Once Upon a Time…

**Reading and Writing Stories in the
World Languages Classroom**

Why do we use storytelling in the language classroom?

- Engage students
- Introduce new vocabulary and structures
- Provide repetition
- Expose students to "authentic" language
- Present culture

What do the students say?

I surveyed my Latin IV class about the story-writing activities they have used, what they enjoyed, and what they found useful.

- Students enjoy acting out parts of stories, and putting them into different words.
- Comprehension increases when the teacher is reading a selection aloud, because students are able to make inferences based on the teacher's intonation; comprehension decreases when the sentences are broken up for choral repetition.
- Stories about animals doing everyday activities were particularly engaging – a bear going to different places in a city, for instance, was more relevant to students than "water skiing."
- It has been helpful to practice structures *as a class*, and then *apply* them in small groups.
- Annotating the story in the target language facilitates comprehension without translation.
- Opportunities to write things down help students feel grounded in the material.

How do we structure story-based activities?

- Before reading, provide an anticipatory set (Technique: Setup) for vocabulary and grammar that students will see.
    - Historia de Sacto Georgio
- Train students to use questions to demonstrate comprehension. As student proficiency increases, questions become more open-ended.
- When writing stories with lower levels, provide a template which students can fill in (TQ: Limit).
    - Layered Book
- Construct stories with multiple scenes that follow a similar format (TQ: Same Conversation); this is the same model used with many fairy tales and children's books, and allows for increased repetition of structures.
    - Three Little Pigs
    - Goldilocks and the Three Bears
    - Rumplestiltskin
    - Little Red Riding Hood

Some Story Activities

Foldable Booklets

There are lots of ways for students to fold small booklets. This is a nice change from what students usually do (even though the writing parameters might be the same), and allow for various degrees of scaffolding. Try folding a layer book with a topic sentence on each page (remember TQ: Same Conversation).

Epistula Albertī - Original

This is a story made up for a Latin III class. Albertus is a polar bear, who is always arriving late to school. He goes around the city, asking certain friends if they have a watch, finally getting a watch from his mother at the end of the day. The story is presented as a letter from Albertus to his friend. The format draws on TPRS practices.

- The story is an example of Roman style letter writing, including customary salutations and pleasantries.
- It follows TQ: Same Conversation, repeating the same problem, with minor changes.
- Students acted out the letter as one narrated, reciting lines when appropriate.
- The letter format gives students practice with 1st and 2nd persons, in different tenses.
- Even though the story seems very simplistic, students are drawn to the relevant everyday vocabulary.

Historia de Sancto Georgio – Iacobus de Voragine

The story of Saint George is part of the *Legenda Aurea*, or *Golden Legend*, a collection of stories about various saints, compiled in the 13th century. The medieval Latin is somewhat simpler than classical Latin, but includes vocabulary and structures that are frequently seen in Caesar's Gallic Wars. It also features a dragon – you can't get much more student friendly than that.

We have been using this story in Latin IV to practice set-ups – small scenes which illustrate a particular piece of language. For instance, we had a lottery to see whose children would be given as tribute to the dragon. Students have been annotating the text and defining words in the target language.

Niceros et Versipellis – Petronius

The story of Niceros and the werewolf is taken from the Satyricon by Petronius. A modified version of the story is found in the *Ecce Romani* textbook.

- Parallel Story – To prepare students for the text, we practiced a parallel version of the story, using characters from *Winnie the Pooh*.
- Storyboard – Students worked in small groups with the text to define new vocabulary, and created a storyboard
- Re-write – Using their storyboard, and not consulting the text, students rewrote the story in their own words.
- Digital Story – Using their storyboard and rewrite, students created a video in Photo Story, including narration.