

An amateur tells the words, a professional tells the story – but an artist tells the listener (anon.)

- Partner work 60 seconds non-stop talking  
Death and the Gardener: partners – describe garden / king / his tale to a child

- Listening Free Melons →

What do you notice about the way I tell?

voice modulation – body language – voice – language of characters – dialogue

Note: some of these observations apply to public speaking and communication in general, others apply to my style of storytelling – which is not the only way. Use them to find your way.

- Telling re-telling Free Melons in a group  
guided partner storytelling: The Dragon  
partner work using skeletons:  
Leprechaun and the Red Scarf (2) / Old Woman who lived in a Vinegar Bottle (6)

Remember

- your responsibility to the listener
- believe in your story
- learn to live your story
- para-language
- tempo, intonation, pauses
- eye contact
- keep your feet “quiet”
- limit description, use repetition
- don't worry about language
- Don't read – even if the story changes

- Methodology

Energy raising – Nasruddin's Shirt

Integrating young children: The Strongest of Them All (as on Cornelsen video)

Frightened Mouse / Noisy House / Ghost with One Black Eye

Last-line race – The Old Woman and her Pig

- Internet resources

[www.tellatale.eu/resources\\_page.html](http://www.tellatale.eu/resources_page.html) is a starting point to explore the vast resources on the internet

Storytell, an excellent Internet listserv: [www.twu.edu/cope/slis/storytell.htm](http://www.twu.edu/cope/slis/storytell.htm)

Gesellschaft der Lehrer der Alexander-Technik, [www.ati-net.com](http://www.ati-net.com)

- Articles by Richard Martin

“The Old Woman and her Pig – Last-Line Race” (Primary English 6.2006)

“The frightened mouse: How to tell a participation story in class 4” (Primary English 1/2003)

“A Christmas Carol: Telling the story” (Primary English 4/2004)

“The Magic Mitten” (Primary English 1/2005)

“Discussing Mr Fox” (Humanising Language Learning [www.hltmag.co.uk/jul02/sart6.htm](http://www.hltmag.co.uk/jul02/sart6.htm))

“Finding Stories on the Internet” (Primary English 2/2005)

download articles at [www.tellatale.eu/resources\\_articles.html](http://www.tellatale.eu/resources_articles.html)

- Recordings

CDs	Jack goes Hunting and other Tales (2003)
The Well of the World's End and other Tales (1998)	
mp3	download at <a href="http://www.tellatale.eu/b_page.html">www.tellatale.eu/b_page.html</a>
DVD	The Tale of the Brown Calf and other Stories (1997)
DVD & Handbook	The Strongest of Them All – Tales and Music for young Learners (Cornelsen, 2000)
CD-ROM	Grammar is Fun – CD-ROM (Longman, Hong Kong <a href="http://www.ilingman.com">www.ilingman.com</a> )
Audio	The Wife's Letter and other Tales (1995)
Video	Tales for the English Classroom Vol. 1 & 2 (Hueber, 1993)

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Skeletons

1. Strongest of Them All
2. Leprechaun and the Red Scarf
3. Giant Turnip/Carrot
4. Noisy House
5. Ghost with One Black Eye
6. Woman who lived in a Vinegar Bottle
7. Frightened Mouse
8. Old Woman and her Pig
9. Woman's Work
10. Big Toe
11. Free Melons
12. Clever Cook

1. The Strongest of Them All

Winter, icy cold, Jack was cold, had no wood for the fire. Took axe, went to cut down a tree.

Looked at tree. Smiled. Swung back with axe but foot slipped on ice, fell, banged his head on ice.

Jack spoke to the ice, "Ice, you are strong."

"Yes, Jack," said the ice. "I'm strong."

"But I know someone stronger than you - the sun. When he comes out, you go away."

"Yes, Jack, the sun is stronger than me."

Jack spoke to the sun. "Sun, you are strong."

"Yes, Jack," said the sun. "I'm strong."

"But I know someone stronger than you - the cloud. When he comes he covers you up."

"Yes, the cloud is stronger than me."

"Cloud, you are strong."

"Yes, ..."

"But I know someone stronger than you - the wind. When he blows he blows you away."

"Yes, the wind is stronger ..."

"Wind, you are strong."

"Yes, Jack."

"But I know someone stronger ... the mountain. You can't blow through him, you have to go around him."

"Yes, the mountain is stronger ..."

"Mountain, you are strong... But I know someone stronger - the tree. Because the tree can grow on top of you, but you can't grow on top of the tree!!!"

"Tree, you are strong... But I know someone stronger - me! Because I have got an axe, I'm going to cut you down. I'm stronger than you, I'm the Strongest of Them All. HA, HA!"

Swung back with axe but foot slipped on ice, fell, banged his head.

2. The Leprechaun and the Red Scarf (a leprechaun is a magical Irish creature – with a pot of gold!)

Ireland – green fields, golden flowers (buttercups Butterblume). And leprechauns – each with a pot of gold!

Boy – red scarf – saw leprechaun, and caught him: "Take me to your pot of gold. Promise I'll let you go if you do."  
Middle of field – full of buttercups. "Here, under this buttercup, is my gold. Now let me go."

Boy needed a spade to dig down to gold. "If I let you go, will you promise not to take your gold away while I get a spade?"

"I promise."

Boy tied red scarf around buttercup to mark it. "If I let you go, will you promise not to take my scarf away while

I get a spade?"

"I promise."

Boy let leprechaun go. Ran for a spade.

Returned to field full of buttercups: each and every buttercup had a red scarf tied around it.

3. Giant Carrot / Turnip (use the word your listeners will find easier)

Farmer – field of carrots / turnips. Wanted to pull up a big one (was very big).

But so big, he couldn't pull it out.

Called for wife. But was so big they couldn't pull it out.

Called for son. / For daughter. / For grandma. / For dog. / For cat.

Still couldn't pull it out.

Then little mouse came by. "I'll help you."

"You? You're too small."

"I'm small, but I'm very strong."

So one last try. They all pulled – and at end of line the mouse pulled. At last the carrot / turnip came out.

All had carrot / turnip for dinner!

Choral participation: Now pull together, pull together, pull together – pull!

4. The Noisy House

Old woman – bed – heard clock ticking, wind in trees. Couldn't sleep.

Next day, told neighbour. "Get yourself a cat – will help you to sleep".

Bed – heard cat purring, clock ticking, wind in trees. Couldn't sleep.

Next day thought cat might be wrong animal – bought dog.

Bed – heard dog barking, cat, clock, wind. Couldn't sleep.

Next day bought pig.

Next day – cow.

Next day – elephant.

Next day "Perhaps all are too big." Bought mouse.

Bed – elephant saw mouse, jumped on chair!

Chair broke, all animals made their noise.

"Stop! This is stupid. Get out of my house!"

She lay in bed. Could only hear a very quiet tick from clock. Very gentle wind in trees.

"Oh, my house is so quiet!" And she went to sleep.

Tip: The participation here can be verbal rather than physical. Encourage the children to suggest animals and they make the noises during the telling.

5. The Ghost with One Black Eye

Baby's favourite drink – apple juice

No apple juice on table

Baby: I want my apple juice, and I want it NOW!

Father: I'll go to cellar for your apple juice

Went down – was dark

Opened cellar door – was darker

Heard voice: I AM THE GHOST WITH ONE BLACK EYE

Ran upstairs: I don't want to go down there any more!

Baby: I want my apple juice, and I want it NOW!

Mother – same

Big brother – same

Big sister – same

Baby goes down – it is dark

Opens cellar door – is darker

Hears voice: I AM THE GHOST WITH ONE BLACK EYE

Baby: Well, I'll give you two black eyes if you stop me getting my apple juice!

Ghost was never heard again.

6. The Old Woman who Lived in a Vinegar Bottle (a very small house, 2 rooms on top of each other)  
Old woman, unhappy – only place to live was in a “vinegar bottle”.  
“Oh, if I had a proper house to live in, I would be happy.”  
Fairy: “If you want a proper house, you can have a proper house.”  
Old woman stood in front of a proper house. Was happy – for a few days!  
Unhappy – “I’ve only got one chair. Now if I had two chairs, then I would be happy.”  
Fairy: “If you want two chairs, you can have two chairs.”  
Was happy – for a few days.  
Haven’t got a ..... (Fill in as many things as you want, until at last she wants everything in the world.)  
Fairy says: “You want everything in the world. But no one can have everything. And you haven’t said thank you even once. So all you will have is a vinegar bottle!”  
And that was all she had.

7. Frightened Mouse  
Small mouse - frightened of bigger mice.  
One day heard two men talking about a magician - lived across the river - could change people.  
Mouse went to magician. “I want to be a BIG mouse.”  
Magic words - mouse changed into a BIG mouse. Proud. Didn’t say thank you to magician.  
Next day big mouse frightened by cats. Mouse went to magician. “I want to be a BIG cat.” Magic words - changed. Proud. Didn’t say thank you.  
Next day big cat frightened by dogs. Went to magician. “I want to be a BIG dog.” Changed. Proud. Didn’t say thank you.  
Next day big dog frightened by horse. Went to magician. “I want to be a big tiger.” Magic words - changed into small mouse.  
“That’s because you didn’t say thank you!”

8. The Old Woman and her Pig (on The Wife’s Letter and other Tales, Richard Martin)  
Old woman found a crooked sixpence – “I’ll buy a pig.” Went to market, bought pig.  
But leading pig home, came to a hedge with a stile. Pig too heavy to lift over.  
“Pig, jump over – or I won’t get home before midnight.” But pig wouldn’t!  
She went a little farther, came to a dog.  
“Dog, pig won’t jump over stile, and I won’t get home before midnight. Dog, bite pig!” But dog wouldn’t.  
She went a little farther, came to a stick.  
“Stick, dog won’t bite pig, pig won’t jump over stile, and I won’t get home before midnight. Stick, beat dog!” But stick wouldn’t!  
Fire. “Fire, stick won’t beat dog, dog won’t bite pig, pig won’t jump over .... Fire, burn stick!” But fire wouldn’t.  
Water – quench fire.  
Ox – drink water.  
Butcher – kill ox.  
Rope – hang butcher.  
Rat – gnaw rope.  
Cat – catch rat.  
And the cat said, “Yes – if you bring me a saucer of milk from the cow.”  
Cow – may I have a saucer of milk for the cat?  
Yes – if you bring me a handful of hay from the haystack.  
So she went to the haystack, took handful – gave it to the cow.  
Cow gave her milk. She gave it to the cat who:  
Started to catch the rat  
Rat started to gnaw rope  
Rope started to hang butcher  
Butcher started to kill ox  
Ox started to drink water  
Water started to quench fire  
Fire started to burn stick  
Stick started to beat dog  
Dog started to bite pig  
So the pig did jump over the stile, and the old woman did get home before midnight.

### 9. Woman's Work

Norwegian farmer - farmhouse against hillside - flat roof, grass growing on it.

Always cross with wife. "Only woman's work".

She fed up - said, "Let's change jobs."

Next day she went to fields. He stayed home to do woman's work.

Churning butter - thirsty, went to tap new barrel of beer in back corner of kitchen.

Heard pig in kitchen, pig drinking cream from butter churn.

He ran (with tap in hand) and wild with rage, kicked pig dead.

Remembered tap in hand - beer flooding over floor.

Got more cream for butter, churning.

Remembered cow still in shed. But couldn't leave cream - baby crawling on floor. So put churn on his back (rucksack).

Crossing farmyard, saw the well - stopped to draw water for cow - forgot cream was on his back - bent down for full bucket - tipped cream into well.

Too far to take cow to grass in meadow, but saw flat roof with grass.

Made bridge from steep hillside to roof. Pushed cow onto roof - cow eating grass.

Thought cow might fall.

So that nothing could happen, he tied rope round cow's neck. Put other end of rope down chimney, into kitchen - tied it round his leg.

Nearly dinner-time, and no butter. Better boil potatoes.

Pot of water on fire.

Cow fell off roof, man dragged across floor, pulled up chimney until he stuck fast.

Wife had finished man's work, came home. Saw cow hanging.

Cut rope.

Husband in chimney fell down head-first into pot of hot water.

She looked at spilt cream, dead pig, beer on floor, husband in pot.

"So that's how you do Woman's Work!"

He was never cross again.

### 10. Big Toe

Poor boy, worked hard in fields all day - so poor never had meat to eat - mother cooked beans every day.

Birthday. Digging in field, thinking of meat, meat, meat.

Spade cut something in hole in ground - heard a cry, saw something disappearing into the earth.

Found a Big Toe was left in hole - "Meat!"

Kitchen - when mother wasn't looking, dropped toe into beans - "Meat for my birthday after all!"

Night - bed - heard a moaning sound - coming closer - closer. Sounded like "Where's my toe?"

Boy hiding under blankets - but sound coming LOUDER and CLOSER!

Sound coming across floor to his bed - LOUDER and CLOSER: "WHERE'S MY TOE?"

"YOU'VE GOT IT!" (As you say this, JUMP onto a pupil in front row!)

### 11. Free Melons

Storyteller - people didn't believe his tales. Went home to think of a story everyone would believe.

Swore he would only leave that room when he had such a story.

Disturbed by children's noise outside in street.

Decided he'd play a trick on them to get peace.

"In market at other end of town - they are giving away free melons"

Children ran, leaving storyteller in peace to think.

As children ran, others asked why. More started running - children - adults ran - whole town soon ran.

Old man ran by storyteller - told him about free melons.

So storyteller thought "Perhaps there really are free melons."

He ran, too.

Shows that if you want everyone to believe your stories, you must believe them yourself.

## 12. Clever Cook

She was a cook: always happy, made sure she had enough to eat and drink!

“Oh, you are pretty” would say to herself - then take a glass of her master’s wine.

Wine would give her appetite - took the best of what she was cooking - “Cook must know what she’s cooking!”

Master, told her a guest was coming, “Prepare two chickens - as tasty as possible.”

Prepared them, over fire to roast. Beginning to brown, but guest not there. Called master, “Soon I’ll have to take them off fire. Shame, chickens are at their juiciest.”

Master said “Then I’ll run and fetch guest myself.”

She put birds to one side, “If I stay by fire I’ll get hot and thirsty.” Went to cellar - drink of wine. (Did taste good!). So took some more. (Tasted even better!)

Back to kitchen, put more butter on birds, smelled so good, but perhaps something missing, better taste - tried with her finger. (Did taste good!). Shame not to eat them at once. Looked out of window for master - not coming.

Looked at birds, one wing getting too brown, better eat it. (Did taste good!). Better eat other wing to even things up, or master would notice something was missing. (Tasted even better!). Looked for master again, still not there. Thirsty now - cellar - master’s wine. (Did taste good.)

Sudden thought, perhaps they’ve stopped to eat along the way. Looked at the birds - shame to waste them.

“Cheer up, you’ve already had a good chunk. Have another drink and eat it all up. There’ll be no reason to feel guilty when it’s all gone.”

So ran to cellar, good honest drink. (Did taste good!). Back to chicken. Ate all of the first. (Did taste good!).

Master still not back. Wine started her feeling sentimental, looked at other chicken. “They grew up together, shouldn’t be parted now. Where one is, the other belongs. What’s right for one is right for the other. And if I took another drink, it wouldn’t do me any harm.” Cellar, wine. (Did taste good!). Ate other bird. (Tasted even better!).

Master returned. “Hurry, hurry, guest here soon.”

“Yes, sir, I’ll get everything ready.”

Master checked table, started sharpening carving-knife on steps in hallway. Guest arrived, knocked on door. She opened. “Shhh, be quiet! Get out of here fast. If master catches you you’re done for. Wants to cut off your two ears, listen to him sharpening the knife.” Guest heard sound - and ran.

She said to master, “What kind of guest is that? He snatched both chickens as I was bringing them to the table and ran off.” “Both?! At least he could have left one for me!”

Master ran after guest, “Come back, come back, I only want one!” Guest ran all the faster.

And she just took another little drink, put on her shoes with the red heels, and skipped around as happy as a lark.

## 13. Tanzanian Sunlight

Two chiefs in Tanzania, lived either side of a mountain.

Land to west was always night, but chief to east had box with lots of sun in it – so was light when he wanted.

West chief, Lugeye, sent man with 100 cowrie shells to east chief, buy some sun.

Walked up mountain, down mountain – to east chief’s village.

Chief sold some sun: “Take it, but don’t look back or it will go.”

Man left village. Girl saw him go: “Hey, man. Look at east chief singing!”

East chief sang – with voice, arms, feet – man had to look back – sun disappeared out of hand.

Told Lugeye, who called a woman to go – 200 shells.

Same happened.

Called a dog to go, 300 shells – dog held sun in mouth, didn’t look back. So Lugeye also got sun.

This is my version based on a tale told by Margaret Read MacDonald, and used here with her kind permission. It is in her *Look Back and See: Twenty Lively Tales to Tell* (pub. H.W. Wilson). The tale was first recorded told by a woman named Ma Kalenze.

### Workshop task

The tale itself is a very simple narrative, yet by using movement, rhythm, chant, singing, audience participation and bringing three children onto the stage, Margaret makes it a dynamic and highly memorable listening activity.

In a small group, discuss how and where you can bring

- movement
- rhythm
- chant
- song
- audience participation
- participation on stage

into this story.

Margaret has published many books of stories. Some are picture books of a single story, others are collections containing a great number of short and easily learnt stories.  
[www.margaretreadmacdonald.com](http://www.margaretreadmacdonald.com)