

# Chapter 12 - Storytelling



## “Once upon a time....”

These words are as old as the hills and always magical. They open up a door to the world of adventure, make-believe, things that were or will be, or things that never were but perhaps should be.

Cubs love stories. They love to pretend they're the hero, performing great deeds or solving impossible problems, whether the story is fiction, fantasy, or true. Stories about the founding of your town or the exploration and settling of your province can be just as exciting as those about a dragon-slaying hero.

Like playacting, stories offer Cubs excitement, fun, and a chance to look at situations from different perspectives to consider how they might deal with them. Although the story world may be very different from their own, it is connected (sometimes just through imagination), and offers lessons they can apply in real life.

Cubs are lucky if their parents have been telling them stories since they were very young. Because some parents are unable to do this, you can fill the gap by including storytelling in your pack program. In a way, television is storytelling, but face-to-face storytelling has a special quality even the best TV program can't match.

What kind of story can you tell? Any kind will do. Stories of Mowgli from *The Jungle Book* are an obvious choice, as are B.-P.'s yarns from *The Wolf Cub Handbook*. Stories of real wolves and other animals can build a real appreciation of nature in Cubs.

Tell stories from history, especially those from your Cubs' varied cultural heritages. Draw on folk tales and mythology from Canada and other parts of the world. You may want to tell stories that teach a lesson, but funny or exciting stories with no apparent lesson are just as good. With a bit of thought, you can create stories straight from your imagination or based on your experiences.

You may think that some types of stories sound pretty dull (history, for example), but you'll soon find that the excitement or dullness of a story depends more on the way it's told than the plot or characters. History can be dull, but a good storyteller can bring it alive. Jungle stories, too, may be very dull unless you make them exciting for your Cubs.

The way you tell a story is important. Because everyone is different, you'll develop your own storytelling style and technique. A little later in this book, we suggest a way to get started and some ideas you'll adapt as you develop your style. It may seem that preparing for storytelling involves more time than you have to spare, but if you start with very short stories, each step takes only a few minutes. As you gain skill, your stories will likely grow longer.

## When to Tell Stories

You don't need to build a story into every meeting, but you can often use short stories or anecdotes to illustrate or introduce an activity or game. Other times, you will tell a story just for the adventure it introduces.

Stories are a good way to change the pace of your program from noisy to quiet between two games, or to wind down just before closing. A dramatic story puts a great finish to a campfire and fits well into other times at camp. A story might be exactly what your Cubs need during a day-time rest period in the shade of a tree, or just before bed.

The best time for a story is when your Cubs are seated in a circle ready to settle down toward the close of the evening. Perhaps you've just finished a quiet song. After a short pause, the storyteller can launch into a tale with some catchy opening words. No further introduction is needed.

The first story to tell when a Cub joins the pack is the story of Mowgli's brothers; this one leads into everything that follows. It helps explain who you and the other leaders are, and why the new member is called a Wolf Cub.

## How to Prepare

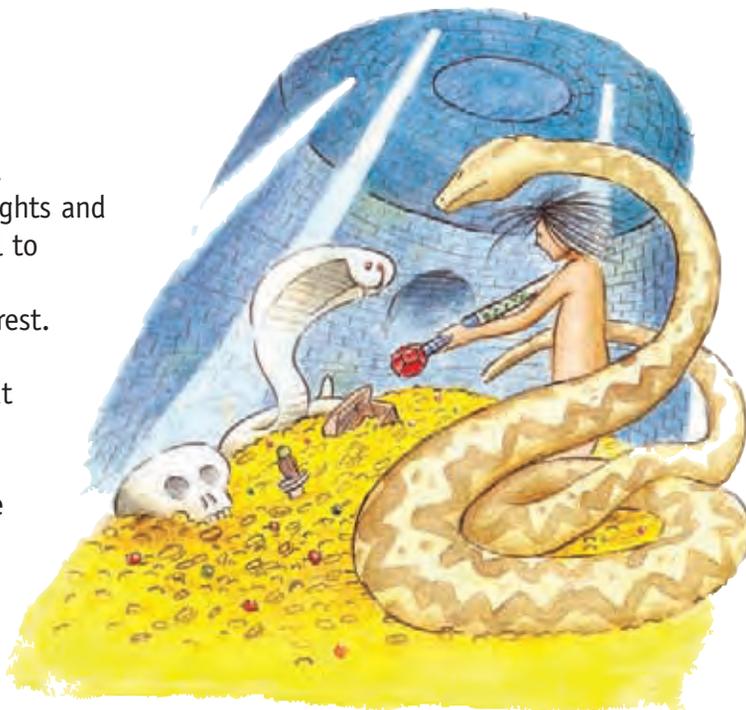
Select a story that appeals to you. What you see in your mind is what you will convey through your words. Here are some practical tips:

- Read the story carefully for plot and to get a feeling for the atmosphere.
- Read the story again, making special note of characters, places and situations that appeal to you.
- Make brief notes on a card for ready reference as you tell the tale.
- Re-read the story and live it as you reinforce it in your mind.
- Determine exactly how to begin. Choose a catchy, exciting opener: "A wolf's haunting howl shattered the still night."
- You might want to tell the story to family or friends to see how they react. Or tell it into a tape recorder and listen to the play-back critically.
- Determine exactly when and how to end your story.



## Telling the Tale

- Ensure the Cubs are comfortable (i.e. don't have them sit for too long).
- Try to set the scene by dimming the lights and lighting a candle, or using a wolf howl to catch their attention.
- Open with a catchy line to create interest.
- Live the story. Growl, whine, and use hand gestures to underline a point, but try not to overdo it. Let the Cubs' imagination take over. At times drop your voice so Cubs have to listen more carefully, while at other times raise your voice as if in alarm or shock. Your voice has an amazing affect on listeners.
- Follow your outline. If you do wander, pause or back-track a little until you find your place again, then proceed. Speak clearly, naturally and a bit slowly, using simple language.
- Speak directly to inattentive Cubs. Try to speak directly to every Cub at some time during the telling.
- Add suspense by pausing at dramatic points.
- When the story is over, stop talking. Let the Cubs talk and react. A few simple questions will usually get them going.
- If you created a special mood, you may want to let the end of the story be your closing ceremony. Finish with a quiet "Good night and good hunting."



## To Read or Tell: That Is the Question

Lord Baden-Powell was an ardent reader. "If you can hand on something of the love of books to Scouts," he said, "you will be giving them friends which will never fail them."

If not home, then school has introduced your Cubs to the wonderful world of books, but not all Cubs see books as sources of entertainment. You can spark their interest and sharpen your storytelling abilities by occasionally telling stories directly from books. Read a few well-chosen sentences, then put the book down and tell some exciting things from the story using dramatic gestures, before returning to the book to read a bit of description. Then, continue to tell the story in your own words.

Make the story and the book come alive by changing your voice pitch and intensity. Show the Cubs you enjoy a good book and a good tale. If having a book beside you gives you more confidence when telling a story, use it.

## Props

Visual aids such as photographs, picture books, flip charts, and transparencies may add interest and realism to your story, but take care that they don't detract from it.

An artificial moon lends atmosphere for the jungle stories (see Chapter 6 for more details). A lit candle in the centre of your storytelling circle casts interesting shadows. But, your most valuable aids are these: the sparkle in your eyes as they light up with excitement and suspense; the chilling sounds your voice makes; and your hand and body gestures.

## Story Sources

1. Your local librarian — an excellent source of information on good books.
2. Personal experiences.
3. *Scouting Life Magazine*.
4. Magazines and daily newspapers.
5. Religious stories from various faiths.
6. Your imagination. Your ability to draw from your imagination will increase as you tell more and more stories. The basis of a good story might include:
  - What you would like to see and do if you were a kid again.
  - Thoughts that go through your mind when you're riding the bus, looking at a magazine, day-dreaming or reading the newspaper.



## Using Storytelling In the Program

Storytelling links, overlaps, and intertwines with program elements and other aspects of the Cub program.

### Games

Link a story to a game. Cubs can perform the actions in some stories during the telling.

### Crafts

After a particularly good story, encourage your Cubs to make models, scenes, costumes or props, and act out the story. Or let them make puppets to do a puppet play version of the story.

### Music

A story is a tale that has yet to be set to music; song blends story and tune. It's great fun to let Cubs use their imaginations to build stories around their favourite songs.

### Playacting

Begin by having Cubs do actions during a fun story. Then have them pantomime the entire story.



## Spiritual fellowship

Tell exciting stories from sacred scriptures in today's language. Seek guidance from religious leaders and look for stories from different faiths. Stories are probably the best way to explain and illustrate Scouting's Promise, Law and Motto.

## Outdoors

True nature stories, nature myths and Native legends are wonderful stories that naturally lead in to learning situations. Outdoors is a wonderful setting for storytelling; stories abound about nature and high adventure. Let Cubs stretch out on the grass and listen to a story during a rest period at camp or on a hike.

## Activity Areas

You can tell stories based on the practical use of Activity Area work to help Cubs learn.

# Program Ideas to Try

**Fun stories:** These are fun for both teller and listener. Nonsense lends itself to actions and sounds. Participation adds a magic touch, and the Cubs' actions give the teller moments to collect thoughts, relax, and simply enjoy the audience.

**Adventure stories:** Space fiction, real life adventure, and zany fantasy tales always appeal to Cubs.

**Learning tales:** All stories can be learning experiences. A moment in history brought alive with adventure, intrigue and suspense is far more enjoyable than learning about it in school.

**Instruction introduction:** B.-P.'s yarns found in *The Wolf Cub's Handbook* are often more descriptive than narrative. He used them to introduce Cub skills instruction; you can do the same to introduce a craft, song or Activity Area. For example, realistic descriptions of how pioneers and explorers looked after themselves might introduce outdoor skills. Themes from *The Jungle Book* can bring alive instruction on the Law, Promise, pack rules, safety in the woods, etc.

**Program background:** A story told in bits and pieces can paint the background for an evening of fun activities. You can even serialize the story to extend it over a number of meetings based on the same theme. True stories from history often work very well.

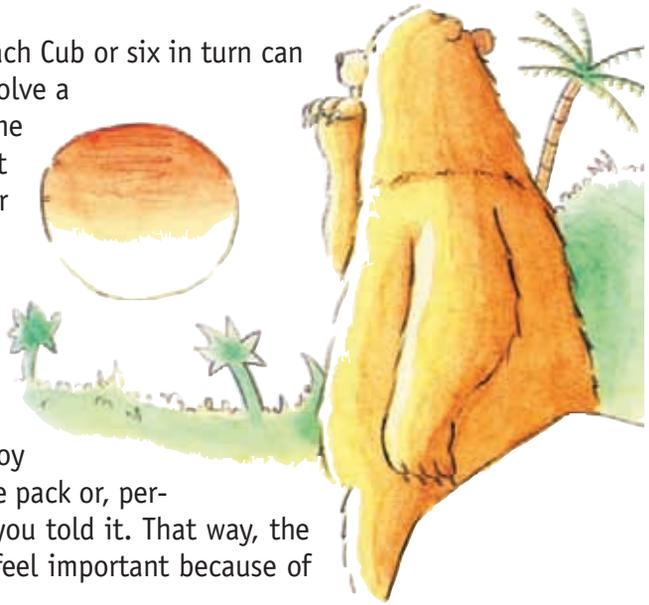
**Moral tales:** Aesop's Fables are probably the best known stories in this category, but there are many others. If you tell the story well, the moral is quite evident to the Cubs. You don't need to belabour the point. Sometimes this is a good way to discipline without pointing the finger at a particular Cub or incident.

**Story relay:** A story relay is a great way to involve Cubs in storytelling. Begin a fantastic tale like this: "One day I was walking down the street when I saw a walrus balancing on his nose on a fire hydrant. He was shuffling a pack of cards with his flippers, AND...." The Cub on your left in the story circle takes up the story, inventing more amazing adventures until saying "and...." Sometimes the Cub says "and" deliberately, but more often by mistake. When this word is spoken, the next Cub carries on the story. When the story gets back to you, add an ending. It's often wise to limit each Cub's contribution to one or two sentences.



**Animated story:** Tell a story full of action that each Cub or six in turn can mime as the story progresses. The story might involve a visit to a farm or a zoo that lets performers mime the animals named. It could be a story that impresses highway safety rules, home safety, or first aid.

**Cub tales:** Let Cubs tell stories, too. Some of them won't want to, but others will be eager to report things that happen to them. A Cub will usually come to you first with some news that has happened. If you think the others would enjoy hearing it, ask if the Cub would like to tell it to the pack or, perhaps, just his or her six. The Cub might prefer if you told it. That way, the Cub wouldn't stand out so much, but would still feel important because of the contribution.



**What's wrong?** Tell a story filled with errors that your Cubs have to interrupt and correct. Safety is a good theme. Try mixing up correct and incorrect facts that the listeners identify with cheers or boos.

**What would you do?** Begin an action story that leaves the hero (or a six of heroes) in a dilemma (e.g. they see a bird with a broken wing lying on the road, smoke pours from a window, or a suspicious character). Cubs provide solutions in words or actions.

**Invention:** Give each six a list of objects or pictures of objects. After a few minutes of consultation, they must introduce them into a story as convincingly as possible.

**Observation story:** Tell a story chock full of detail about a hit-and-run accident, a bank hold-up, or a purse snatching. After the story, question the Cubs as if they were police witnesses.

**Listening to sounds:** Have Cubs listen to a variety of sounds, and ask them to find words to describe them. A Cub's ability to express himself or herself is important in several Activity Areas.

**Newspaper articles:** An item from your daily newspaper can provide a basic plot for an exciting or message story. Often little stories, put through the grist of your imagination, become tremendous tales. Here's an example.

A town in England suffered a great snow storm. Now there's nothing unusual in that fact, until you read that the "snow" was in fact potato flakes. Here's what happened: a machine in a local food factory ran wild and bombarded the town with instant mashed potato flakes. These covered gardens, gummed up windows, and instantly turned black cats white.

Think of what you might do with such a story. You could turn it into a mystery tale of intrigue and sabotage, a fantasy involving disgruntled gremlins, a fun add-on story, or a lead-in to some winter games outdoors.

**Newspaper/magazine photos:** Consider interesting photos featured in local newspapers (e.g. a car or truck sunk into the surface of the road). Have we found the long-lost gold mine reputed to



be in this area? Is it one of the secret passageways to the old house on the hill? Have we discovered a meeting room used by spies during a war? You can make up a story from any interesting angle. A photo filler in a magazine might show, for example, a picture of an animal stuck head-first in a garbage container. Think of the possibilities. Could this be the bear that park rangers have been tracking? Perhaps your Cubs could send a signal to park rangers. How? (Here's a lead-in to an evening involving signals and secret messages.) Or, is the photo showing a picture of a bear that escaped when the circus was in town? Or, maybe a Cub pack member devised the garbage can trap to keep a pesky bear occupied while other members evacuated camp. What stories can you or your Cubs build from these ideas?

## Stories with Games

### Marooned

A black cloud hung over the small island as if stuck like glue to the spot. The rain fell so hard the lake began to rise. Black Six noticed water rising rapidly over the island beach and decided their members had better quickly cross the rickety old foot bridge to safety on the main shore. Five Cubs scrambled across before the rising lake ripped the bridge from its moorings and sent it floating away. One youth was marooned on the rapidly disappearing island and, unless the Cub escaped soon, the child would be washed away by the swirling water. Each member of the six has a three metre piece of rope. The island is 12 m away. There's a small skiff on the island, but no oars or paddles. Black Six must rescue their buddy as quickly as possible.

In your game, each six must rescue a Cub 12 metres away by pulling the marooned victim across the hall on a piece of cardboard. To do it, they must tie together five short pieces of rope with reef knots and throw a life line, working as a team to beat the clock. Give each Cub a chance to be marooned.

You can introduce almost any game with a story like this, drawing from sources as varied as the Cubs in your pack. With a little practice, a lot of imagination, and a sense of fun and adventure, you'll have your members always ready and eager for storytime.

### Two Stories

Here are two different kinds of stories to get you started.

#### A Korean Folk Tale

Long, long ago, the Emperor of China sent an emissary to Korea with a most unreasonable request.

"You are to load all the water of the Han River on a ship and send it to China," the message said.

The King of Korea and his ministers were very puzzled at this request and could not think what to do. The Prime Minister, Hwang Hui, spoke up. "You should reply to the Emperor of China in these terms," he said.

"Your Majesty, the King of Korea will be delighted to transport all the water of the Han River to China. The ship will, however, need a mast made of sand. As you know, there is very little sand in Korea, but I am told that in north China there is a very vast desert. I should be very grateful if you would have a 100 metre mast of sand delivered to me as soon as possible."

It is said that, after receiving this reply, the Emperor of China never again sent an unreasonable request to the King of Korea.



## A Cherokee Legend

Once upon a time, seven Cherokee Indian boys became famous because they were keener to bowl stone hoops over the ground than to work in the cornfields.

These boys could do marvellous things with hoops but their mothers thought hoop bowling was a very idle pastime. In fact, the boys' parents were so sure bowling hoops was useless, that they made up their minds to cure their boys of their laziness.

The mothers collected a number of stones, like those the boys used as hoops, and boiled them instead of corn for their sons' supper. At mealtime, the mothers said, "Since you like bowling stone hoops better than working in the cornfields, you may eat stones or go hungry."

The boys did not like this treatment at all and, instead of promising to spend some of their time working in the cornfields, they objected to being scolded; the youth made up their minds to play hoops all the time. The boys joined hands and began to dance around the village. They danced and danced and danced around the lodges until their mothers were dismayed to see that their feet were whirling through space in a circle.

The mothers watched in desperate fear as the boys rose higher and higher. Up, up they went until they reached the sky. And, if you look at the sky on a clear night, you can still see those seven boys. We know them as the constellation called "the Pleiades," but the Cherokees call them "Antitsutsa" — The Seven Boys. (Tell the story with a star chart.)

