Now and Then Stories



Complete at least six of the 10 activities below.

1. How Nature Works
Rich oral traditions are part of many cultures. Before written language was invented, storytelling was a way to pass on information. Stories explaining natural phenomena such as thunder, the moon's phases, or the passing of seasons continue to be popular. Find a legend that explains a natural phenomenon, such as a type of weather, a constellation, or a geographical feature. Learn this legend and share it with a group.

2. The Trickster
Many cultures have legends featuring a "trickster" character, such as the Coyote in some southwestern Native Indian cultures, Anansi the Spider in some West African cultures, or the Fox in some Southern European cultures. Read some Trickster legends and perform one for your troop/group, or make up a contemporary legend with a trickster character and share it with others.

3. Once Upon a Time
Many fairy tales share common elements:

- There is a quest or a journey.
- Things appear in sets of three.
- Characters get magic "tools" such as magic swords or shoes or carpets.
- The main character must overcome an obstacle to become a better person before reaching her goal.

Try creating a modern fairy tale that includes these traditional elements. How could you share your creation with others?

4. The Moral of the Story Is…
Many stories from around the world end with a moral, which is a lesson about right and wrong behavior. Storytelling is a way that cultures share and teach young people what that culture considers acceptable and good behavior. Read a story from the past with a moral and share it with others.

5. The Latest Tall Tales
Some modern myths and stories told at sleepovers and at camp show storytelling continues to be a popular way to pass on cultural rules of behavior. Share some modern myths or stories. What are the morals of these tales?

6. Stereotype Myths
Some older fables and fairytales have stereotypes. A stereotype is generalization about an entire group of people. Common stereotypes in fairytales are that women are weak and must be rescued by men or that characters with a physical disability, such as a curved back or a limp, are evil. Find a fairy tale or fable that you can modernize by taking out the stereotypes and making it a more contemporary, realistic story.

7. Telling Stories for a Living
Storytelling can be a career or a hobby. Professional storytellers perform at schools, libraries, community events and fairs, storytelling competitions, and on television. Check with your school system, university or college literature or folklore department or library, a local library, or historical association to find out if a professional storyteller will be performing in your community. If you cannot attend a performance, watch a video of a storytelling performance. Look for ways the storyteller makes the story exciting through her voice and her gestures.

8. Care for the Earth
Many cultures share a tradition of stories whose morals concern protecting the environment. Find and read some of these stories and do one of the following activities:
Perform one of the stories.
Create a modern fable on the same theme and perform it.

9. Stories in the Family
Some of the best family times are sharing stories and anecdotes about things that happened when family members were younger. Plan a family storytelling night. Think of a way to preserve your family stories.

10. Keeper of the Past
Record what an older member of your family or an older family friend or neighbor says about her past. Beforehand, think of questions to ask to start the memories flowing. Then share your efforts with others.