

## Storytelling

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*The Boyhood of Raleigh* by [Sir John Everett Millais](#), oil on canvas, 1870.

A seafarer tells the young [Sir Walter Raleigh](#) and his brother the story of what happened out at sea

**Storytelling** is the conveying of events in [words](#), and [images](#), often by [improvisation](#) or embellishment. Stories or [narratives](#) have been shared in every culture as a means of [entertainment](#), education, cultural preservation, and instilling [moral](#) values. Crucial elements of stories and storytelling include [plot](#), [characters](#) and [narrative point of view](#). The term 'storytelling' is used in a narrow sense to refer specifically to oral storytelling and in a looser sense to refer to narrative technique in other media.

## Historical perspective

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A very fine par dated 1938 A.D. The epic of Pabuji is an oral epic in the [Rajasthani language](#) that tells of the deeds of the folk hero-deity [Pabuji](#), who lived in the 14th century.

Storytelling predates writing, with the earliest forms of storytelling usually oral combined with gestures and expressions. In addition to being part of religious [ritual, rock art](#) may <sup>[original research?](#)</sup> have served as a form of storytelling for many ancient cultures. The [Australian aboriginal](#) people painted symbols from stories on cave walls as a means of helping the storyteller remember the story. The story was then told using a combination of oral narrative, music, rock art, and dance, which bring understanding and meaning of human existence through remembrance and enactment of stories.<sup>[1]</sup> People have used the carved trunks of living trees and ephemeral media (such as sand and leaves) to record stories in pictures or with writing. Complex forms of tattooing may also represent stories, with information about [genealogy](#), affiliation, and social status.

With the advent of [writing](#) and the use of stable, portable [media](#), stories were recorded, transcribed, and shared over wide regions of the world. Stories have been carved, scratched, painted, printed or inked onto wood or bamboo, ivory and other bones, [pottery](#), clay tablets, stone, [palm-leaf books](#), skins (parchment), [bark cloth](#), [paper](#), silk, [canvas](#), and other textiles, recorded on [film](#), and stored electronically in digital form. Oral stories continue to be committed to memory and passed from generation to generation, despite the increasing popularity of written and televised media in much of the world.

## Contemporary storytelling[\[edit\]](#)

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Modern storytelling has a broad purview. In addition to its traditional forms ([fairytales](#), [folktales](#), [mythology](#), [legends](#), [fables](#) etc.), it has extended itself to representing history, personal narrative, political commentary, and evolving cultural norms. Contemporary storytelling is also widely used to address educational objectives.<sup>[2]</sup> New forms of media are creating new ways for people to record, express, and consume stories. Tools for asynchronous group communication can provide an environment for individuals to reframe or recast individual stories into group stories.<sup>[3]</sup> Games and other digital platforms, such as those used in [interactive fiction](#) or [interactive storytelling](#), may be used to position the user as a character within a bigger world. [Documentaries](#), including interactive [web documentaries](#), employ storytelling narrative techniques to communicate information about their topic.

## Oral traditions[\[edit\]](#)

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An African storyteller in [Parc des Buttes Chaumont, Paris, France](#).

[Albert Bates Lord](#) examined oral narratives from field transcripts of Yugoslav oral bards collected by [Milman Parry](#) in the 1930s, and the texts of epics such as the [Odyssey](#) and [Beowulf](#).<sup>[4]</sup> Lord found that a large part of the stories consisted of text which was improvised during the telling process.

Lord identified two types of *story vocabulary*. The first he called "formulas": "[rosy-fingered dawn](#)", "[the wine-dark sea](#)", and other specific [set phrases](#) had long been known of in [Homer](#) and other oral epics. Lord, however, discovered that across many story traditions, fully 90% of an oral epic is assembled from lines which are repeated verbatim or which use one-for-one word substitutions. In other words, oral stories are built out of set phrases which have been stockpiled from a lifetime of hearing and telling stories.

The other type of story vocabulary is theme, a set sequence of story actions that structure a tale. Just as the teller of tales proceeds line-by-line using formulas, so he proceeds from event-to-event using themes. One near-universal theme is repetition, as evidenced in Western [folklore](#) with the "[rule of three](#)": three brothers set out, three attempts are made, three riddles are asked. A theme can be as simple as a specific set sequence describing the arming of a [hero](#), starting with shirt and trousers and ending with headdress and weapons. A theme can be large enough to be a plot component. For example: a hero proposes a journey to a dangerous place / he disguises himself / his disguise fools everybody / except for a common person of little account (a [crone](#), a tavern maid or a woodcutter) / who immediately recognizes him / the commoner becomes the hero's ally, showing unexpected resources of skill or initiative. A theme does not belong to a specific story, but may be found with minor variation in many different stories. Themes may be no more than handy prefabricated parts for

constructing a tale, or they may represent universal truths – ritual-based, religious truths, as [James Frazer](#) saw in *The Golden Bough*, or archetypal, psychological truths, as [Joseph Campbell](#) describes in *The Hero With a Thousand Faces*.

The story was described by [Reynolds Price](#), when he wrote:

A need to tell and hear stories is essential to the species Homo sapiens – second in necessity apparently after nourishment and before love and shelter. Millions survive without love or home, almost none in silence; the opposite of silence leads quickly to narrative, and the sound of story is the dominant sound of our lives, from the small accounts of our day's events to the vast incommunicable constructs of psychopaths.<sup>[5]</sup>

## Märchen and Sagen [\[edit\]](#)



Illustration from *Silesian Folk Tales* (The Book of [Rubezahl](#))

Folklorists sometimes divide oral tales into two main groups: *Märchen* and *Sagen*.<sup>[6]</sup> These are [German](#) terms for which there are no exact [English](#) equivalents, however we have approximations:

*Märchen*, loosely translated as "[fairy tale\(s\)](#)" (lit. little stories), take place in a kind of separate "once-upon-a-time" world of nowhere-in-particular. They are clearly not intended to be understood as true. The stories are full of clearly defined incidents, and peopled by rather flat characters with little or no interior life. When the supernatural occurs, it is presented matter-of-factly, without surprise. Indeed, there is very little effect, generally; bloodcurdling events may take place, but with little call for emotional response from the listener.<sup>[citation needed]</sup>

*Sagen*, best translated as "[legends](#)", are supposed to have actually happened, very often at a particular time and place, and they draw much of their power from this fact. When the supernatural intrudes (as it often does), it does so in an emotionally fraught manner. Ghost and [lovers' leap](#) stories belong in this category, as do many UFO stories and stories of supernatural beings and events.<sup>[citation needed]</sup>

Another important examination of orality in human life is [Walter J. Ong's](#) *Orality and Literacy: The Technologizing of the Word* (1982). Ong studies the distinguishing characteristics of oral traditions,

how oral and written cultures interact and condition one another, and how they ultimately influence human epistemology.

## Storytelling and learning<sup>[edit]</sup>



[Orunamamu](#) storyteller, griot with cane

Storytelling is a means for sharing and interpreting experiences. Stories are universal in that they can bridge cultural, linguistic, and age-related divides. Storytelling can be adaptive for all ages, leaving out the notion of [age segregation](#).<sup>[7]</sup> Storytelling can be used as a method to teach ethics, [values](#), and cultural norms and differences.<sup>[8]</sup> Learning is most effective when it takes place in social environments that provide authentic social cues about how knowledge is to be applied.<sup>[9]</sup> Stories function as a tool to pass on knowledge in a social context.

Human knowledge is based on stories and the human brain consists of cognitive machinery necessary to understand, remember, and tell stories.<sup>[10]</sup> Humans are storytelling organisms that both individually and socially, lead storied lives.<sup>[11]</sup> Stories mirror human thought as humans think in narrative structures and most often remember facts in story form. Facts can be understood as smaller versions of a larger story, thus storytelling can supplement analytical thinking. Because storytelling requires auditory and visual senses from listeners, one can learn to organize their mental representation of a story, recognize structure of language, and express his or her thoughts.<sup>[12]</sup>

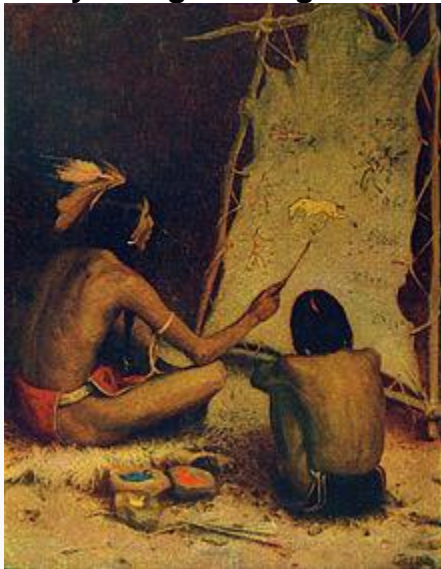
Stories tend to be based on experiential learning, but learning from an experience is not automatic. Often a person needs to attempt to tell the story of that experience before realizing its value. In this case, it is not only the listener who learns, but the teller who also becomes aware of his or her own unique experiences and background.<sup>[13]</sup> This process of storytelling is empowering as the teller

effectively conveys ideas and, with practice, is able to demonstrate the potential of human accomplishment. Storytelling taps into existing knowledge and creates bridges both culturally and motivationally toward a solution.

Stories are effective educational tools because listeners become engaged and therefore remember. Storytelling can be seen as a foundation for learning and teaching. While the storylistener is engaged, they are able to imagine new perspectives, inviting a transformative and empathetic experience.<sup>[14]</sup> This involves allowing the individual to actively engage in the story as well as observe, listen and participate with minimal guidance.<sup>[15]</sup> Listening to a storyteller can create lasting personal connections, promote innovative problem solving, and foster a shared understanding regarding future ambitions.<sup>[16]</sup> The listener can then activate knowledge and imagine new possibilities. Together a storyteller and listener can seek best practices and invent new solutions. Because stories often have multiple layers of meanings, listeners have to listen closely to identify the underlying knowledge in the story. Storytelling is used as a tool to teach children the importance of respect through the practice of listening.<sup>[17]</sup> As well as connecting children with their environment, through the theme of the stories, and give them more autonomy by using repetitive statements, which improve their learning to learn competence.<sup>[18]</sup> It is also used to teach children to have respect for all life, value inter-connectedness, and always work to overcome adversity. To teach this a [Kinesthetic learningstyle](#) would be used, involving the listeners through music, dream interpretation, or dance.<sup>[19]</sup>

In the [Quechua community](#) of Highland Peru, there is no separation between adults and children. This allows for children to learn storytelling through their own interpretations of the given story. Therefore, children in the [Quechua community](#) are encouraged to listen to the story that is being told in order to learn about their identity and culture. Sometimes, children are expected to sit quietly and listen actively. This enables them to engage in activities as independent learners.<sup>[20]</sup>

### Storytelling in indigenous cultures [\[edit\]](#)



*The Historian" - The Indian Artist is painting in sign language, on [buckskin](#), the story of a battle with American Soldiers.*

For indigenous cultures of the Americas, storytelling is used as an oral form of language associated with practices and [values](#) essential to developing one's identity. This is because everyone in the community can add their own touch and perspective to the narrative collaboratively - both individual and culturally shared perspectives have a place in the co-creation of the story. [Oral storytelling](#) in indigenous communities differs from other forms of stories because they are told not only for

entertainment, but for teaching values.<sup>[21]</sup> For example, the [Sto:lo](#) community in Canada focuses on reinforcing children's identity by telling stories about the land to explain their roles.<sup>[21]</sup>

For many indigenous people, experience has no separation between the physical world and the spiritual world. Thus, indigenous people communicate to their children through ritual, storytelling, or dialogue, for everything comes from the Great Spirit or Creator and is one. Everything, including inanimate objects, has a soul and is to be respected. These values, learned through storytelling, help to guide future generations and aid in identity formation.

Storytelling in indigenous cultures is typically passed on by oral means in a quiet and relaxing environment, which usually coincides with family or tribal community gatherings and official events such as family occasions, rituals, or ceremonial practices.<sup>[23]</sup> In order to insure that each member has equal access to the elders and the storyteller during the storytelling, people seat themselves in the shape of a circle, which promotes a feeling of unity among the tribe because no single person is at the head. During the telling of the story, [children](#) may act as participants by asking questions, acting out the story, or telling smaller parts of the story.<sup>[24]</sup> Furthermore, stories are not often told in the same manner twice, resulting in many variations of a single myth. This is because narrators may choose to insert new elements into old stories dependent upon the relationship between the storyteller and the audience, making the story correspond to each unique situation.<sup>[25]</sup>

Indigenous cultures also use [instructional ribbing](#)— a playful form of correcting children's undesirable behavior— in their stories. For example, the [Ojibwe](#) (or Chippewa) tribe uses the tale of an owl snatching away misbehaving children. The caregiver will often say, "The owl will come and stick you in his ears if you don't stop crying!" Thus, this form of teasing serves as a tool to correct inappropriate behavior and promote cooperation.<sup>[26]</sup>

## Types of Storytelling

There are various types of stories among many indigenous communities. These stories may be used for coming of age themes, core values, morality, literacy, and history. Very often, the stories are used to instruct and teach children about [cultural values and lessons](#).<sup>[25]</sup> The meaning within the stories is not always explicit, and children are expected to make their own meaning of the stories. In the [Lakota Tribe](#) of North America, for example, young girls are often told the story of the [White Buffalo Calf Woman](#), who is a spiritual figure that protects young girls from the whims of men. In the [Odawa Tribe](#), young boys are often told the story of a young man who never took care of his body, and as a result, his feet fail to run when he tries to escape predators. This story serves as an indirect means of encouraging the young boys to take care of their bodies.<sup>[27]</sup>

Some people also make a case for different narrative forms being classified as storytelling in the contemporary world. For example digital storytelling, online and dice and paper based Role-Playing Games. In traditional [role-playing games](#), storytelling is done by the person who controls the environment and the non playing fictional characters, and moves the story elements along for the players as they interact with the storyteller. The game is advanced by mainly verbal interactions, with dice roll determining random events in the fictional universe, where the players interact with each other and the storyteller. This type of game has many genres, such as [sci-fi](#) and fantasy, as well as alternate-reality worlds based on the current reality, but with different setting and beings such as werewolves, aliens, daemons, or hidden societies. These oral based role-playing games were very popular in the 1990s among circles of youth in many countries before computer and console-based online MMORPG's took their place. Despite the prevalence of computer-based MMORPGs, the dice-and-paper RPG still has a dedicated following.

## Values

Stories in indigenous cultures encompass a variety of [values](#). These values include an emphasis on individual responsibility, concern for the environment, and communal welfare.<sup>[28]</sup>

Stories are based on values passed down by older generations to shape the foundation of the community.<sup>[29]</sup> Storytelling is used as a bridge for knowledge and understanding allowing the values

of "self" and "community" to connect and be learned as a whole. Typically, stories are used as an [informal learning](#) tool in Indigenous American communities, and can act as an alternative method for reprimanding children's bad behavior. In this way, stories are non-confrontational, which allows the child to discover for themselves what they did wrong and what they can do to adjust the behavior.

Parents in the [Arizona Tewa](#) community, for example, teach morals to their children through traditional narratives. Lessons focus on several topics including historical or "sacred" stories or more domestic disputes. Through storytelling, the Tewa community emphasizes the traditional wisdom of the ancestors and the importance of collective as well as individual identities. Indigenous communities teach children valuable skills and morals through the actions of good or mischievous stock characters while also allowing room for children to make meaning for themselves. By not being given every element of the story, children rely on their own experiences and not formal teaching from adults to fill in the gaps.<sup>[32]</sup>

When children listen to stories, they periodically vocalize their ongoing [attention](#) and accept the extended turn of the storyteller. The emphasis on attentiveness to surrounding events and the importance of oral tradition in indigenous communities teaches children the skill of keen attention. For example, Children of the [Tohono O'odham](#) American Indian community who engaged in more cultural practices were able to recall the events in a verbally presented story better than those who did not engage in cultural practices.<sup>[33]</sup> Body movements and gestures help to communicate values and keep stories alive for future generations.<sup>[34]</sup> Elders, parents, and grandparents are typically involved in teaching the children the cultural ways, along with history, community values and teachings of the land.<sup>[35]</sup>

Storytelling also serves to deliver a particular message during spiritual and ceremonial functions. In the ceremonial use of storytelling, the unity building theme of the message becomes more important than the time, place, and characters of the message. Once the message is delivered, the story is finished. As cycles of the tale are told and retold, story units can recombine, showing various outcomes for a person's actions.<sup>[36]</sup>

## Storytelling Research

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Storytelling has been assessed for critical literacy skills and the learning of theatre-related terms by the storytelling and drama charity Neighborhood Bridges, Minneapolis. They are at the forefront of storytelling-drama research in schools.<sup>[37]</sup> While a storyteller researcher in the UK has proposed that the social space created preceding oral storytelling in schools may trigger sharing (Parfitt, 2014).<sup>[38]</sup>

## Storytelling as art form

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### Aesthetics

The art of narrative is, by definition, an [aesthetic](#) enterprise, and there are a number of artistic elements that typically interact in well-developed stories. Such elements include the essential idea of narrative structure with identifiable beginnings, middles, and endings, or exposition-development-climax-resolution-denouement, normally constructed into coherent plot lines; a strong focus on temporality, which includes retention of the past, attention to present action, and protention/future anticipation; a substantial focus on characters and characterization which is "arguably the most important single component of the novel";<sup>[39]</sup> a given [heterogloss](#) of different voices dialogically at play – "the sound of the human voice, or many voices, speaking in a variety of accents, rhythms and registers";<sup>[40]</sup> possesses a narrator or narrator-like voice, which by definition "addresses" and "interacts with" reading audiences (see [Reader Response](#) theory); communicates with a [Wayne Booth](#)-esque rhetorical thrust, a dialectic process of interpretation, which is at times beneath the surface, conditioning a plotted narrative, and other at other times much more visible, "arguing" for and against various positions; relies substantially on now-standard aesthetic figuration, particularly

including the use of [metaphor](#), metonymy, [synecdoche](#) and [irony](#) (see [Hayden White](#), *Metahistory* for expansion of this idea); is often enmeshed in intertextuality, with copious connections, references, allusions, similarities, parallels, etc. to other literatures; and commonly demonstrates an effort toward *bildungsroman*, a description of identity development with an effort to evince *becoming* in character and community.

## **Festivals**[\[edit\]](#)

[Storytelling festivals](#) feature the work of several storytellers. Elements of the [oral storytelling](#) art form include [visualization](#) (the seeing of images in the mind's eye), and vocal and bodily [gestures](#). In many ways, the art of storytelling draws upon other art forms such as [acting](#), [oral interpretation](#), and [performance studies](#).

Several storytelling organizations started in the U.S. during the 1970s. One such organization was the National Association for the Perpetuation and Preservation of Storytelling (NAPPS), now the National Storytelling Network (NSN) and the International Storytelling Center (ISC). NSN is a professional organization that helps to organize resources for tellers and festival planners. The ISC runs the [National Storytelling Festival](#) in [Jonesborough, TN](#).<sup>[41]</sup> Australia followed their American counterparts with the establishment of storytelling guilds in the late 1970s. [Australian storytelling](#) today has individuals and groups across the country who meet to share their stories. The UK's [Society for Storytelling](#) was founded in 1993, bringing together tellers and listeners, and each year since 2000 has run a National Storytelling Week the first week of February.

Currently, there are dozens of storytelling festivals and hundreds of professional storytellers around the world, and an international celebration of the art occurs on [World Storytelling Day](#).

## **Emancipation of the story**[\[edit\]](#)

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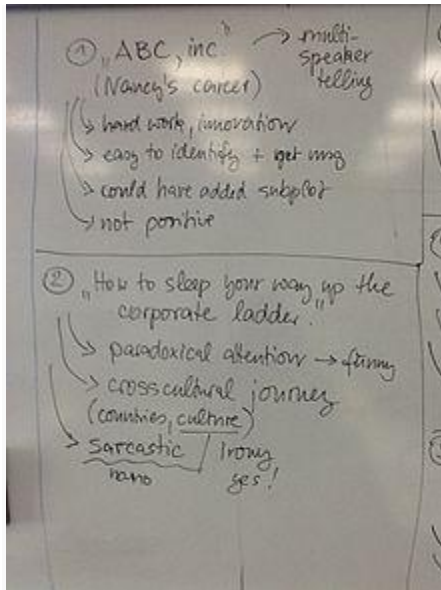
In oral traditions, stories are kept alive by being told again and again. The material of any given story naturally undergoes several changes and [adaptations](#) during this process. When and where [oral tradition](#) was pushed back in favor of [print media](#), the [literary idea](#) of the [author](#) as originator of a story's [authoritative](#) version changed people's [perception](#) of stories themselves. In centuries following, stories tended to be seen as the work of individuals rather than a collective effort. Only recently when a significant number of influential authors began questioning their own roles, the value of stories as such – independent of authorship – was again recognized. Literary critics such as [Roland Barthes](#) even proclaimed the [Death of the Author](#).

## **In business**[\[edit\]](#)

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### **Within the workplace**[\[edit\]](#)





Storytelling practice example (Summer School Berlin School of Economics 2013, European Business and Economics (EBEP))

For many multi-media communication complex institutions, communicating by using storytelling techniques can be a more compelling and effective route of delivering information than that of using only dry facts.<sup>[42][43]</sup> Uses include:

### Using narrative to manage conflicts

For [managers](#) storytelling is an important way of resolving conflicts, addressing issues, and facing challenges. Managers may use narrative discourse to deal with conflicts when direct action is inadvisable or impossible.

### Using narrative to interpret the past and shape the future

In a group discussion a process of collective narration can help to influence others and unify the group by linking the past to the future. In such discussions, managers transform problems, requests, and issues into stories. Jameson calls this collective group construction storybuilding.

### Using narrative in the reasoning process

Storytelling plays an important role in reasoning processes and in convincing others. In meetings, the managers preferred stories to abstract arguments or statistical measures. When situations are complex, [narrative](#) allows the managers to involve more context.

### In marketing

Storytelling is increasingly used in advertising today in order to build customer loyalty.<sup>[45]</sup> According to Giles Lury, this marketing trend echoes the deeply rooted need of all humans to be entertained.<sup>[46]</sup> Stories are illustrative, easily memorable, and allow any firm to create stronger emotional bonds with the customers.<sup>[46]</sup>

A Nielsen study shows consumers want a more personal connection in the way they gather information. Our brains are far more engaged by storytelling than by cold, hard facts. When reading straight data, only the language parts of our brains work to decode the meaning. But when we read a story, not only do the language parts of our brains light up, but any other part of the brain that we would use if we were actually experiencing what we're reading about becomes activated as well. This means it's far easier for us to remember stories than hard facts.<sup>[47]</sup>

Developments include the use of trans-media techniques, originating in the film industry which **Build a world in which your story can evolve**. Examples include [Coca-Cola](#)'s "Happiness Factory".

### **“Script Writing” MCD502**

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