

IHSSA Storytelling Workshop 2021

Robin and Darrin Crow

Robin- 319-447-1806, robincrow@cvchristian.org

Darrin 319-329-7805 crow,darrin@gmail.com

www.darrincrow.com

1. Personal Stories

- a. Personal stories are a great tool to give your creative writers and talkers an outlet
 - i. Personal stories have been hugely popular across the country with the success of the Moth Radio Hour, Snap Judgement, and other personal storytelling shows on NPR.
 - ii. You don't need to worry about copyright with a personal story!
 - iii. Your kids who love to write but don't want to do original oratory or prose can use this outlet.
 - iv. Your student who loves to talk about themselves...
 1. Can have an outlet to legitimately share!
 2. Can learn to tell a story concisely
 3. Can learn (maybe) about what we do and don't want to hear.
 - v. Personal stories can be humorous, but they can also be serious, heartwarming, harrowing.
 1. We had a student craft a comedy/ horror story out of a trip to state speech.
 2. A story can be on a serious topic, but it should not be therapy on stage
 3. A story can have a meaning, a message, but it can also be told just for the sake of telling it.
 - vi. What can I tell a story about? I'm not interesting
 1. I avoided personal stories for a long time because of this.
 2. Is there a story that you find yourself telling over and over again?
 3. Is there a family story that has been told for a long time?
 4. Ask your family or friends what story you tell all the time.
 5. For me it was Scott Kruger and Flag Football in 7th grade
 6. Or the fact that my family owns Wall Street
 - vii. How do I craft a personal story?
 1. I am a big believer that this process should involve a lot of play.
 2. If you have two people working on stories, it is great to pair up and tell to each other.
 3. Thank each other for telling each time.
 4. Find at least one thing in the story that stands out to you as a listener and share it with the teller.
 5. There are tons of ways to craft a story, but the simplest is to just sit down and tell someone the basic story.

- a. It doesn't need to be interesting since we are just looking to get the basic facts of the story down.
 - b. Now, tell it again, focusing on sensory details of the story.
 - i. What do you see, smell, hear, taste?
 - ii. Go a little overboard and throw in all the details you can.
 - iii. You won't use all of them in the story, but there may be things that really jump out.
 - iv. Don't underestimate smell, since smell is a major trigger for memories, emotions, and connection with your listener.
 - c. Tell the story again, focusing on the emotional details of the story.
 - i. How do you feel throughout the story?
 - ii. Those feelings may change through the different parts of the story.
 - iii. Showing rather than telling is vital here.
 - iv. It is ok to tell us this time through the story, playing with what the emotions are.
 - v. Then as you decide what you want, play with showing us rather than telling.
 - d. Keep playing with the story, telling it several times in each rehearsal.
 - i. Play with the sensory and emotional details, adding in or taking out as you want to.
 - ii. Play with which pacing, volume, movement.
6. Another way to craft is to go from end to beginning.
- a. How do you want the story to end?
 - b. Then ask yourself, what happened just before that
 - c. And just before that
 - d. And so on until you get to the beginning.
 - e. It is counter-intuitive, but it can help keep you from going off on rabbit trails and stay focused on the plot.
7. Does my story have to be told completely as it happened?
- a. There is room to adjust the timeline or order of events, leave some things out, etc so that it fits the narrative arc.
 - b. No, don't invent a whole lot of things to make the story more interesting.
 - c. Of course, you may start playing with a personal story and suddenly see its potential as a tall tale and start riffing.
 - d. Bill Lepp is a master of the personal tall tale
8. Can I write my story out and memorize it?

- a. Of course! If that makes you more comfortable, go right ahead.
- b. Because a story can just be told and can be different every time, this can be a good category for your kids who hate memorizing.
- c. When creating your story, it can be written out word for word, outlined, storyboarded, comic booked, covered with sensory and emotional sticky notes, or done however it works for you to get the story down.

2. Using Your Body

- a. Just because you are sitting on a stool doesn't mean that you can't be wildly expressive with your body.
- b. Every part of your body can be part of the story (except your backside, 'cause it has to stay firmly attached to the stool)
- c. The story you are telling will determine how much movement you use.
- d. Personality and the type of story can also determine how much movement there is.
 - i. Darrin is a flailer and sometimes has to dial back the movement, especially digitally.
 - ii. Other tellers can create spellbinding stories with almost no movement.

3. Telling Digitally

- a. Just in case we have to go digital, here are a few tips.
- b. We have all been on too many Zoom meetings, but if you haven't gotten in to explore the settings and how things work, take time to do so
 - i. The audio settings are especially important.
 - ii. Go into advanced settings and mess around to see what difference it makes in sound and video quality.
 - iii. Just remember where they were set when starting, and write down or take a picture of settings that work well.
- c. Since you are on a stool, you can have the camera in close since you won't need a full body shot.
- d. But if you are using your legs a lot, make sure you can see them.
- e. Do you flail your arms around over your head a lot? Make sure we can see that too.
- f. Shoot for a fairly neutral background.
- g. While you don't need to bring in the photo shoot light trees, make sure we can see your face and that the light doesn't wash you out or make odd shadows.
- h. If you can connect your camera/ computer with an ethernet cable, it will help make the connection secure.
- i. Check your sound settings in whatever program you are using.
- j. Do a test run to make sure it's all working. And maybe another one. And...
- k. Experiment with telling while looking mostly at the camera and while looking around the room like you would in live performance. I'm still not sure which way to go.

A few tremendous storytellers to check out

<https://www.leppstorytelling.com/>

<http://storytellertimlowry.com/index.html>

<https://www.ddavisstoryteller.com/>

<https://lindagorham.com/>

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=v5ggH2kYDiQ> Linda Gorham story, "Plastic Glory"

Storyteller Donna Washington telling "Red, Red Lips". Not a personal story, but a great example of using your body well.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=roGcGfUAe6k&list=PL74CnCXjkZsKGulb8zgRPkobdscBNiLwX&index=3>

<https://kwhs.wharton.upenn.edu/2019/10/educator-toolkit-power-storytelling/>

Lesson plans for a storytelling unit

https://www.pps.net/cms/lib/OR01913224/Centricity/Domain/179/Oral_Storytelling_Unit.pdf

A Few Good Books to Explore

From Plot to Narrative Elizabeth Ellis, Parkhurst Brothers, Inc., Little Rock
Elizabeth's book has been hugely valuable to me in crafting stories. The method is fun, interesting, and really practical.

The New Book of Plots Loren Nemi, Parkhurst Brothers, Inc., Little Rock
Loren's book takes Jack and the Beanstalk and retells it with ten different plot structures. It is really fun to take a personal story and play with the structure of its telling.

Inviting the Wolf In: Thinking About Difficult Stories Elizabeth Ellis and Loren Nemi, August House Publishers

If you have a student who would like to tell a serious personal story, this is a great book to guide the process.