

Playing with Stories... Preschool/Reception Classes – Under 5s

Martin is adept at using lots of playful participation in storytelling with young students to engage them with both story and language. These include actions, sound effects, sing-along songs, and repeated rhymes. Eventually, as they gain confidence through mimicry, the children are given opportunities to come up with their own ideas, actions, and sounds.

For instance, *The Very Noisy House* story starts with an old man in a rocking chair, which the children act out with the sound of the creaking chair. Thinking his house is too noisy, the man asks the advice of a wise woman who suggests he brings different animals into the house – each with their own participative sound and action. These are repeated together as the house fills up, with the children suggesting their own animals. In the end, the wise woman tells the old man to send away all the animals, one by one. Now he thinks that his house – with just a creaky chair – is very quiet!

Singing Stories. Primary School – 5 to 8-year-olds

Martin is an accomplished singer and musician, as well as a storyteller, often using a ukulele to accompany his storytelling. He has composed several original and easy-to-remember tunes for children to sing along with, helping the easy flow of the stories and the engagement level of the children. Often, the songs are remembered by students long after the storytelling sessions are finished! Stories for this age group also allow them to recognise and understand repeating patterns, and predict what might happen next in the story.

In his retelling of a traditional French folktale, *The Quackling*, Martin introduces the story with a lively song to be learned together. This is entertainingly repeated at each stage of the journey as the Duck sets out to retrieve her belongings from a greedy Bear King. Along the way, she collects some useful ‘friends’ who help her to overcome the King in ways that the students can work out for themselves. Having completed her task, the words of the song are changed to fit the same tune and celebrate her success!

Tree Tales – Story Plus Workshop. Primary School, 5- to 8-year-olds

Martin retells a magical myth about a woman who is always kind toward nature. One day, whilst walking in the woods, she discovers a secret doorway in the trunk of an old tree. Through the door is a whole other world inside the tree – which Martin encourages the children to imagine for themselves – and she is given a treasure by the tree itself. Her neighbor is a greedy man who tries to take the tree’s treasures without asking, but ends up stuck inside the tree...

This story helps children to open their imaginations and then take their first steps in oral storytelling using story-pictures as a starting point. Martin facilitates the students to draw their own colourful and

creative trees and describe the unique details that make them magical. The students then create different characters – good and bad – who visit that tree, and make their own short stories as they unfold. Martin encourages the children to be spontaneous and playful in their storytelling, either in spoken word or writing, through using open-ended questions.

Do What You Can! Primary School – Middle School – 8- to 12-year-olds

Martin tells a captivating story about a forest fire. In this tale, when the fire breaks out, a small bird takes on the heroic task of bringing water to extinguish the flames. But what about the other animals in the forest? How will they respond to this crisis? The children get to help shape and colour the story with their own imaginations... The story ends with an entertaining song, echoing the bird's heroic words repeated in different voices to represent all the animals:

Do what you can, do what you can. It's amazing what will happen if you do what you can!

Martin tells many stories about the natural world – sometimes familiar settings, sometimes exotic locations. The stories help to celebrate the diversity of life and highlight the interdependence between all living things. Without giving fixed answers or ideas, they allow children to explore the consequences of actions through the story characters.

Magical Myths. Middle School – 8- to 12-year-olds

Some of Martin's stories offer an opportunity to explore meaningful emotional scenarios, including empathy with others. In *The Boy Who Became a Bear*, based on a Native American myth, the story begins with a boy who has lost his parents. Others in the village where he lives try to make up for his loss, but one day he travels away from home and enters a cave where he meets a large group of different animals. The King of the Beasts offers him the chance to live with some of them and a choice of which animal. Students imagine and discuss which animal they might choose for themselves and why... In the end, the boy lives with the bear clan and slowly transforms into one of them. He happily lives in the woods with his new bear family until the time comes to repay their kindness by saving their lives from a hunter...

Story Plus Workshop for Middle School – 10- to 12-year-olds

Telling a story is like remembering an adventure! Martin tells a captivating European folktale about a young man who doesn't know how to tell a story. One day, a traveller arrives at the village and asks for help to fix his broken boat. As the young man gets to work, the boat begins to move by magic, taking him on a strange and twisting adventure, where he magically changes shape several times. By the time he returns home, back in his original form, he has an amazing story to tell everyone in the village!

The students contribute creative ideas that are improvised by Martin into the telling of the tale. Afterwards, they each write their own versions of the story – following its narrative structure but

adding new details. This is one of several stories told by Martin that highlights and celebrates the power of storytelling itself. The ability to tell a good tale could save your life...

Workshop: Imagineering – 10- to 12-year-olds

Martin tells stories that are full of vivid images, feeding children's hungry imaginations. In this workshop, he facilitates children to explore their own unique imaginations in different scenarios: in the woods, at the seaside, in a haunted house, on a remote island. He gently demonstrates how to create pictures in their imaginations and use improvised words to describe what they see, either in spoken or written words, and with the help of story-boards. Martin also uses several 'storytelling games' to strengthen their imaginations in an engaging and entertaining way, for instance, telling the start of a story that the children then devise their own endings for...

Shape-Shifters. Middle School 12- to 14-year-olds

Martin tells a selection of traditional tales from around the world about humans who can change shape into animals, or trees, and the other way round. These magical and mysterious stories create a heightened sense of wonder about ourselves and the world around us, highlighting our close connections with other species. They also help us to explore the nature of being human, and how we change our own skins through life.

- One day, a strange, beautiful woman appears in the cabin of a woodcutter. She offers to stay with him as his loving wife, as long as he promises to keep her fur coat, with its bushy tail, hanging inside the house. All goes well until the smell of the fox fur becomes unbearable...
 - A fisherman and his wife are unable to have children of their own. One day, the husband finds and releases a seal cub caught in his nets. The next day, a young girl arrives at the seashore, lost and lonely. Gladly, they welcome her into their lives, giving her everything she needs. Until one day, she asks to return to the salty sea...
 - A young man falls in love with a young woman who he meets by a willow tree growing beside a beautiful river. She tells him that the only way they can be together is to bring a gift to her father – the River God himself. He has only three days to find something suitable, but what gift should he give...?
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Tales of Transformation. Secondary School – 12- to 16-year-olds

Stories are meaningful opportunities to explore and come to terms with some of the darker and more difficult aspects of life. Martin uses some of the folk and fairytales from the Brothers Grimm. Often, these include a character, someone ordinary and familiar, going into the wild woods – a dark and dangerous place, but where transformation can occur. Through the narrative of the story, we face our own fears and transform inner darkness within the fertile woods.

One of Martin's favourite Grimms' Tales to tell is *Iron John*, where a king's son is kept safely away from a dark and dangerous wood. But, as he approaches adolescence, he is compelled to leave the safety of the palace and go to live in the forest, with a hairy, scary Wild Man for a mentor. Removed from privilege, he learns about self-dependence and, in overcoming several challenges from the Wild Man, takes his first steps towards transforming from boy to man...

A World of Words. Older Secondary School Students and Adults

Martin tells epic sagas and stirring stories from Scandinavian and Anglo-Saxon storytelling traditions, infused with crafted words, woven together with alliteration and poetry. The natural rhythm and rhyme of the stories helps students to savour the resonance of words as well as conjure intricate details of the story settings in their imaginations. For instance, Martin tells the Norse tale *Wayland the Smith*, a story about finding your own destiny, and filled with a strong sense of place and time of year. The main character, Wayland, arrives in the valley of Wolfdale at the beginning of spring...

*When the light was once again returning,
When the land was no longer still but stirring,
When a blanket of white was changing to a carpet of green,
When the sap was rising in the trees,
And all creatures finned, furred and feathered were calling for a mate.*

Arabian Nights. Older Secondary School Students and Adults

Originating from India, North Africa, and the Middle East, the folktales collected within the treasury known as *The Arabian Nights*, or *1001 Nights*, have delighted audiences around the world for centuries. Martin brings to vivid life a selection of these intriguing tales of extraordinary encounters, exotic landscapes, and magical adventures – often with unexpected twists and cleverly layered as stories within stories, like a Russian Doll. Despite seeming magical and faraway at first, these Arabian Nights stories convey much meaning and ‘tell the truth’ in a way that audiences can easily understand...

- A down-on-his-luck fisherman catches a mysterious brass bottle in his nets. Opening the lid, a giant genie takes shape in front of him, threatening to kill him unless he can find a story good enough to save his life...
- The prize flowers in the Sultan's royal gardens are disappearing at night. The two elder princes have failed in their quest to catch the thief. But the youngest son manages to stay awake long enough to see a fearsome monster, then follow it secretly into a shadowy tunnel. His bravery, honesty, and quick-thinking are the only weapons he has at his disposal...
- A terrible war has lasted for years, the land on both sides has been ravaged and ruined. In the end, each army sends a chosen champion to fight each other in single combat: winner takes all. All day and all night they fight, wounding each other without either one of them winning. In the

soft light of early morning, they lie on the ground exhausted and begin to tell each other the stories of their lives... As dawn breaks, there is glimmering hope of reconciliation.

Teaching Teachers – The Art of Storytelling

Martin regularly runs storytelling training sessions for schools, universities, museums, and environmental organisations. He's able to make storytelling accessible through playful participation and having a go without fear of failure: "If you want somebody to gain something from storytelling, you first have to let them enjoy it for themselves." Martin uses a range of tried and tested techniques based on mental imagery and spontaneous language, facilitated in a way that allows everyone to get started. Through finding their particular voice, each teacher will come away with their own tale to tell...

"Martin's workshop was a thorough and in-depth look into the world of storytelling, and something myself and my fellow students valued greatly as part of our learning experience. I have found myself quoting Martin in essays and reflective practice since..." – Trainee Teacher