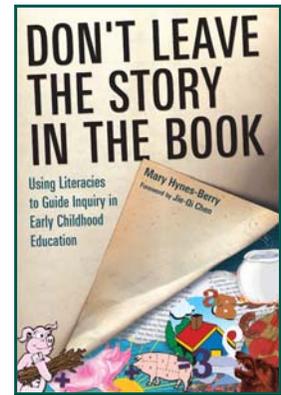


Don't Leave the Story in the Book

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Introduction: The Work of a Lifetime

Essentially, this book is the work of a lifetime.

The ideas and strategies discussed here were set in my childhood and have been evolving ever since. From the first, I experienced teaching and learning as a dynamic—and one that functions best in a community: I am the third in a family of ten children, two girls and eight boys; the elementary school I went to was a two-

room schoolhouse—with about forty students in each class. Cooperation, as well as teaching and learning from others, was a necessity, not a theory—or for that matter, an option.

I grew up with stories as a primary way to understand the world. Our parents told us stories and read to us; every day after lunch, our teacher read from a chapter book. I was a voracious reader—my siblings and I were so grateful for the Stearns County Bookmobile that provided a steady stream of classic chapter books, mysteries, biographies, historical fiction, and more for us to read, share, and work into our play.

I became a storyteller almost as soon as I became a reader. I read and told stories to my little brothers and cousins; the stories I told, I made up on the spur of the moment, weaving in elements of fairy tales and odd facts. I remember being excited by learning about the idea of symbiosis and for a while the stories included symbiotic relationships.

At about eight, I was thrilled to learn from an older cousin who was an English major that I could spend the rest of my life reading and talking about stories. I immediately resolved that would be what I would do, and essentially that is what I have done. I was drawn to medieval literature and did my graduate work exploring the narrative structures of Arthurian legends. I explored the way a story was told and how the style and details of character, setting, and point of view could shift the meaning, even when the plot was the same.

Unfortunately, however interesting I found this topic, the reality was that medievalists ranked high among the hopelessly over-educated. As a further complication, our family was growing. . On the plus side, I had another set of little boys to whom I could tell stories. Then, I became active at Ancona, the Montessori based school our sons attended and soon was instrumental in setting up and staffing a part-time resource room/library. This was much more satisfying than teaching freshman composition as an adjunct. Oral storytelling in the preprimary and primary classrooms seemed a natural extension of the resource room/library.

From the first, I was much more intentional about selecting and preparing the story than I had been with my family listeners. For the next twenty years or so, I went into ten to fifteen classrooms on a weekly basis with a story that I had chosen as a result of consulting with the teachers about what was currently happening in the curriculum. I then researched legends, myths, folk and fairy tales from around the world that would complement the themes and issues they identified.

My fascination with how the way a story was told and how that could affect the meaning took on new force. I became familiar with a folklore classification tool called the Stith-Thompson Index (McDonald, 1982, 1999). It provides a Dewey Decimal like system to show how folk tales, myths, and legends from around the world use similar elements such as character, motif, or plot. I was able to create cycles in which we looked at how different cultures told a story. In the beginning of each year, I might tell 5 or 6 weeks of stories about Beginnings—myths about the creation of the earth, or astronomical bodies such as the sun and moon, the coming of fire, and other such motifs. I did other series looking at variations of a powerful tale type such as *Cinderella*. Sometime during the year, I would take 6 to 8 weeks to recount an epic, relentlessly stopping at cliff-hanging moments that would be fresh a week later. Among those that I told were the *Iliad*, the *Odyssey*, the *Ramayana* from India; *Beowulf*, the *Song of Roland*; *Sundiata*, the African epic warrior; *Gilgamesh*, and the Irish hero tales of *Finn McCool*.

I would often use one story with the preprimary and another with the primary, based on what was developmentally appropriate. In keeping with oral storytelling tradition, no matter how often I told a story there were always variations in the telling, in response to the wonderfully individual character of each group of listeners. At the end, I would remind the children that if they liked the story, it was now theirs—they could tell it to themselves or others in their own words, in their own way.

What Does It Mean for Storytelling to Be Transparent?

I didn't use props and, given my severe musical impairments, didn't dare sing except as a villain. I became aware that I was deliberately downplaying the storytelling as a performance. In effect, I wanted

my telling to be *transparent*—to let the story do the wonderful work of engaging the listeners in meaning-making. I did prime the pump, however. As I settled myself in, I would say something about what brought me to tell this particular story; I might suggest an open-ended question to think about as they listened. With the younger children especially I often brought along a toy dragon, originally called LSMFT but who later became Smiley. I would claim he had suggested I repeat a story I had told him because it had helped with a question or problem he had. With the older children, I used a globe to show how the story had travelled over time and distance yet could still speak to us. After the telling, we had a brief conversation about the story, perhaps comparing it to others in the sequence. Other times, I proposed a project the teachers and I had talked about, relating the story to something currently under study.

Without thinking about it, my academic background asserted itself. Though I didn't know the term, I was doing what is now known as "teacher action research." After each session, I would go home, make notes and reflect on the kind of conversations that the same story sparked in different classrooms. I also kept track of which stories engaged the children most deeply and which they begged for again and again.

Over time, I realized that while I was a good storyteller, the real reason children literally hung onto my words was that *I only told good stories*—tales that had stood the test of time because they said something essential about the mysteries which surround and confound us humans.

I became very involved with several early childhood and family literacy programs, including one at the Head Start center in a public housing project, and began working with parents of developmentally delayed young children in an intervention program run by Michael Reese Hospital.

What Made Projects Like The Stone Soup Network So Important?

But it was Sue Gottschall and the *Hug-a-Book Foundation* that opened up new ways to explore with children and teachers all that happens when you take the story out of a book. While all the years I have been associated with Hug-A-Book have been enriching, the six years I spent with the **Stone Soup Network Project**, funded by the Annenberg Foundation, were particularly fruitful. I was very involved in designing and directing as well as implementing a project that created classroom libraries in 60 inner city classrooms in three Chicago schools.

Our objective was not just to fill empty bookshelves with high quality children's literature that celebrated diversity; the real mission was for all stakeholders to work together to create **a culture of literacy** in the schools so that children and their families would see reading and writing as a meaningful, engaging activity to develop the habits of mind to turn them into life-long readers and writers. The program involved on-going professional development with staff of the schools, as well as regular on-site consulting and modeling teaching strategies using authentic literature across the curriculum.

My responsibilities as program director also involved writing weekly field notes, similar to those I had always done at Ancona, collecting data, writing reports to the funders, and developing handouts and idea books that would reinforce the strategies and beliefs about literacy we were promoting. An equally important role was to help facilitate sharing and cooperation in the network. I did a weekly newsletter, and we co-ordinated literacy *events* that brought students, their families, and teachers together on a regular basis within and between schools. Thanks to the commitment of Chicago's Public Access TV to giving a voice to everyone, the call-in show, *Hotline 21*, allowed our Stone Soup Network to have the children in our schools speak for themselves about the stories they loved.

One of the delights of the project was the way it allowed me to return to the same classrooms, again and again, telling stories, listening to what children heard, and modeling teaching/learning strategies that would link to the curricular goals. While I had seldom brought in a book in my years at Ancona, I now purposefully chose stories that could be found in books in the classroom libraries we were building. I told the story in my own words, as I had always done; I continued to begin with a framing question or point of information about why I chose the story. At the end, I'd show the book and the teacher, and I would suggest an extension—more often than not one that would have the children create a classroom book, exhibit, or performance. The data we gathered provided overwhelming evidence that books that were introduced as read-alouds or through storytelling and then extended into lessons became the most popular books in the library. While I do not have the same kind of hard data, I know that good stories stay in children's minds and hearts. Over the years I cannot count how many children would approach me as I came into the school or classroom to ask about a story told months and even years before. They remembered even details because that story told them something they needed to know.

Once again, I see this as proof of the power of good stories rather than about my skills as a storyteller. Good stories are among the most powerful tools we have for learning because they begin in the heart and move into the head. The social-emotional truths of a great story can be so compelling that the listener asks more and more questions.

I began to appreciate the importance of this social-emotional force when I agreed to work with my mother, Sister Arleen Hynes, on a handbook for the field of Biblio-Poetry Therapy, a creative arts therapy of which she was a pioneer. *Biblio-poetry Therapy: The Interactive Process* (1984, 2011) came out in 1984 with Westview Press and has been in print ever since. Discussions over the years with gifted practitioners of this creative arts therapy has added a rich dimension to my thinking about the power and

importance of texts in all forms. I owe a deep debt of gratitude to Joy Sawyer who has recently updated the third edition to reflect the extensive growth of this field.

How Can Science and Math Come Out of Stories?

It might seem a reach to go from creative arts therapy to science and math but in fact, my eclectic experience was proving the opposite. The children had all kinds of things they wanted to discuss about the stories they loved the most. In addition to—or maybe it is more accurate to say, at the same time as—they wondered about important social-emotional truths of a story, they were curious about the “facts,” the logistics or plot details: *Are heroes ever afraid or confused? Were there really giants? Why does the story say it's a beanstalk that grows?*

Questions like that about the beanstalk made sense in a different way after I project-directed an early math program for Encyclopedia Britannica Educational Corporation in the early 1990s. Between that and living with a “pure scientist” (my husband is an atomic physicist), I began to be invited to do workshops and presentations on using books to promote not just literacy in the traditional sense, but also mathematical and scientific literacy.

In the mid 1990's, I also began teaching as an adjunct at Erikson Institute, in Chicago, a Graduate Program for Early Childhood Development. I supervised student teachers and developed and taught methods courses, including those focused on mathematics and science, for the Teacher Education Department. In the last decade, I have concentrated my professional life around teaching and several important Professional Development projects with Erikson including:

As part of the *New Schools Project*, under the direction of Patty Horsch, I worked with Jackie Robinson and Revere Schools on improving school climate using classroom structures and instructional strategies to increase student achievement. The rich discussions our Erikson team had for the four years I was involved have been invaluable in helping me clarify my thinking about learning.

Designing the curriculum and implementing workshops for the **StoryBus** project extended what we did at Hug-A-Book, particularly in terms of playing seriously, with stories.

Finally, it is a real joy to be actively thinking about foundational mathematics as a member of the Erikson Early Mathematics project. As a team we have developed year long PD sessions that have deepened the understanding of foundational mathematics and the most effective ways to teach it for 300 Chicago Public School preschool and kindergarten teachers

What Kind of Meaning Comes Out of Teaching and Learning?

The point of recounting the meandering path of my professional life is, as I said, to show that this book truly is the work of a lifetime. However, my experience is in no way unique. It reflects what has been happening since human life began; one way or another story plays a central role in the human impulse to find meaning in our existence. At the same time, the fundamental understanding of what it means to learn and what it means to teach is one that I share across the ages with the many who have always understood that ***to learn is to teach; you cannot teach well if you are not still a learner.***

Thus, this book is a statement of ***praxis***: while it outlines a series of *pedagogical practices*, every strategy reflects deeply-held core *philosophical beliefs* about the nature of teaching and learning including: ***Teaching and learning are dynamic*** — effective teachers are life-long learners whose major objective is to develop and foster the ***life-long habits of mind*** that will motivate their students to continue learning long after they have left the classroom.

Teaching for understanding not for achievement should drive what happens in classrooms at all levels. Without solid foundational knowledge and authentic reasons for remembering what we've learned, lessons are quickly forgotten.

Quality Intellectual Work is the desired outcome of the teaching/learning dynamic. This term is defined in Chapter 2 as *evidence that the learner(s) are actively involved in constructing understanding through a disciplined inquiry that has meaning beyond the classroom.*

Classrooms function most effectively as **Learning Communities**, where inquiries are sparked and sustained by input from learners as well as from teachers—who themselves are learning.

Finally, the thirty plus years I have spent as an oral storyteller, working directly with children as well as with in-service and pre-service teachers, underlies my passionate beliefs that

Books and stories are among the most powerful tools available for teaching and learning. **Digging deeply** into a rich book/story so that we go from literal comprehension to discovering and exploring the subtexts that connect the story to self, to other texts, to the world of ideas *is more efficacious than casting a wide net of examples.* (An analogy might be made to the way it is only when we keep unpeeling or dicing the onion that the tears come).

Thus each chapter begins with a case study about how a particular story/text was used in an early childhood classroom in ways that exemplify the teaching/learning issue that is the focus. The case study is revisited throughout the chapter to help the reader construct a more nuanced understanding of the key points. While the focus is on early childhood classrooms, this is praxis—both the underlying beliefs and

the strategies, that concerns the teaching/learning dynamic which extends across all ages and stages. In fact, as Chapter One argues, it is an effective tool for adult learning, including professional development for preservice and inservice teachers.

How Is the Book Organized?

This book falls into two parts: the first five chapters are concerned with exploring the philosophical beliefs that inform the kind of practice I am endorsing. For the most part, the teaching/learning examples involve literacy, including many practices associated with the approach known as balanced literacy.

Chapter 1 uses the *Stone Soup* story as a metaphor for the way that the teaching/learning dynamic functions most effectively when teachers and learners have had authentic experiences of doing quality intellectual work in classrooms. The case studies for each chapter are discussed as examples of **parallel-processing** in which in-service and pre-service teachers are introduced to pedagogical practices and strategies through experiences that involve them as adult *novice learners*.

Chapter 2 uses the classic tale of *The 3 Little Pigs* to look at what is meant by **quality intellectual work**. The definition calls for actively involving the learner in constructing understanding by emphasis on the 3 E's of **Engage, Explore, Evaluate**, rather than the 3 R's of rote instruction.

Chapter 3 introduces a Chinese version of *Cinderella* as it examines **the nature of inquiry** and the crucial role of **conversation** in the teaching/learning dynamic. It looks at how **problem-solving** can engage the whole classroom community in discussing **open-ended questions** that move back and forth from lower order to higher order thinking.

Chapter 4 builds on an dramatization activity with the story *Abiyoyo* to dig more deeply into the nature of **play** and the crucial role it has in motivating inquiry and problem-solving. This chapter includes descriptions of interactive teaching/learning strategies focused on literacy.

Chapter 5 brings the first section of the book to a close by looking at several versions of *Goldilocks* to establish criteria for judging the **quality of both literary and informational juvenile literature** that are such important tools for promoting quality intellectual work.

Part II of the book looks at how the foundational principles associated with quality intellectual work enter **into teaching for understanding in the disciplines** of *mathematics, science, and social studies*. While the primary examples are drawn from early childhood classrooms (preK to 3), there is good evidence that the guided inquiry approach used in all of these areas works well at all levels and is related to what "real" researchers do.

Chapter 6 uses a measurement activity that grew out of Arlene Mosel's *Tikki Tikki Tembo*. The chapter examines the importance of focusing on **mathematics** as opposed to **arithmetic** and **counting**. A distinction is made between *drilling "naked numbers"* which put the emphasis on facility with calculations and **mathematizing**, that is, *problem-solving the story* behind the many mathematical problem situations that can be found all around us, in everyday life, as well as in many high quality texts.

Chapter 7 begins with a *pourquoi* legend about why the sun and moon are in the sky. It explores **the central role of guided inquiry in teaching/learning science**; it looks at strategies that structure learning in a way that supports national standards for **teaching science as a problem-solving process**.

Chapter 8 explores how several picture books about quilts were at the heart of **integrated curriculum** projects that embedded **social studies** into the full array of disciplines. The chapter looks at the importance of **intentional design**, so that the teaching/learning dynamic is responsive to the needs, interests, and abilities of the specific classroom community.

Chapter 9 looks at how questions about the parable of **Who is the Strongest?** dominate early childhood classrooms. Seven-year-old children have a more complex level of understanding than five year olds and as teachers, we need to understand how to shift the emphasis from concrete to pictorial to symbolic understanding in order to take into account the individual profile of intelligences that everyone brings to learning.

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There is no question that this book would be impossible were it not for the decades of delightful conversations and playing with ideas and stories with a hosts of wonderful people. I couldn't possibly name everyone but I do want to single out the following friends/professional colleagues who have inspired and supported me for decades (in alphabetical order since there is no possible way to rank how profoundly I have benefitted from their friendship and insights). It is no accident that you will see many of these names repeated in specific thanks: Jie'Qi Chen, Sue Gottschall, Joan Grimbert, Dan and Lois Holm, Liz Hurtig, Rebeca Itzkowich, Donna Johnson, Rick Laurent, Marlene McKenzie, Gil McNamee, Basia Miller, Eleanor Nicholson, Pam Whalley, Mary-O Yeager.

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Sebastien, Nico and Daniel Berry, as well as their splendid Hynes cousins; and most recently to my darling grandchildren: The Broccoli-headed girls, Mireille, Savannah, Ava, Tyra, Simone, and Saskia Berry.

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CAN TV has made a significant contribution to giving ordinary people in Chicago a voice thanks to the visions of Barbara Popovic and Greg Boozell, among many others. Making over 50 episodes of a storytelling show, *Fantasies and Fairytales*, allowed me to explore how the power of stories told with minimal props can translate from live to video performance — I couldn't have done it without my stalwart homeboy crew – Nico and Daniel Berry, or the local children who served as the audience; Mike Gleason and Bill Gadomski also deserve a shout out. .

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And then there's my life-mate all these years, Gordon "GoGo" Berry. His lifetime of seriously playing with physics meant we had opportunities to live in France, Sweden, and Great Britain (his home country). I got to appreciate first-hand what it means to be a second language learner and to see how story

transcends cultures. Maybe just as importantly, the way he and I have gradually worked out how science and literature are really different ways of playing has been authentic high quality intellectual work, complete with all the bumps and peaks good learning always includes.

Teachers College Press:

“Books and stories do not automatically produce quality intellectual work in the classroom. Intellectual quality depends also on adults—committed and intentional teachers and parents who activate the potential of stories. To help teachers build on what they know about stories, Mary describes praxes for using books that are grounded in well-defined principles of teaching and learning.”

—*From the Foreword by Jie-Qi Chen, Erikson Institute*

Drawing from 30 years of teaching and professional development experience, this book offers a roadmap for using children’s literature to provide authentic learning. Featuring a “storyteller’s voice,” each chapter includes a case study about how a particular fiction or nonfiction work can be used in an early childhood classroom; a series of open-ended questions to help readers construct their own inquiry units; and a bibliography of children’s literature. This book provides a unique synthesis of ideas based on constructivist approaches to learning, including the importance of positive dispositions and learning communities, the nature of higher-order thinking, and the relationship between methods such as guided inquiry in the sciences and balanced literacy.

Chapters:

1. How Are Learning Communities Like Stone Soup? Exploring a Praxis
2. What Can We Learn From the 3 Little Pigs? The Three E’s of Quality Intellectual Work
3. Can Cinderella’s Slipper Be Gold Instead of Glass? The Role of Questions in Quality Intellectual Work
4. How Can We Play With Abiyoyo? The SIP of Play and Quality Intellectual Work.
5. What Makes a Good Goldilocks? Assessing the Quality of Picture Books
6. How Long Is Tikki Tikki Tembo? What’s the Problem with Naked Numbers?
7. How Did The Sun and Moon Come To Be In The Sky: Playing with the Amazing Facts of Science
8. How do You Get from Patches to a Patchwork Quilt? Reading an Object for Learning Across the Curriculum
9. Who’s The Strongest? What Makes Stories Such Effective Tools For Quality Intellectual Work?

Mary Hynes-Berry brings a lifetime of using oral storytelling to promote learning in her work with preservice and in-service teachers at Erikson Institute, Chicago, Illinois.