

About “Appreciations and Suggestions”

The following information is my interpretation of the highly successful methods used by Doug Lipman in his national storytelling workshops and in his book, *The Storytelling Coach: How to Listen, Praise, and Bring Out People’s Best*. I have simplified this process in order to make it easier for classroom storytelling work.

-- Glenda Bonin, Storyteller

Establish the ground rules:

1. The person telling the story is always in charge.
2. Storytelling cannot happen without a teller and someone to hear the story. This is a mutual exchange, and for the exchange to work best, active participation is necessary.
3. In a workshop setting, there must be a level of trust and respect. Members of the group need to work as a team to help each other become better storytellers.
4. After a storytelling session, there will be no discussion about the work without the permission of the person who has told the story.
5. The word “should” is never to be used in this setting.
6. The storyteller may decide if he/she wants to have appreciations or suggestions.

The storyteller is free to accept or reject any appreciations or suggestions received, and the teller will not be required to implement anything suggested unless he/she wishes to do so.

An appreciation sounds like this: “I liked it when. . .”

The only reply to an appreciation is “thank you.”

A suggestion sounds like this: “I would like the story better if. . .”

The only reply to a suggestion is “thank you.”

At the conclusion of the appreciations and suggestions segment, ask if the storyteller has received information that will be helpful if the story is told again. The opportunity to re-tell provides the storyteller a chance to think a bit more about the tale and consider how to make it better. If at all possible, students should have a chance to tell a story several times. In most cases, the tale will improve with each subsequent telling.

Note: For older students, a third component - Questions - may be added. This is an opportunity for the teller to know if listeners were confused or uncertain about some part of the story. In this exchange, an audience member asks a question (for instance, “How big was the dog?”). The storyteller then has an opportunity to briefly discuss the question and consider if including this information will enhance the story in future telling. At the conclusion of this exchange, the storyteller thanks the inquiring student.