

Needle Boy: Storytelling tips and Learning tools

Before narration:

Introduce this story as a folktale from India in which a boy has an adventure in the jungle.

Author's note: Though there is a different version of this story famous as a Bengali (East Indian) folktale with an old lady as the focal character who visits her daughter, I heard this South Indian version from my grandmother.

Interestingly, I've also read the Bengali version in an Iranian folktale collection.

Storytelling:

- Replace the animals in the story with different animals as appropriate for variety
- Use character voices-a growl for the tiger, trembling voice for the boy when he meets the animals, howl for the wolf, etc.
- Show appropriate facial expressions to engage the audience-menacing look for the predators and a scared look for the boy when talking to them, and a relieved look as he tricks them and gets away
- Before reading the part where the 'Needle boy' tricks the tiger into letting him go, build suspense and ask the children to guess what he would say to the animal who wanted to eat him?
- Emphasize the words 'thin and bony' and 'plump and fat'
- Smack your lips when you read 'much better meal'

After narration:

- Ask the children:
 - If they noticed how the animals in the jungle also made fun of the 'Needle boy'
 - If they think animals can speak
 - This form of expression where animals talk is called 'anthropomorphism' in the English language
 - To describe the characteristics of the 'Needle boy' [smart, clever, etc.]
 - To suggest alternate ways by which the 'Needle boy' could have escaped from the animals

Extended activity:

- Researching the word root for 'anthropomorphism' can be an exercise in itself
[Anthrop-human, morph-form. Anthropomorphism, or personification, is attribution of human form or other characteristics to anything other than a human being. Most cultures have traditional fables with anthropomorphised animals, which can stand or talk like humans, as characters. Source: Wikipedia.org]
- This story can be told to younger kids using a flannel board:
 - Print the illustrations that accompany the story. Cut out the characters and stick to felt paper
 - Paste the grandmother at the left end of the board and then move the boy along to the right and wind back to the left as he meets the animals and then meets his uncle
 - As the boy (pumpkin) starts back home, trace his path back home right to left so he meets the animals in the reverse order (the last animal he met while coming would be the first animal he meets while going back)

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- This story can be enacted in class

Reading Comprehension:

Ask the children:

- 1) What are the animals the “needle-boy” met in the jungle?
- 2) Suggest an antonym for “entice”
- 3) What dishes made from pumpkin have you eaten?

Answer Key

- 1) Wolf, tiger, bear
- 2) Repel
- 3) Depends on individual student experience