

**Name:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Class Period:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Story Topic:** \_\_\_\_\_

## **The Moth Storytelling Assignment**

### **Description**

This assignment is to come to the front of the class and tell us a story from your life, on a topic chosen by your class. We are basing this assignment on the format of The Moth, a popular live storytelling series. This story may be about a turning point in your life, the first time you did something or something happened to you, or a significant conversation. It should be engaging to your audience—that's us—and should have a beginning, middle, and an end.

### **Moth Examples**

Listen and watch to as many Moth stories as you like—the more the better. Do listen to the following four stories from The Moth archives to get an idea of the assignment and its format. We will use these in our brainstorming discussion.

“Hitchhiking, Mosh Pit, and Iggy Pop”

“The Secret Daughter”

“Last Laugh”

“Green Bean Queen”

“Storytelling Tips,” directly from The Moth’s website

Be forewarned: Moth stories are told, not read. We love how the storyteller connects with the audience when there is no PAGE between them! Please know your story “by heart” but not by rote memorization. No notes, paper or cheat sheets allowed on stage.

Have some stakes. Stakes are essential in live storytelling. What do you stand to gain or lose? Why is what’s happening in the story important to you? If you can’t answer this, then think of a different story. A story without stakes is an essay and is best experienced on the page, not the stage.

Start in the action. Have a great first line that sets up the stakes and grabs the attention of your audience.

No Example: “So I was thinking about climbing this mountain. But then I watched a little TV and made a snack and took a nap and my mom called and vented about her psoriasis then I did a little laundry (a whites load) (I lost another sock, darn it!) and then I thought

about it again and decided I'd climb the mountain the next morning."

Yes Example: "The mountain loomed before me. I had my hunting knife, some trail mix and snow boots. I had to make it to the little cabin and start a fire before sundown or freeze to death for sure."

Steer clear of meandering endings. They kill a story! Your last line should be clear in your head before you start. Yes, bring the audience along with you as you contemplate what transpires in your story, but remember, you are driving the story, and must know the final destination. Keep your hands on the wheel!

Know your story well enough so you can have fun! Watching you panic to think of the next memorized line is harrowing for the audience. Make an outline, memorize your bullet points and play with the details. Enjoy yourself. Imagine you are at a dinner party, not a deposition.

No standup routines please. The Moth LOVES funny people but requires that all funny people tell funny STORIES.

No rants: Take up this anger issue with your therapist, or skip therapy and shape your anger into a story with some sort of resolution. (Stories = therapy!)

No essays: Your eloquent musings are beautiful and look pretty on the page but unless you can make them gripping and set up stakes, they won't work on stage.

Our Own, Class-Specific Details

No shorter than 3 minutes, no longer than 5 minutes.

Rehearse and time your story presentation.

No notes can be used but MEMORIZE YOUR OPENING & CLOSING LINES

Possible Subjects or Topics: First time, Family story, Turning point, Embarrassments

*REMEMBER: Everyone may not want the story they are telling for this assignment repeated out in the hall or in the world. I trust that, as respectful theatre students of mine, you would never gossip about what you hear in my room. However, I have no control over other people's actions, and neither do you. Please don't tell a story that you wouldn't want anyone to know. Also, stories involving abuse of any kind (including abuse at home, abuse of drugs and alcohol, abuse suffered or inflicted on anyone else, etc.), suicide attempts or criminal activity must be reported by me to the administration. I care very much about what is happening in your lives, but this is not the proper forum to disclose this type of information. You may harm a fellow student who is suffering, as well. If you have questions, don't assume it is ok, run them by me first!*

**ACTIVITY SHEET:**

ON THE DAY OF YOUR PERFORMANCE; TURN IN AN OUTLINE OR FISHBONE  
ALONG WITH YOUR RUBRIC WHICH I WILL GRADE WHEN YOU PERFORM

**ON A SEPARATE SHEET OF PAPER, WRITE AN OUTLINE WITH BULLET POINTS  
WHICH INCLUDES:**

- Opening line that grabs your audience
- Setup the story, create the exposition
- Your quest, what you're after, what's at stake
- What keeps you from achieving your goal, what's your conflict, what trials, torments do you face?
- What test(s) must you face?
- Where's the twist, the turn of events?
- What's the climax – the MOMENT OF CHANGE?
- How does your story resolve itself? What's your ending?
- Closing line that finishes your story

**-OR-**

***COMPLETE A FISHBONE FOR STORYTELLING***

# **GRADING**

You will be graded on two aspects of your performance: the story as conceived by you (the “play itself”) and your performance (the “production.”)

## **Effective Storytelling Performance Skills:**

When telling a story, an effective storyteller demonstrates the following traits observable by others:

- Voice Mechanics: Speaks with an appropriate volume for the audience to hear. Employs clear enunciation. Uses non-monotonous, vocal expression to clarify the meaning of the text.
- Face/Body/Gesture: Expressively uses non-verbal communication to clarify the meaning of the text.
- Focus: Concentration is clear; DOESN'T BREAK CHARACTER, eye contact with audience is engaging and storyteller creates a connection to the audience. Maintains a charismatic presence in space (stage presence)
- Characterization: If dialogue is employed, characters are believable to listener. Storyteller's natural voice is differentiated from character voices.
- Use of Space: Storyteller seems comfortable, relaxed and confident in front of listeners. Storyteller maintains clear spatial relationships for characters and narrator.
- Pacing: The story is presented efficiently and keeps listeners' interest throughout.

## **Effective Storytelling Composition:**

Basic Story Structure:

- Story has a clear and engaging opening sentence
- Story's sequence of events is easy for the listener to follow
- Story's ending has a sense of closure
- Clear, memorized last line
- Story is 3-5 minutes long

Words:

- Teller's choice of language is descriptive and articulate.
- If dialogue is employed, the teller's character text is clearly differentiated from the narrator's text so that the listener understands who is talking.
- Content is school appropriate; no cursing or other prohibited content

Innovation:

- Teller employs a unique or creative use of language, sound, or body language.
- Teller creatively presents the sequence of events.
- Teller's perception of the meaning of the story is artfully expressed or suggested through the telling
- Teller follows the topic selected by the class and does not share inappropriate stories

NAME: \_\_\_\_\_

CLASS PERIOD: \_\_\_\_\_

STORY TOPIC: \_\_\_\_\_

**Performance Skills Rubric:**

	<u>ACCOMPLISHED</u> <u>10-8</u>	<u>PROFICIENT</u> <u>7-5</u>	<u>INTERMEDIATE</u> <u>4-2</u>	<u>BEGINNER</u> <u>1-0</u>
VOICE MECHANICS				
FACIAL EXPRESSION				
BODY LANGUAGE & GESTURE				
FOCUS				
CHARACTERIZATION				
USE OF SPACE				
TIMING/PACING				

**Storytelling Compositional Skills Rubric:**

	<u>ACCOMPLISHED</u> <u>10-8</u>	<u>PROFICIENT</u> <u>7-5</u>	<u>INTERMEDIATE</u> <u>4-2</u>	<u>BEGINNER</u> <u>1-0</u>
STORY STRUCTURE				
WORDS				
INNOVATION				

NOTES:

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Name \_\_\_\_\_ Class Period: \_\_\_\_\_

## Fish Bone for Storytelling

Topic: “ \_\_\_\_\_ ”

