

## **Who's an old lady?**

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### **ABSTRACT**

Story retelling can be a great experience for most children. It gives children opportunities to express their creativity through retelling their favorite stories. Many children do not like to present their retellings in front of a classroom, so it is important that a teacher allows a certain space in his/her classroom for children to share their retellings with a smaller group of kids. Story retelling can be used as an assessment to evaluate a child's comprehension level. When a child is exposed to oral language at an early age, then he/she will more likely have a better grasp on language skills as he/she gets older. Many students are not exposed to correct oral language skills at home, so it is very important that teachers offer as many examples and strategies to make up for their deficiency in language. Retelling offers a great deal of creative use of language skills and opportunities for children to express their individuality.

Keywords: retelling, children's stories, creativity, comprehension, oral language, individuality

## What is story retelling and why is it used?

Teachers read stories to their students on a daily basis. When a child listens to the story and then retells the story in his/her own words in the correct order, it is called retelling. The child may not include all the details of the story, but he/she will include the details that seem most important to him/her. Story retelling is an important part of a child's oral language. "Spoken language is important in its own right and especially in school as it is central to teaching and learning (Hill, 2010, p. 4). It is the way students understand a story and have the chance to express it in their own individual ways. Some students living in poverty may not understand the vocabulary in the story form due to lack of language experience (Sinatra, 2008), and may connect to the story but may not be able to retell the story using the same type of vocabulary or language. Retelling stories gives children opportunities to express their creativity by using stories they are familiar with and turning them into something they can relate to or something they can gain the most from the story.

## How is retelling used in the classroom?

Retelling can be used for lots of activities in the classroom and it does not always look the same way. Retells can be used in many "text forms such as: fairy tales, fables, myths, mysteries, poetry, procedural text, expository text, diagrams, and maps" (Mowbray, 2010, p. 10). Using the art of retelling as an activity in the classroom allows for children to grow in their language skills by being actively engaged in their reading, working cooperatively with peer, writing, listening, speaking, reading, predicting, sharing and comparing their work with peers, and many more ways to enhance their learning (Mowbray, 2010). Children can have their own special place in the classroom where they perform their retellings. This area can have a storyboard, dress-up clothes, small stage, and a rug to sit on to watch the others retell their stories (Kirkland & Patterson, 2005). Most younger children love to play dress-up. Giving them their own space to use their retelling strategies allows them to be more creative and more energetic about their story rather than having them stand up in front of the classroom and present it. Children do not have to read a hard copy of a book to be able to retell a story. Storybooks on a CD-ROM offer many different types of books that will adjust to a child's reading and comprehension level (Pearman, 2008). These storybooks on CD-ROM offer choices of having the student read the story independently, having the computer read the story, or by clicking on a word or phrase for the computer to read it to the student to help him/her read the story (Pearman, 2008). Most students love using the computer and using storybooks on CD-ROM allows them to feel like they are not really "reading"; it seems as if they are just playing on the computer.

Some teachers may use retelling as an assessment of a student's reading comprehension. Teachers can assess if the student understood the meaning of the story, if he/she made a connection to the story, if he/she included events from the story, and if he/she included some of his/her own creativity to the story. The Narrative Scoring Scheme is a device that measures "the range of skills required for school-age children to effectively tell coherent and interesting story" (Heilmann, Miller, Nockerts, & Dunaway, 2010, p. 156). Teachers can use this tool to accurately measure the student's knowledge and comprehension of the story. "Young children's active participation in read-aloud events, even for a short period of time, has been found to increase expressive vocabulary development" (Leung, 2008, p. 167). Students also learn from each other

when they are telling a story. They learn new words, new ways to tell a story, and they learn more about the person telling the story.

### **What effects does retelling have on children?**

Story retelling and story reading can affect a child in many ways. It can help the child become more fluent in reading and help them become a better speaker. It can also improve their language skills. “Children who are frequently exposed to storybook reading are more likely to use complex sentences, have increased literal and inferential comprehension skills, gain greater story concept development, increase letter and symbol recognition, and develop positive attitudes about reading” (Silver, 1985; Isbell, Sobol, Lindauer, & Lowrance, 2004, p. 158). The more children read or are read to, the more they will enjoy it when they get older. They will also have a better use of language as they get older. “Children’s understanding of books as they read, hear, and view is an active, constructive meaning-making process that requires the coordination of various skills” (Paris & Paris, 2007, p.2). When children are being read to, they are not just listening; they are comprehending the story and looking at the pictures to make inferences about the story. They are also making connections to the story, using their prior knowledge of the subject being read about. Children are introduced to new words when participating in read-alouds (Santoro, Chard, Howard, & Baker, 2008). This allows the students to expand their knowledge of different subjects and develop better communication skills.

### **Written below is an example of a retelling of “The Little Old Lady”:**

Once upon a time there was a little old lady that lived with her son,  
He sent her away because she had too much fun.  
Every night before she went to sleep,  
He would hear her scream as she would eat.  
“One fish, two fish, oh three fish more,  
Pretty soon I will be rich enough to waltz right out your door”.  
You see, the little old lady liked to dance all night,  
Her singing was awful, and she was a horrible sight.  
On Monday she would gossip with all the old ladies at the Tiki town hall,  
They talked about everyone and anyone; they had such a ball.  
She would declare, “Maple, I’m tired of hearing John complain about me moving back in  
that old shoe,  
Suppose I can move in with you?”  
Maple would nearly crack her back laughing,  
As the little old lady disappeared out the door; she was snapping and tapping.  
As she sat at the dinner table that night eating away,  
She screamed so loud you could hear her echo the next day.  
“One fish, two fish, three fish more,  
Pretty soon I will be rich enough to waltz right out your door”.  
On Tuesday she would go to visit her BINGO friends,  
All of her coins she did spend.  
When she realized all the money she did spend ,  
Her friends rapidly disappeared; and they were gone like the wind.

She went home and saw John, laying in his bed wide awake,  
 The little old lady screamed loudly as she ate,  
 “One fish, two fish, oh three fish more,  
 Pretty soon I will be rich enough to waltz right out your door”.  
 On Wednesday she had no money to go to the market,  
 So she sat at home all day... happy as a lark.  
 Thursday, Friday and Saturday no one had seen or heard from the little old lady,  
 They began to worry about her, but they knew she would return...maybe.  
 On Sunday, she grabbed her big old fishing pole,  
 And went to the city’s old abandoned fishing hole,  
 “Come out little fish; I know you’re here”,  
 The little old lady shouted loud and clear.  
 As she sat on her large bucket with her pole laying flat in the water,  
 She saw a jerk, heard a gulp, and shouted “reel it in harder”.  
 Just as she was about to go in behind her fishing pole, she thought she heard a band,  
 All of a sudden a big large fish jumped straight into her hands.  
 Then all of a sudden right out of the blue,  
 She counted 100 fish, and this is true.  
 “Open wide little fish, I’m digging for coins,  
 I’m not searching for your heart or even your loins”.  
 What did she find to her surprise?  
 When all of the fish opened their mouths wide?  
 “One fish, two fish, three fish more,  
 Today I am rich enough to waltz right out his door”.

By using the components of a good retelling of a story, the author was able to put a “whole new spin” on a old story that everyone has heard and loved. She put the story in her own words but maintained the original concept of the story. She also made it her own by using rhyming words and making the story into a rap instead of just a simple retelling of the original. This is a great example of allowing students to use their creativity to retell a story.

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