

The Storytellers' Compass (Teen - Adult)

Description#1:

The Storytellers' Compass uses conversational storytelling to create a mosaic of stories and ideas. Participants "play" hexagonal cards representing stories ranging from personal experience to world tales. As the conversation evolves, the cards form unique patterns of stories. By the end of the 3-hour experience, participants have a deeper understanding of their own living body of text and a method for organizing many short stories into one thematically integrated composition.

Description #2:

Using conversational storytelling, participants evolve unique patterns of stories into one thematically integrated composition. By the end of the 3-hour experience, participants have a deeper understanding of their own body of text and a method for analyzing, organizing and applying this text in writing and performance.

A/V Needs:

Flip Chart

Small tables for 3-4 people (i.e. card tables) enough for all participants.

Max of 20 participants (if space and tables available).

Further background information:

This program takes as its premise the following:

1. Storytelling is a conversational art form.
2. The storyteller's art begins with listening.
3. Storytellers must be concerned not only with the story they share but with the context of their sharing. The goal of the storyteller is to choose the right story at the right time for the right reasons.
4. The storyteller is a living body-of-text. The teller must explore his or her existing body-of-text fully.
5. Stories can be better understood when they are placed beside other stories. All stories change value when put in relationship with other stories.
6. To tell means to discern. Discernment makes the art of telling distinct from other story art forms. The storyteller practices discernment in choosing stories to share and in bringing forth latent values in those stories.

History:

The Storytellers' Compass was developed over a period of six years as I sought to find a method for strengthening and applying what I believe to be critical skills for storytellers: discernment, composition, interpretation, and intention towards the listener. Too often, I believe, storytellers are concerned with acquiring new stories, or presenting unique, "signature" stories. The greater work of the teller, I am convinced, is the ability to offer up the most apt story they know in service of the telling. In longer concert formats, storytellers must be cognizant of the overall effect of each told story as it relates to the whole experience of the telling. To do this, we need awareness of our living body of texts (the stories we know and carry in memory, from the most unique to the most mundane) and a facility for accessing and applying this body of text in performance. The Storytellers' Compass uses a discovery learning approach with small groups in conversation. Participants are encouraged to make observations and reflections on their experience in order to discover the core concepts and values of the work for themselves. As facilitator I seek to offer activities ("telling experiences"), which will evoke insight and learning. I listen for opportunities to underscore an experience with the concepts and theories they address.

The Storytellers' Compass has been presented in various stages of development at the Florida Story Camp, the Mid-Atlantic Storytellers conference, the Northern Appalachian Storytelling Festival, and the John C. Campbell Folk School. During my year with the Disney Institute I applied the Storytellers' Compass to programs on family stories and to explore the Disney concept of Imagineering. In Los Angeles, I worked for 3 years with Adlerian Psychoanalyst, Joshua Gross, to develop a version of this program that explored both the artistic process and the opportunities it presents for personal growth. This version was presented at the Beverly Hills Library in a full-day format. Since then, this program has been presented to Disney Consumer Products artists, the 2001 Tejas Storytelling Festival and various writers and performers groups. The most recent presentation was for the 2002 National Storytelling Conference .