

stories

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INSPIRATIONAL STORIES FROM ENGLISH LANGUAGE CLASSROOMS

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TEFLIN Teacher Development Series

NOTES FROM THE BOOK EDITORS

Flora Debora Floris & Willy Ardian Renandya

Inspirational Stories from English Language Classrooms is a collection of inspirational stories contributed by language teachers working in a wide range of contexts in different parts of the world. The book is part of TEFLIN Teacher Development Series, a collaborative project with the Publication Division of TEFLIN (The Association for the Teaching of English as a Foreign Language in Indonesia).

This book is for English teachers, trainees, scholars, administrators, as well as policy makers who are interested in motivating and empowering their students through short-stories. This book also serves as a resource book for pre-service teachers who are doing their micro-teaching/practicum or pursuing their higher degree education.

The book contains classroom stories and suggested teaching/learning activities that can be used in language classrooms, teacher training and teacher professional development programs for pedagogical purposes. The stories brought by 44 contributors from 20 different countries in Asia and beyond are based on their authentic teaching experiences; and the suggested classroom activities presented in this book can be used as a model on how these stories might be used to enhance language learning and teacher learning.

This book originated from a simple idea, i.e., we love telling stories. We become story tellers and story listeners since young. Narrative conventions such as folk tales, novels, films, the story of one's life, or family stories around the dinner table have always enchanted and fascinated children as well as adults. Throughout the history of mankind, storytelling has been one of our most innate and fundamental communication forms.

Geoffrey Berwind, a professional storytelling consultant believes that "stories powerfully connect us to our listeners" (in Duncan, 2014, par. 6). Stories build relationships and are very powerful "for reducing the distance among teachers, self, and peers" (Ling-Chen, 1992, p. 970). Furthermore, sharing one's real-life stories enables our interlocutors to "feel that they get to know us as authentic people" (Berwind in Duncan, 2014, par. 6). Stories bring out genuine human connection which is a fundamental element in any human interaction.

For the past decades, studies have shown the benefits of the use of stories as a powerful pedagogical instrument from pre-school through to university level classrooms. Stories help language learners develop the four language skills of speaking, listening, reading and writing and activate their thinking skill (McRae, 1991). “Stories allow instructors to teach the four language skills to all levels of language proficiency and can enhance ELT courses for learners if selected and exploited appropriately” (Murdoch, 2002, p. 9).

Wajnryb (2003) argues that the content and meaning of stories have impact in engaging learners in their learning process and developing their target language skills. Similarly, Wright (in Floris, 2016, p. 112) states “above all stories offer the language learner an opportunity of experiencing language rather than studying it”. In addition, other positive values which are embedded in stories “can contribute a great deal to the socio-cultural, emotional, cognitive and personal growth of EFL learners” (Pathan, 2013, p. 21).

Our real teaching experiences are stories that may appeal to many students and teachers as what we have experienced might be relevant and familiar to the listeners or readers. Our stories therefore have the potential to be used as an instrument to develop students’ language proficiency and also to help us become more reflective practitioners.

This book is divided into 5 sections and 40 chapters. As you read the stories in this book, consider how you might adopt—or adapt—the experience and the insight that these texts convey for both you and your students. We hope that this book will inspire you to develop and use your own story as a catalyst or a springboard for teaching language skills.

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