

Storytelling

Reflections from Preeti Patel, Director of Education, Montessori Global Education

When it comes to Storytelling, I reflect on a quote from Maria Montessori who said, **“by offering the child the story of the universe, we give him something a thousand times more infinite and mysterious to reconstruct with his imagination, a drama no fable can reveal.”** (To Educate the Human Potential, pg.9)

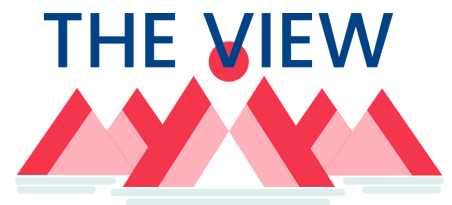
Maria Montessori was a real advocate for storytelling – and the more I reflect on this the more I note that stories are all around us. For centuries, stories have been a way of passing on the history of our families, our cultural background and more – I certainly remember the tales retold at the knee of my maternal grandmother. She was not educated in the traditional sense; she married at a very young age and sadly did not have the opportunity to attend school and receive an education (she said she would have been an Engineer if she had). However she had a great talent of storytelling. I remember being completely spell bound and enthralled as she wove and spun a thrilling tale that sometimes had me propped at the edge of my seat; other times hiding under my bed covers as my imagination ran wild supported by her wonderful imagery.

Storytelling is very different from Story reading. Story reading depends on narrating a story with the aid of a book or a written script whilst Storytelling does not depend on the presence of a written text instead it is:

- Spontaneous – often in response to what is said in conversation by others.
- Oral – using spoken words, gestures and expression. The oral narrative allows and encourages the reader to develop their imagination as they picture the characters and scenes in their mind.
- Organic/Iterative – The narrative does not follow the set pattern of the written text in a book but can flow and change depending on the audience's engagement, making the experience more dynamic.

Both Storytelling and Story Reading are however really vital experiences for the children.





Why is Storytelling/Story Reading important for children?

- **Enhances Language development /the learning of languages**

Stories can be a rich and varied source of language learning opportunities. Whilst Storytelling or Story Reading should be fun and engaging experiences, they should be purposeful and considered. The adult facilitating this should really take this opportunity seriously and not as a task/ routine/ time filler that it can sometimes become.

Ensuring that children are having an immersive experience during the facilitation of Story Telling/Story Reading can help children learn new words, improve their grammar, and develop their reading skills. Stories not only introduce new vocabulary, but they give children opportunities to hear them being used or use the new vocabulary in various contexts.

- **Promotes Creative (the ability to come up with unique, original solutions) and Critical Thinking**

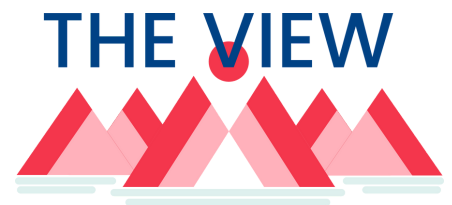
One of the major benefits of storytelling is the development of Creative Thinking. By giving children the freedom to come up with their own endings, children are aided in exercising their imagination and developing storytelling skills. Additionally, storytelling can help children learn to think critically.

By analysing stories and exploring different interpretations, ending and variations, children can develop skills and ability to problem-solve and think creatively.

- **Builds Emotional Intelligence**

Stories can help children identify and regulate their emotions and learn how to deal with difficult situations. In the safe environment of the story children can be introduced to characters who are facing challenging circumstances, they can learn how to identify the feelings they are experiencing and offer opportunities to discover how they could cope with the circumstances and the feelings. Storytelling can also help children learn how to express their emotions in a healthy way. By hearing stories about characters who feel scared, sad, or happy, kids can discover how to identify and cope with their own feelings. These could then of course be supported by empathetic adults and favourable environments and opportunities to for example explore these in role play so that they are able to make further sense of their experiences.

Additionally, stories can help children learn how to understand others' feelings as well. By listening to stories about kind, helpful, and forgiving characters or experiencing how unkind words and actions can affect others, children can learn how to empathise with others.



- **Promotes Listening skills**

When children are invited or spontaneously join a Storytelling or Story Reading session there is a committed engagement from the child. If the child is joining in the activity because they want to then they will be all ears. They will want to know what happened, they will want to know why it happened, and they will remember the characters, the places, the emotions. This will support the development of their listening skills.

- **Promotes Executive function and Self-Regulation**

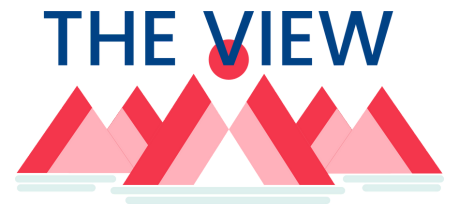
Executive function and self-regulation skills are the mental processes that enable us to plan, focus attention, remember instructions, and juggle multiple tasks successfully. Storytelling has a unique relationship to each of these skills: it directly addresses and encourages working memory, cognitive flexibility, and inhibition control.

- **Storytelling Is A Fun Way To Learn**

I am certain that everyone reading this will agree that storytelling is a fun and engaging way for children to learn. By engaging their imaginations and expanding their horizons, stories can help children discover new things about themselves, their environments and the world around them. Hearing stories can equip children with skills they will use throughout their lives. And most importantly, it provides them with hours of fun and enjoyment while learning!

Research indicates that having poor language and literacy skills creates a negative impact on the holistic development of children.

- Children will find it difficult to make social connections if they cannot join in with the play of their peers.
- They will find it difficult to express their thoughts, feelings and emotions.
- In the longer-term children with language delay will experience challenges in their educational journey and this could have an impact on future employment prospects. There could also be an impact on their social interactions and relations which could in turn have an impact on their mental health and wellbeing.



Reflect on the most profound storytelling experience you have had...



What impact did it have on you

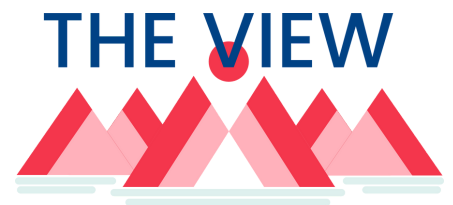


How could you create such experiences for the children in your lives



Why do you remember it





How could you create such experiences for the children in your lives?

Story Telling and Story Reading are powerful tools in our toolbox. Whilst it is important to use these tools effectively REMEMBER the most important things for the adult is to respect and acknowledge that storytelling and reading are both an art and a science. It is therefore important to make sure of the following:

Preparation

- Good and effective Storytelling or Story reading requires preparation so ensure that you have put in that time for the prep.

Presence

- Make sure that you are fully focused and taking the process seriously,
- Make sure you're emotionally expressive and excited while you're reading the story

Movement and Enjoyment

- Use actions and different voices
- Exhibit a positive and happy body language

Time

- Pick your moments to tell them these stories. The more spontaneous (this does mean you have to be prepared in advance 😊) your opportunities the more engagement you will have.

ENJOY AND EXPLORE THESE WONDERFUL TOOLS!



**Tell us more about any
storytelling initiatives
happening in your
homes, settings and
Countries?**

Email us:
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