

BED TIME STORIES COME ALIVE! STORY TELLING

Gloria Blanco

Centro Cultural Colombo Americano, Cali

A vital element in the motivational drive of the students is the emotional state generated by the classroom atmosphere. "Bed Time Stories Come Alive" is a proposal that attempts to focus on external influences, capitalized on activating memory and stimulating imagination and creativity through images and sounds, thus making the learning of English a pleasant experience.

The teacher's attitude has fundamental influence on students' motivation: lots of energy projected through the voice and body movements, a warm smile, and enjoyment of what one's doing will guarantee the right climate for a fun class.

HOW TO MAKE STORIES COME ALIVE

First, choose a story appropriate to the level of your students. At the beginning, using one they already know in their own language, like "The Little Red Riding Hood", or "Peter and the Wolf", will give best results. This way, students will feel comfortable and will participate more enthusiastically.

HOW TO COLLECT THE ELEMENTS TO CREATE THE SCENE

1. **USE SOME MUSIC:** Choose background music that will go along with the story, some sound effects or short songs related to the story. I find Steve Millang's, Greg Soelsa's and especially RAFFI'S SONGS, the most lively and easy to learn. You can prepare your own tape by recording distinctive sounds easy to identify, like birds singing, water running, etc. There are some sound effects or environment records like "Earth, Sea and Sky", a recording sampler produced by Word Disk Music.
2. **SET THE SCENE:** It is important to «make believe» that the story is really taking place. You may do this by building trees, mountains, houses, and so on, with cardboard paper, paint and glue. You may also use transparencies that you project on an empty wall, or if you cannot afford neither one, you may use your students' imagination; take them through a fantasy trip by having them close their eyes, breath deeply, and focus on their breathing, and once you sense they are relaxed have them visualize the scene you will describe; or you may combine all three methods for best results.

Whether you use a lot of visuals or just your voice, the important thing is getting the students to picture in their minds a very pleasant and colorful scene.

3. **PLAN STUDENTS' PARTICIPATION:** Story telling is not only a listening practice but also an opportunity for the students to talk, move, and participate before, during, and after the activity. Before the activity, you can have a brainstorming session on what is in the scene, who the characters are or what is going to happen. While you are telling the story, some students can make sound effects or react physically when they hear you say a word or sentence. For example, a group of students can whistle and sing like birds, while others with their hands together making a circle over their heads, run across the room when they hear the word "sun". Others can say the characters' lines while you act it out.
4. Now you're ready to act! Set the scene, play the music, and start telling the story. Make sure that your tone of voice is loud enough for everybody to hear and that there's a big smile on your face! Try to feel every emotion the character of your story is feeling. This way the image that you intend to project will be more convincing.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

- Earth, Sea and Sky.* Volume 1, The Nature Recording Sampler, P.O. Box 2749, Friday Harbor, WA 98250. (800) 228-5711
- We All Live Together.* Volume 4, Produced by Youngheart Records P.O. Box 27784, Los Angeles, CA. 90027
- RAFFI More Singable Song.* MCA Records Inc., 70 Universal City Plaza, Universal City CA 91608 - U.S.A.
- Overhead Transparencies for Creative Dramatics.* Creative Teaching Press Ins. Cypress CA. 90630

Note from the author: The cassettes and transparencies are available at most school supplies in the United States and they can be ordered by mail.