

Why Storytelling?

Many speakers are attracted to the interp categories, especially Duo, DI, HI and TI. But before you jump into those very competitive events, get your feet wet in STORYTELLING! It's the best preparation for the more advanced events because it gives you a chance to practice basic interp skills and really learn how to use your instrument (your voice, body, and face). Storytellers do everything larger than life, so you really get a chance to expand your acting range.

What makes a good Children's Storytelling?

- Avoid books designed to teach reading; they are too simplistic and too repetitive. Skew your audience a bit older and a bit more sophisticated (1st thru 3rd grade is a good target age).
- Avoid rhyming books; you will fall into sing-song patterns and put your judges to sleep.
- Choose books with dialogue in addition to narration, interesting story lines, plots and multiple characters: the plot needs to hook the audience (what's going to happen next?!) and multiple characters show off your acting skills (look for ways to make each character DISTINCT*). Careful of too many multiple characters, however—too many characters can be confusing.
- Look for books that might allow you to incorporate sound effects—those are always appreciated (especially if they're funny). And since you can use minimal props and/or costume elements in Storytelling, consider adding those as well (but don't let the props take over!).
- Although there is no minimum time, anything less than 5 minutes is rarely competitive. 8 minutes is about right; 10 minutes is the absolute maximum.
- Bring the book with you into the rounds, even if you don't use it. Set it up—it makes a nice visual aid and proves to the judge that what you are about to perform is actually published.

Another advantage is that if your FUNNY storytelling is long enough (at least 8 minutes), you can turn it into an HI, which is a state event (unlike Storytelling which is only a league event). Many state championship HI's have been children's stories!

Parodies or alternate versions of fairy tales work well in Storytelling, because they employ a bit of adult humor so your judges tend to appreciate them a bit more.

Note: one of the most performed authors of children's parodies is Jon Scieszka (rhymes with "Fresca"), who wrote popular books like *The True Story of the Three Little Pigs by A. Wolf*, and *The Stinky Cheese Man and Other Fairly Stupid Tales*, etc. The problem with his books is that they are often performed, so you risk "hitting" another speaker in your rounds with the same material—and that is NEVER a good feeling. And some of the experienced judges are too familiar with the material, so they will either be bored or they will compare you to previous performances they saw, which isn't fair but happens anyway.

But if you do choose familiar material, bring something new to it and be BRILLIANT!

*The most common HI criticism that beginning interpers get is "I couldn't tell the difference between your characters." So how do you make each character consistent and distinct? Use

- 1) focal points (ask for a demonstration)
- 2) body language, facial expression and gesture (be animated! Don't be afraid to be outrageous!)
- 3) vocal variety and dynamics: volume, pace, pitch (and character, which can be created with accents, unconventional speech habits such as a lisp, etc.)