

TELLING STORIES, SHARING LIVES



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ABOUT JEN

- Founder & CEO of SilverKite Community Arts™
- Ph.D. in Theatre (specialty in intergenerational arts practice)
- Arts educator for over 30 years – began working with older adults in 1999
- Fulbright Distinguished Award in Teaching Awardee
- Grinnell College Wall Service Awardee



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Intergenerational Arts Programs (online and in-person when safe): connecting generations through the arts

Intergenerational Theatre Company (touring fall 2022): telling life stories through drama, music, and movement

Arts Resources: lesson plans (in development), arts activity toolboxes, SPARK Boxes™

Professional Development & Consulting: intergenerational and community arts program development and assessment

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TODAY'S AGENDA...

- Part 1: The Story of Stories
- Part 2: Exploring ways stories can foster intergenerational connections (why, how, let's try)
- Part 3: Let's Try – storytelling activities
- Part 4: Bringing it home

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THE STORY OF STORIES

Their magical means of meaning making...

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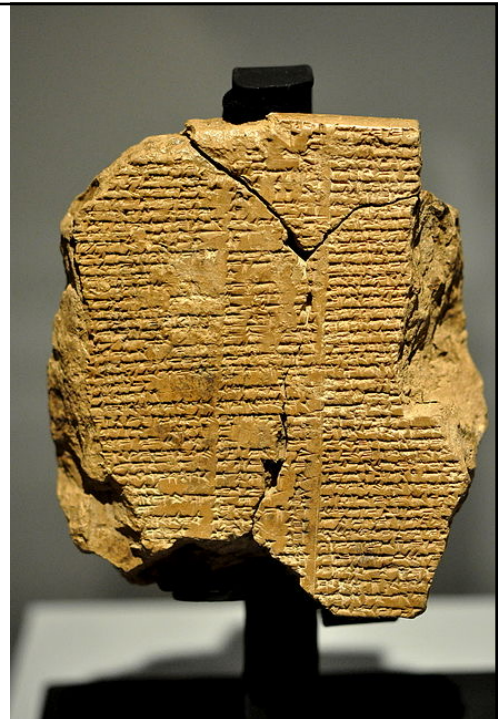
HISTORY OF STORYTELLING

Humans relied on oral tradition to tell stories, recount history and life lessons

Often the keeper of stories was revered in communities

Oldest surviving tale is Gilgamesh – tale of Sumerian king – oldest surviving text from 18th century BCE

Earliest record of storytelling found in Egypt – sons of Cheops entertained father with stories



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PURPOSES OF STORYTELLING

- Education, lessons on ways to live life
- Entertainment
- Historical archive / cultural preservation
- Promote literacy, memory, cognitive skills
- Advocate / provoke
- Organize
- Build, shift, or challenge social and cultural identities



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STORYTELLING & MEANING MAKING

- Cognitive psychologists (Jerome Bruner among others) believe storytelling = meaning making
- Erik Erikson's Developmental Stages help us to understand purposes of storytelling as we age



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WAYS STORIES CAN HELP BUILD IG RELATIONSHIPS

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DEFINING “INTERGENERATIONAL RELATIONSHIPS”

- ☐ Multigenerational – people from different ages are represented
- ☐ Intergenerational – people from different ages are invited to interact with each other in meaningful ways
- ☐ Families are intergenerational
- ☐ Uniting “bookend” generations of non-familial connections

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WHY IG CONNECTIONS? WHY NOW?

- COVID causing social isolation
- By 2050 adults over the age of 65 will outnumber children under 15
- 10,000 Americans turn 65 each day with a life expectancy of 85
- Cultural shifts:
 - Mobility
 - Technology
 - Individualized cultural experiences
 - Segmented development & living experiences
 - Documented social disengagement with the community

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BENEFITS OF FOSTERING INTERGENERATIONAL CONNECTIONS

- ☐ Helps eliminate fear and age stereotypes of old / young
- ☐ Create seeds of compassion
- ☐ Eliminates feelings of loneliness / isolation
- ☐ Transference of wisdom & helping to revision the future
- ☐ Gives all ages the roles of "teacher" and "student"
- ☐ Children feel special, Adults get a second chance
- ☐ Helps adults with life review
- ☐ Helps seniors find a new purpose, re-invention and re-engagement

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STORIES AS COMMUNITY BUILDERS

New studies show we connect to the emotions of the characters (particularly protagonist)

Develops empathy

- Helps you to understand another person's perspective
- Helps you to find a way to connect to someone else

Gives you alternative models on ways to behave / live your life

Builds trust

- Feel heard and listened to if you share your stories

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PUTTING AN ACTIVITY TOGETHER

Some tips...

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STORYTELLING ACTIVITY TIPS...

Listening is as important as telling

Provide tools for the telling and structures to make everyone feel comfortable

Encourage the use of the storytellers three tools...
body, space, voice

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THE SECRET IG SAUCE



Prepare for the interactions

Take the time to create a “courageous space” to do the program

Relationships start by finding something in common

Create opportunities for participants to be both teachers and learners as part of the program

Create opportunities for everyone to do something new – together

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ACTIVITIES TO TRY...

Fictional, non-fiction, and collaborative

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TELLING FICTIONAL STORIES

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WHY FICTION?

- ❖ Gives audience distance (Brecht)
- ❖ Allows imagination to see and question the possible and impossible
- ❖ Invites the reader to create own narratives, meanings
- ❖ Fosters empathy
- ❖ Can be rooted in cultural traditions (folk tales, myths, lessons, etc.)

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ACTIVITY: SUPERHERO CHARACTERS!

Based on our lives!

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TELLING LIFE STORIES

Activities to promote individual storytelling

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WHY TELL PERSONAL STORIES?

- Modeling vulnerability
- Stories help us to explore our own history and that of others
- Broaden our perspectives
- Discover what is important to someone else, what's valued, what's carried
- Help us to find something in common with someone else, help us connect
- Self-esteem boost
- Legacy building



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ACTIVITY: PHOTO REMINISCENCE EXERCISE

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ACTIVITY: NAME STORIES, BIRTHDAY
STORIES

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COLLABORATIVE STORYTELLING

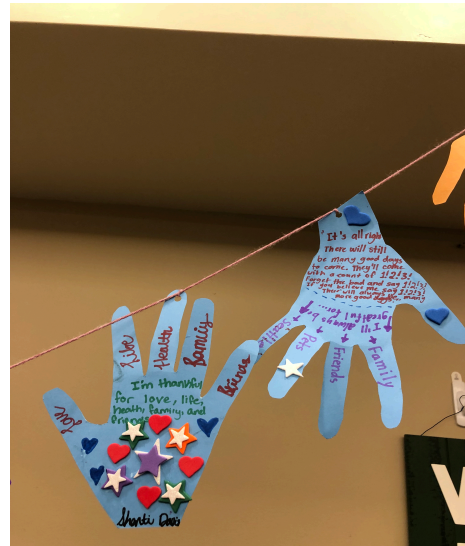
Creating and telling stories
together...

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BENEFITS OF COLLABORATIVE STORYTELLING

- Working together to create a narrative
- Boost self-esteem
- Learn how to say yes, and...
- Value other people's contributions, ideas
- Have pride in art making
- Pressure is not just on you!



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ACTIVITY: “PASSIVE” COMMUNITY STORYTELLING

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ACTIVITY IDEAS...

- Wisdom tree
- Puzzle pieces
- Group poem
- Storytelling book / journal
- Sidewalk chalk / community contributions



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ADAPTING TO COVID...

How can you create storytelling-based intergenerational connections during this challenging time?

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ACTIVITY IDEAS...

1. Letter writing / postcard writing – curated is best, can include art cards and other projects.
2. Zoom meetings / workshops / conversations
3. Open Mic nights
4. Phone meetings or sessions
5. Recording book readings
6. Story writing exchange

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TAKING IT HOME

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TAKING IT HOME


What might a new storytelling project, program, passive project, or event in your community look like?

What would you like to try?

Who might be some partners?

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