their story.</p>	<p>Storyteller speaks in monotone, not using vocal or physical expression to communicate emotion or ideas.</p> <p>Storyteller lacks energy and enthusiasm.</p>
Story Structure	<p>Story has a <i>clear</i> beginning, middle, and end.</p>	<p>Story has a <i>somewhat clear</i> beginning, middle, and end.</p>	<p>There is some story structure but it feels unclear.</p>	<p>Story does not have a clear structure and jumps around in a way that's confusing.</p>
Authenticity	<p>Story has specific details that help the audience know it <i>really</i> happened to the teller.</p> <p>Storyteller is "real," direct, and makes eye contact when telling their story.</p>	<p>Story has some details that help the audience know it <i>really</i> happened to the teller.</p> <p>Storyteller is "real" and makes eye contact when telling their story.</p>	<p>Story has a few details that help the audience know it <i>really</i> happened to the teller.</p>	<p>Story seems unrealistic, rushed, and lacks important details.</p> <p>Storyteller avoids eye contact or makes very "overdramatic" choices in their storytelling.</p>
Theme	<p>It is clear what the story is really about (the bigger idea) and the theme is highlighted in multiple points of the story.</p> <p>We know exactly why you are telling this story.</p>	<p>We can infer what the story is about (the bigger idea) by the end.</p> <p>We know why you are telling this story.</p>	<p>We aren't exactly sure what the story is about (the bigger idea) by the end.</p> <p>The story leaves us with some questions.</p>	<p>The storyteller doesn't know exactly what the story is about.</p> <p>We don't understand why it is important for you to tell this story.</p>

5 KEY CONCEPTS OF MOTH STORYTELLING

Change

Change is what separates a story from an anecdote. From the beginning to the end of the story, you're somehow a different person, even if in a small way.

- *Teacher tip:* Ask student to fill in the blanks: "I used to be __, but now I am __."

Stakes

We like to define stakes as *what you have to win or lose in the story*. Or, alternately, what MATTERED to you? Letting the audience know what you cared about in the story, or what was at stake for you, makes them care about the story too.

- *Teacher tip:* when we talk about stakes, be clear that we're not looking for your HIGHEST STAKES story. We're looking for you to find the stakes within the story you're choosing to tell.
- *Teacher tip:* if a story seems small, it can be helpful to ask a participant WHY they want to share it. If the story idea has sprung to their mind, there is usually a reason why.

Theme

Choosing a theme can help a storyteller decide how to shape this particular story. There are endless ways to shape and craft one life event into a story. Deciding what thread or theme you want to draw out for this particular 5-minute version can help you make critical choices of details that pertain.

- *Teacher tip:* "What's this story about for you in one sentence?" "What's this story about in one word?"

Scene vs. Summary

A story is most effective when you have at least one really vivid scene: with sensory details, action, dialogue, and inner-thoughts/feelings. But a story can't be ALL scene; some parts probably need to be summarized, like a montage in a movie ("then I picked up my friend, we stopped to get gas, and we were on our way.")

- *Teacher tip:* the scene exercise. Ask participants to choose one important scene from their story, and give them each one minute to describe everything they remember about that scene.
- *Teacher tip:* a summary exercise can be great in working on "the before." Ask students to describe themselves "before," using phrase like "I would always..." and list a few examples.

Be Honest/Be Real

There's no one right way to tell a story. If you're a person who likes to get theatrical, with gestures and impersonations - you can tell a story that way. If you're a quiet, reserved person-- you can tell a story that way. Be yourself.

- *Teacher tip:* once you feel your students are ready for it, ask them to stand up while they describe a scene from their story so they can experience what it's like to tell a story to a crowd. They will start to feel out their own performance style, too.

Off Limits Stories

Stories are meant as a community-building exercise, so we *do* have rules about what stories cannot be shared in the context of a storytelling unit or school StorySlam.

Off-limits stories include:

- *Stories that are harmful to anyone in the school community, or stories that reveal details about anyone in the school community without their permission*
If a student wants to reveal things about another student or member of the community, and *has not asked their explicit permission*, it cannot be performed.

- *Stories for which the act of telling will change life in a drastic way*
There is a difference between telling the story of when you came out to your friends, and deciding to come out to your friends BY TELLING your Moth story.

A story is about a life-changing moment; it's not the moment to change the story of your life.

- *Stories the teacher has not yet heard*
You should make sure to hear all stories beforehand. Students have to share a story they've practiced- they can't decide to get onstage and wing it.

THE MOTH



THE STORY MAP

These story elements can help you focus a big story, or find the meaning/perspective behind a single moment. You can switch the order of them if you want to!

WORLD AS IT WAS

What was life like before this story happened? What do we need to know about you to understand why this story mattered?

AND THEN ONE DAY...

What happens to set the story in motion? What do you WANT or want to AVOID?

RAISING THE STAKES

Why is this important for you? What do you have to win or lose?

THE MOMENT OF CHANGE

What choice do you make—or what happens that changes how you see things?

WORLD AS IT IS NOW

How are you different now than at the beginning? You don't have to catch us up on all of life, but tell us how things have changed for you.

THE MOTH



STORY STEPPING STONES

Some storytellers write out their stories. Some just use "markers" to keep track on the way. Use these bullet points to keep track of lines you want to say, details you need to remember, or anything at all. Having your FIRST LINE and LAST LINE will help you stay on track, too.

FIRST LINE: _____

• _____

• _____

• _____

• _____

• _____

• _____

• _____

LAST LINE: _____