

Program 5

Ellin Greene

Description of the Program

Telling a story is like asking the listener to imagine what if. That is what today's storyteller, Ellin Greene does. She asks you to imagine what's happening as she tells you a tale. A former storytelling specialist in the New York Public Library system, Ms. Greene has been a children's literature specialist at the National College of Education. Let your imagination create pictures as she tells an old English tale which has a theme that is found in many other fairy tales and folk tales around the world.

Have you ever told anyone a story? If so, you've discovered a wonderful way to communicate with people.

The Storyteller's Story

A very rich gentlemen had three lovely daughters. He asked each one how much they loved him. The first said as much as I love the world, the second said as much as my life, and the third said as much as fresh meat loves salt. He was upset with the third daughter's answer and threw her out because he thought she didn't love him.

The girl left home and along the way gathered some rushes and made a cloak to hid her fine clothes. She went to a big house and begged for work. They took her in to scrub pots and do dirty work. She was called Cap of Rushes because of the cloak that she always wore.

Sometime later there was to be a large ball and all the servants could go and watch. She said she was too tired to go but after the others left she cleaned up, took off her cloak of rushes and went to the party, The master's son fell in love with her but she slipped away before the dance was over. She did this again at two other dances. At the last dance he gave her a ring and said if he never saw her again he would die. He tried to find her but he could find nothing about her so the master's son got sick and was dying. The cook was going to made him some soup but Cap of Rushes begged to do it. She put the ring in the soup and the cook took it to him. When the son found the ring he asked who made the soup and the cook said she did. He asked again and was told it was Cap of Rushes. When the girl came to him she told him that it was her and they were to be married.

Since her father was coming to the wedding, she asked the cook not to put any salt on the food. When her father tasted the food without salt he realized that his third daughter did love him. The girl told everyone who she was and they all lived happily ever after.

Questions and Answers

1. *What are your favorite kind of stories to tell?*

Literary type of story especially the English tales. Augusta Baker said to tell the tales from your ethnic background. My mother was English and my grandmother came to live with us so I grew up learning English tales.

2. *How long have you been telling stories?*

I have been telling stories for a long time. I have known Augusta Baker for 40 years. I met Augusta Baker when she was telling stories while I was a student at Rutgers. I then worked as her assistant at the New York Public Library. We wrote a book together about storytelling. We did two editions together and now I've done the 3rd edition and Augusta Baker wrote the forward to it.

3. *Some of your books of storytelling collections include recipes. Why?*

I have always liked books that had food in them. I wrote a book called **Clever Cooks** which was a collection of stories about good cooks who got into trouble but used their wits to get out of trouble. I put recipes in these books.

4. *What have you learned about stories from being a storyteller?*

I think you learn a lot about yourself by the kinds of stories that you choose to tell. These stories reveal who you are. I have also learned that the same basic story or theme appears in stories all over the world.

Suggested Activities

1. What other stories did the students think of when they heard Ms. Greene's tale? How were these stories alike and how were they different?

2. Ask students to find stories from different countries that have the same theme. Animal tales such as the "Tortoise and the Hare" are common the world over. Let them search for these stories. How are they different based on the country in which they originated.

3. Let the students write their own story using the same theme as in this story and in Cinderella. How many different stories can be written with the same theme?