

Program 8

Gayle Holmes

Description of the Program

Let's create a story. What do we need? What should we start with... A plot? Characters? Does this sound hard to do? Well it can be, yet it also can be fun. Gayle Holmes has been creating and telling stories for over six years. She is a storyteller from South Carolina. Her favorite stories are from the African and Asian cultures. Now if you think all a storyteller does is tell stories, then you are wrong. For telling stories is much more than saying the words. It's combining events with characters while creating a setting. Telling a story is one of the most difficult art forms that exists.

You begin with imagination. Invent a plot. Add characters that are interesting. Place them in a setting that you would like to visit. Then search out words that convey a meaning that touches your heart and your spirit. Put all this together and you have created a story.

The Storyteller's Story

Akimba and the Magic Cow is an African tale. Akimba was the poorest man in the village. He have no money and no food. He went to the woods and met an old man cutting wood and Akima stopped to help him. The man gave Akimba a cow. and told him to go home and tell the cow, "Coo, coo coo," and see what happens. He did and the cow gave him a gold coin. He kept saying "coo, coo coo" until he became a wealthy man. When he had to go on a long journey he asked his friend Bumba to watch the cow, but not to say "coo, coo, coo" to him. As soon as Akimba left, Bumba said "coo, coo, coo" and the cow gave him a gold coin. Bumba kept the cow and gave Akimba a different cow when he returned. When Akimba told this cow "coo, coo coo" all the cow did was moo. Akimba returned to the old man in the woods to tell him what happened. The old man gave him a sheep and said to say "boo roo roo" to the sheep when he got home. The sheep gave him a silver coin and Akimba became wealthy saying "boo roo roo". Eventually he had to take another trip and he left his sheep with his friend Bumba with the warning not to say "boo, roo, roo". Well Bumba did and found that the sheep gave silver coins. He kept the sheep and gave Akimba a different one. All the new sheep would do when Akimba said "boo roo roo" was say "baa, baa, baa". Like before, Akimba returned to the old man in the woods who then gave him a chicken and told him to say "cluck, cluck cluck". When Akimba said "cluck, cluck, cluck," the chicken gave him an egg. Since he was hungry, he ate the egg and eventually became a wealthy man again.

Now Akimba took another trip and like before left the chicken with Bumba who was surprized when the childen laid a plain egg. Well, eggs are eggs so he ate it. Akimba returned and found the chicken wouldn't lay an egg when he said "cluck, cluck, cluck" so he returned it to the old man who gave him a stick and said to say "stick dance for me" to make the stick start and to say "mamba" to make it stop. In

his hut Akimba said “stick dance for me” and the stick began to beat Akimba until he said “Mamba”. Finally Akimba began to suspect his friend Bamba so he pretended to go on another trip and told Bamba not to say “stick dance for me” while watching the stick. Bamba did and the stick began to beat him for the two days it took Akimba to return. Bamba begged him to stop the stick and agreed to return Akimba’s cow, sheep and chicken if he did. Akimba stopped the stick, took his animals home and was never hungry or poor again.

Questions and Answers

1. *What goes into telling a good story?*

You have to find a good story then it has to become part of you. When you’re excited about a story it becomes easier to share.

2. *Why do you think people like to listen to stories?*

Because it is very personal. It is something you are sharing. There is interaction between the people no matter how many people are involved.

3. *What are your favorite stories to tell?*

I like African and Asian stories and most of them have songs in them. I always sing with my stories.

4. *When did you start telling stories?*

About six years ago when I worked in a public library and Augusta Baker trained me. I’ve been telling stories ever since.

5. *What is a good length to tell a story?*

Twenty minutes is a good length for a experienced storyteller because it gives you time to develop the story and to interact with the audience. Five to seven minutes is a good length for a beginning story teller.

6. *Do you have any advice for a beginning storyteller?*

Find a story you like and tell it over and over again. Tell family stories because everyone has stories about their family and things they have done.

Suggested Activities

1. Ms. Holmes used gestures in her storytelling. She said she would think about the characters for a long time and what they would do, then watch people and incorporate those things in the story. Let the students tell a prepared story using gestures and again not using gestures. What is the difference in these versions?

2. At the end of the program, Ms. Holmes began another story with a song. Let students look for stories that have songs in them. The music teacher can probably give students examples of such songs and stories and teach them to the class.

3. Let students follow Ms. Holmes advice and tell family stories to the class.