

KNOW

About the Artist



Shayna Jones, professional Storyteller and performance artist, has one vision: to create a space where listeners slow down, unplug, and listen deep to the wisdom of folktales.

Through focused study and sheer delight, Shayna unearths stories from around the world and brings them to vivid life for anyone who will sit and listen. Her professional experience as an actor, dancer and vocalist, alongside her love of connecting “eye to eye and heart to heart”, ensures that her Story Shows are captivating experiences. Students saturated in the hustle and bustle of extracurricular activities, flashing screens, and surround sound will be amazed at what a simple story, well told, can do and teach.

About the Performance

Shayna brings a dynamic, traditional Storytelling show to students of all ages.

- **Performance Duration:** Story Shows are approximately 45- 60 minutes in length with time for questions and answers either at the end of, or in the midst of, the performance.
- **What you can expect from the Story Show:** Each performance consists of 3 or 4 folktales 5 to 15 minutes in length. We weave our way between each tale with original, participatory songs, rhythm making with our hands and feet, and movement to wake up the body and re-engage the mind.
- **Who and what will the students see during the performance:** Shayna performs solo on stage, with nothing but her voice and her presence to fill the room. She brings with her folktales from cultures around the world that highlight universal themes that every student can relate to.
- **What is expected of the audience during the performance:** Audience members are expected to come prepared to listen, laugh, cry, sing, and dance. In short, to fully engage. Shayna encourages teachers NOT to require students to take notes during her performances.
- **Technical requirements:** Technical requirements (such as a sound system) may be discussed with Shayna on an as-needed-basis depending on group and room size.
- **Artist Website:** You can learn more about Shayna and her work at www.wearestoryfolk.com

About the Art Form

Traditional oral storytelling is as old as humanity itself. As long as there has been language, human beings have used Story to make sense of the world, to identify our heroes and villains, to understand our suffering and our joy. Storytelling is at the heart of human culture.

Students will benefit from awareness of the heavy use of metaphor and allegory in folktales. Though talking lions and magic trees take center stage in these tales, the values they convey are for human hearts and minds. Older students may be skeptical at the mention of Storytelling, relegating it to child’s play, but they’ll be surprised! Folktales featuring wild animals and mystical creatures serve to warn, guide, and shape our actions, that we may lead “good lives” - good as defined by the culture at hand. Each story show is an opportunity to explore the values and themes presented by the tales. Students will be given opportunity to engage and reflect.

Visit www.storytellers-conteurs.ca for more information about the art of Storytelling in Canada.

WONDER

Links to Curriculum

- **Drama/Theatre:** Students will watch a professional performing artist bring stories to life with her body, voice and presence. Students eyes will be opened to yet another career path possible in the performing arts.
- **Language Arts:** Students will encounter literary devices such as allegory, simile, hyperbole, parable, personification and many others throughout the performance. Each performance provides excellent fodder for writing exercises as outlined in the Activity Section below.
- **Social Studies:** World folktales will give students a window into the values, mores, and customs of different cultures and people groups.

Pre-Performance Discussion Questions

- 1) What is your favorite storytelling medium (e.g. books, movies, face to face, etc.) and why?
- 2) List the books/movies/etc. you know that feature “animals doing human things” as the main characters. Why do you think the storytellers chose to tell their story in this way?
- 3a) Using one of the examples from question two, imagine how the story would have been different if human beings, and not animals, were the main characters. Share your reflections with a partner or the class.
OR
- 3b) And now, a thought experiment: if you were to change one of the animals in question two to a totally different animal (e.g. to a smaller animal, or a more ferocious animal), would the meaning of the Story shift in any way? Explain.

Post-Performance Activities

Activity One:

Proverbs as Mini-Folktales

Present students with the following proverbs:

- When elephants battle, the ants perish. (Cambodian)
 One dog barks because it sees something; a hundred dogs bark because they heard the first dog bark. (Chinese)
 Every kind of animal can be tamed, but not the tongue of man. (Philippine)
 If you chase two hares, you will not catch either. (Russian)
 Do not seek to escape from the flood by clinging to a tiger's tail (Chinese)

Discuss as a group or in pairs. Have students select the proverb that stands out to them the most. Students may write or orally share a brief story of their own inspired by the proverb.

Activity Two:

Creating Personal Fables

Ask students to assign animal characters to represent people they know. This is a private process and no one but the student needs to know which animal represents the student's father, teacher, sister, or, themselves, etc. Have students create a story starring those animal characters. Students may present their stories to the class.

Visit www.storyarts.org/lessonplans/index.html for an excellent resource of simple, story based activities like these.

Post-Performance Discussion Questions

- 1) What story most resonated with you and why?
- 2) List some of the themes, values, and lessons of the folktales. Reflect on these. Do you agree or disagree with one or more of the lessons within the tales?
- 3) Can you recall which story featured an “all animal cast”? Now, as you did in pre-performance question No.3, how would the message of the story be altered if different animals were used? Or, how would the message be altered if you changed the animals to human beings?