

Hi, Marni!

My son, Ben, would like to work on the story, "A Parakeet Named Dreidle" by Isaac Bashevis Singer. Would that be appropriate? If not, we need to keep looking!

Thank you!

Linda Russell

Linda,

thanks so much for writing.

I know some of I.B. Singer's work but I don't recall that story and I don't have my old Stories for Children book anymore. But the BIG thing is whether BEN likes the story. It sounds fun and the dreidle name clearly gives it a Jewish flavor. That's fine. My one worry is that Singer is literary in his style, kind of wordy. I worked once on one of his tales and though I LOVE reading his language, it doesn't come out the mouth easily. If Ben really likes the story - that is absolutely the most important thing - that he's not just "oh all right, I guess so" about it - you know what I mean? - then go for it. Read it once or twice and just talk the story back and forth to each other. Summarizing is ok just to be sure he has the gist of what happens. But then move into HIS own storytelling way. That will have some of Singer in it, but it will also have BEN's own natural way of talking too. Storytelling is this marriage of the exact way we TALK with the way the ancients or a modern writer have crafted a story. Finding that middle place isn't always EASY but it is fun and if he has found a tale he likes, it will be all the more fun

Thanks for writing. If it makes sense, let me know how it's going before Sunday and I'll think of how best to help Ben next.

Sincerely,

Marni Gillard

Dear Gert, Paula and Mary,

This is in response to the parent question we received as to what determines whether a story is a good one to choose for the project. It also is being done in light of the number of students yet without stories and the tentativeness of some who have them. There seems to be some confusion as to what we are looking for. Some parents and students appear to be looking for guidance.

Some of these ideas are Mary's, some mine and some were inspired by a handout of Karen Chace's that I received at a workshop that I took with her on forming storytelling clubs..

Please add any others that you can think of..also make comments/suggestions and /or kid-friendly wording for the ones that are listed.

If we can put this together well, I think it will help the students clarify the choice of their stories and will make for a good handout to put in the children at the well kit.

A GOOD STORY FOR TELLING:

***Has a beginning, a middle and an end.** This means that when we read or hear it, we are waiting to find out what's right around the next "bend" in the story and how it will end.

*Starts off in a way that "**captures your attention**" and makes you want to know more

*Has a **strong and clear ending**. You are not left feeling, "that's it?"

- *Is one that has **interesting characters**, but not too many.
 - *Has a **story line that is fairly simple**, Not too difficult or complicated to follow or to figure out.
 - *Should be not real, real short, but not too long either. **Five minutes is a good average**
 - *Is one that "**speaks to YOU**"; a story that you really like and are excited about sharing with others because you think they will like it too
 - *Would be one **of interest to an audience of people of different faiths** , like the audience you'll be telling to in April)
 - *Shares some truth or piece of wisdom, something interesting about your religious tradition that you would like others to know.**
- For example: Selma has chosen a story about Nasrudin Hoja, a very funny and wise Muslim man about whom hundreds of stories have been written. He's a really interesting figure in Islam. Many non-Muslims have never heard of him.
- *Has wording that is easy to understand**, or an explanation for words that people of other traditions might not know

We really do want ANY Children of the Well participants to contact us immediately if they are not truly set on a story and loving telling it. It won't be an imposition. Of course as new tellers you may feel nervous, but the MOST IMPORTANT THING is that you CARE about the story you are telling and can see it in your mind and speak it from beginning to end.

If you are having the feeling "this dumb old story, I wish I had a better one" then PLEASE CONTACT ME or MARY MURPHY. We have so many wonderful stories in print and are happy to meet with you or stick one in the mail so you can have an option BEFORE SUNDAY. PLEASE DON'T WAIT until Sunday. By the time we meet in class we should all be practicing playfully with the tales that we love and feel proud to tell.

It's not a bad thing to change stories. BUT NOW is the time to find an alternative. On Sunday starting to look at stories will take too much time. Please contact Marni (just reply to this email) or by phone 381-9474. Or contact Mary by email at mary.leo@gmail.com.

Parents, if you have not heard your child successfully tell the story OUT LOUD from beginning to end, please find time to sit together and listen to the story told. Don't feel you need to coach or criticize. Simply be supportive and if there's a glitch in understanding, help with what the story is saying. Help the child simply be able to tell from beginning to end. We'll work with everyone on polishing the tales. What the young people all need now is to have a story they reallllly like and one they can tell all the way through. Thanks for your attention to this.

Sincerely, Marni Gillard