

Integration of Curriculum in Story Telling: 'Virtual Joy of Reading'

(Experiences of a Volunteer StoryTeller, Lockdown 2020)

Story telling is the oldest teaching tool, we all have stories to tell. Stories help create visual pictures, arouse curiosity and energize the neurons in the brain.

It was lockdown 2020 due to COVID virus! Schools, shops, institutions were all closed. Families huddled together whether in 5 bedroom house or a one shanty room, in urban and rural areas. Life presented new challenges, new learning! *Virtual Joy of Reading Program* was organised by Food4thoughtfoundation started to promote and bring together rural kids and volunteer storytellers, every Sunday morning.

"What you give is your ONLY investment in life" quotes the Bhagwad Gita.

As an experienced primary teacher and storyteller I volunteered for 10 story telling sessions for children .I would be excited to greet children virtually from PAN India every week, they speaking different Indian languages. Our medium was English storytelling.

Initially, I narrated stories from Panchatantra, Akbar & Birbal, Mahabharata and animal stories. Children listened and I asked them to draw, write or design props out the story as homework for following week, to maintain a connection thread. Other volunteers participated in Telugu, Marathi, Bengali , Kannada and Hindi storytelling.

Further all the stories narrated were uploaded in youtube channel for those students who would have missed the sessions

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=k7NOOwJKurU&list=PLv51mYb9KRS0Q3hulmJW6l-u94kx2P-68>

Youtube: Virtual Joy of Reading (Veena/English storytelling)

After few days , I changed the concept of storytelling by integrating stories with some fun learning –topics in Science, Math, Grammar concepts. The objective was to keep children interested and evolving in education which was the need of the hour! Sometimes, teachers and parents joined in too to observe our interactive sessions, making learning for a broader reach out.

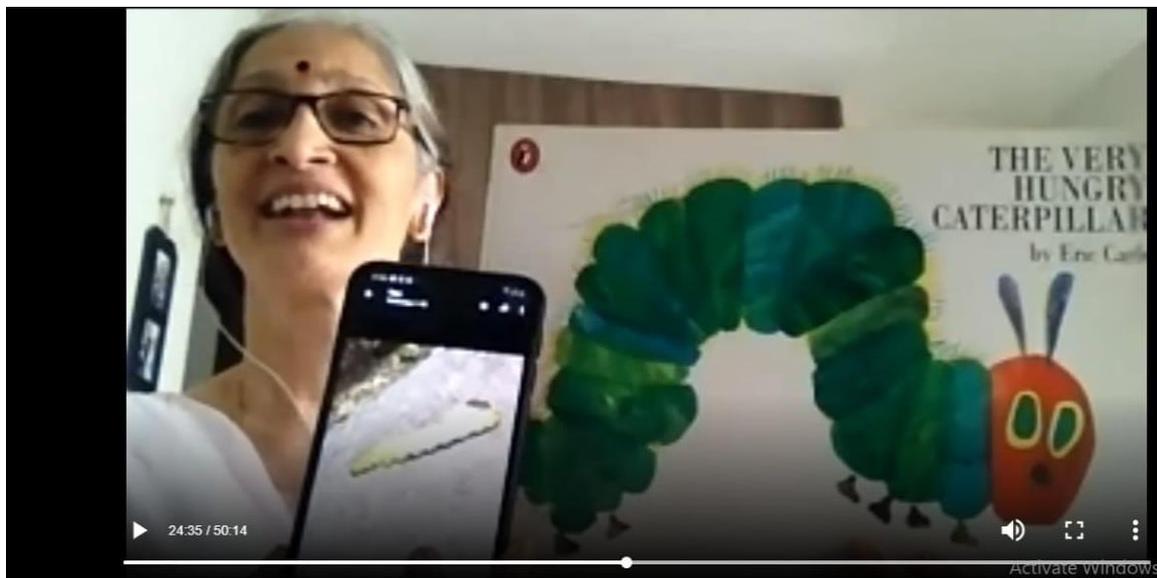
Example building Science in Story Session:

Imagine you are learning about plants and the teacher reads out notes from the Science book in a monotonous tone, never really looking at the children.

What would be the learning /reaction of the students?

On other hand, Imagine another teacher brings REAL leaves, brown branches and some seeds and shows it to the class. She narrates a story about different trees and monkeys swinging from them using simple REAL props she have brought to class. Children discuss animals and homes and their food habits as part of story extension.

What would be the learning /reaction of the student?



Keeping this in viewpoint one Sunday, I showed children a photo of a green, fat caterpillar that I saw in our garden. They were SUPER excited and started talking about its colour, legs, size, eating leaves, rainy season etc.. Then I read out the story of Hungry Caterpillar by Eric Carle. We discussed the life cycle of butterfly and some children asked if I would show them a butterfly formation next week!

One parent watching with child was excited too and showed us her farmland – papaya trees, onion and ginger plants and the roots. Real life observation made storytelling more interesting and fun learning of Science concepts.



Learning Outcome for Students:

“Where do you find stories?” I asked one Sunday. “Stories are found in newspaper, books, family members, Internet” answers came from the children promptly. I showed them my homework – notes, magazine cut outs for October 2nd Gandhi Jayanti story session. Reading short notes from newspaper soon became fun History lesson about marching 880 villages for Dandi Yatra and other details. One child quickly brought her History book, another recited Gandhi poem and spoke about cleaning home and toilets and she did same at home. They could recall dates and story details much quicker. A very satisfying session!



Stories integrated into curriculum add interest and motivation, makes easy learning of concepts. Story telling improves communication and listening skill.

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