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Stories Teachers Tell. [Original writing]

Whalin, Kathleen Diane, Ph.D.

The Ohio State University, 1991
STORIES TEACHERS TELL

DISSERTATION

Presented in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for the Degree Doctor of Philosophy in the Graduate School of The Ohio State University

By

Kathleen Diane Whalin, B.A., M.S.

* * * *

The Ohio State University
1991

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College of Education
To Phyllis

Lands Where No One Can Live
land without roots
land without the water of tears
land with no stones of loneliness

- Eve Merriam, "A Throw of Threes"
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CHAPTER I

Introduction

In Which We AreIntroduced to Some Teachers and the Study Begins

"When a writer calls his work a Romance, it need hardly be observed that he wishes to claim a certain latitude, both as to its fashion and material, which he would not have felt himself entitled to assume, had he professed to be writing a novel. The latter form of composition is presumed to aim at a very minute fidelity, not merely to the possible, but to the probable and ordinary course of man's experience. The former - while as a work of art, it must rigidly subject itself to laws, and while it sins unpardonably so far as it may swerve aside from the truth of the human heart - has fairly a right to present that truth under circumstances, to a great extent, of the writer's own choosing and creation. The point of view in which this tale comes under the Romantic definition lies in the attempt to connect a bygone time with the very present that is flitting away from us."

- Nathaniel Hawthorne, preface to The House of Seven Gables quoted in Possession by A.S. Byatt

This dissertation examines the nature of the stories about their lives told by three teachers. Its focus is on personal experience narratives; stories told about oneself. This study attempts to begin to fill the current gap in personal experience narrative research; neither folklorists nor education researchers have studied the
stories teachers tell their students. Studying such stories seems a valuable way to begin to explore classrooms and teachers as storytelling communities - what stories are told, what is their purpose, what value do they have.

The personal experience narratives were collected over the period of an academic year in each of the teacher's classrooms. My goal was try to try to capture a sense of the stories, the tellers, and their settings. I entered the study with no clear idea of what I would find and exited the field with more questions than answers. As I listened and watched and transcribed and thought, I remained acutely aware of the necessary distance between what I had seen and what I could translate. What follows is an initial exploration of the form of stories I find most powerful, those stories about their own lives that people voluntarily share.

Importance of the Study

This study offers a beginning exploration of a source and type of narrative that has not been studied by educational researchers. Researchers such as Britton, Cazden, Heath, Rosen, and Paley have looked at the importance of narrative in classroom settings, but from the point of view of students' narratives. This study focused instead on the stories told by teachers. In studying ERIC and in reading educational research on narrative I found nothing that dealt with the life stories teachers told
their students. I had heard teachers tell stories about
themselves in classroom settings and had met teachers who
said they often told stories, so I knew storytelling was
part of many classroom cultures. I decided to focus on
three teachers who willingly welcomed me into their
classroom. I wanted to see what stories about their lives
(personal experience narratives) these teachers told.

In considering the existing research done on personal
experience narrative, I turned to folklore research. My
study is an attempt to combine the world of folklore with
the world of education. The two approaches to everyday
life have much to offer each other, as joint research into
classroom culture by people such as Courtney Cazden and
Dell Hymes (1976) has shown. For both disciplines, the
struggle is to capture an elusive whole, to give the
nonparticipant a sense of the complete storytelling event.

This study not only offers an exploration of how
folklore research can be applied to observations of
classroom phenomena but moves into the problem of how to
present a complex event. It uses the work of Labov (1972)
on the structure of adolescent African-Americans' personal
experience narratives as a means of assessing the
complexity of each teller's stories. It draws on the work
of the performance school of folklore, for whom a
storytelling event is inseparable from its context if it is
to be understood, as well as the growing body of
educational research that uses ethnographic techniques, in presenting the stories in relationship to ongoing classroom events. Finally, the study offers a means of interpreting the stories that incorporates both my observations of the tellers and my acceptance of the viewpoint of the ethnographer John Van Maanen (1988). To Van Maanen, the offering of multiple perspectives clarifies a given event. Most researchers using ethnographic techniques have fictionalized the setting and given the informers new names. I chose to write short pieces of fiction, based on the stories I heard. I see such a decision as a logical extension of the fictionalizing that is already part of ethnographic research reporting. Furthermore, writing fiction gave me a chance to include my observations on the personalities of the people with whom I spent a school year. I was able to incorporate their life events, stories they had chosen to share, with my perceptions of them - this is how I think this person would have felt during this story. My short stories are my responses to their stories.

For I think the studying of teacher narratives in classroom setting has much to offer the educational research community. To include the stories that are part of the classroom, stories told by the teachers, stories told by the students, is to begin to understand what is valued and accepted in that community. The response of the listeners to the stories determines the norms for
storytelling. Who is allowed to tell stories? Are all stories allowed to be told? What form do the stories take? What subjects do they include? What does the voluntary sharing of life events say about how a teacher sees her teaching, her students, and herself? I think the answer to these questions will shed much light on what goes on at a fundamental level in individual classrooms.

This study offers an introduction to the area of researching teachers' personal experience narratives.

The Tellers

Each of the three women whose classrooms I observed and whose stories I recorded necessarily represents an individual case. Not only is each an artist and, as such, worthy of individual attention (Bauman, 1986), but so also does each individual storytelling event constitute an occurrence to be translated, however imperfectly (Bauman, 1986, Hymes, 1975). Folklore research, the focus of personal narrative research which remains outside educational research considerations, has long debated the importance of the story's words (text) over the surrounding events (context) or the storyteller's individual translation (texture) (Dundes, 1964). Lacking complete access to the storytelling event, i.e. access to recording the reactions of children in the classroom, my discussion of the stories is necessarily limited. I accepted the perspective of Arewa and Dundes (1964) that
the informant’s/teller’s perspective is all-important in understanding a story and concentrated on the tellers. I recorded what they said and later interviewed them for their views on themselves as storytellers. I changed their names and their settings but kept the stories as complete as I was able to transcribe them.

The stories will be analyzed both as folklore speech events and as life narratives of fictionalized characters. As Hawthorne, novelist, and Van Maanen, ethnographer, would agree:

"With each retelling, we discover more of what we know. Because of their form and their dependence on the audience, meaning will be worked on again and again. By telling our stories and telling them over in different ways, we are admitting to those we trust our goals are not necessarily fixed, that we are never free from doubt and ambiguity, that our strategic choices in field work are often accidental (guided more by inchoate lore than by a technical logic), that our data to be meaningful require development over time, and that we are far more dependent on the people we study than we can know or say. The rub, of course, is that by such an admission we must recognize that we are flying by the seat of our pants much of the time. There is risk here, but there is also truth." (Van Maanen, 1988, p. 120)

Who then are the teachers whose classrooms I haunted for a year? What are the schools and classrooms like?

Jane

Jane teaches third grade in an elementary school in a small midwestern university town. The school is brick, built during the 1940s. Her classroom is on the first floor and seems to burst out of its confining walls. Wooden-doored lockers line one wall, a blackboard covers
another, and the other two walls are a collage of posters, drawings, and photographs of classroom events. The location of the desks rotates weekly, desks are clumped together in groups of five or six. The rare remaining floor space is often crowded with classroom projects: constructions such as castles or Washington D.C. monuments or display materials to support oral reports.

Jane herself is short, enthusiastic, and very alive. She greets children as they enter the classroom, freely shares her weekend events, and does not hesitate to yell if she feels the class is out of control (not listening to her, not working). Her general tone is fairly theatrical. Her voice shows much expression and dynamic range. Her eyes, which reflect what her voice is saying, are dramatically made up. Her waist-length hair and often flamboyant clothing reinforce the impression that this is SOMEONE. She talks openly about life with her two children and her husband and about her extended Italian-American family.

Mary

Mary teaches language arts in a suburban middle school. The school was built in the last five years and is sprawling and modern. Like Jane she is short and comes from a large Italian-American family. Mary's classroom is used by succeeding classes of seventh graders and is fairly austere. Desks are arranged in facing rows with a middle
aisle. Mary herself usually stands at a podium when she talks to her class. Mary also adopts fairly dramatic dress and make-up, more informal than Jane's, but still far from plain oxford cloth shirts and pinstriped skirts. Her speech is careful and measured. She also talks about family events but in general seems more reserved than Jane.

Candace teaches fourth grade in an urban magnet school. The school was built in the last twenty years, is brick, and laid out on one floor. Her classroom, like Jane's seems to be crowding its boundaries. Its blackboard is the focus of the day's structure - the schedule, opening journal assignments, as well as the date and its significance (Martin Luther King, Jr.'s birthday, for example) are posted. Candace uses colored chalk and drawings as well as written text on the blackboard. The desks, whose configuration varies, occupy the center of the classroom. Its edges are crowded with animal cages (a dove, an iguana, and a guinea pig live in the classroom), two computers, and a bookcase.

Candace is a young black woman who is also tied to a large extended family. Her voice's pitch and quality vary widely, when she is angriest it becomes most quiet. She tells formal stories about her childhood but rarely tells of her current life.
The Questions

Educational research (Cazden, Hymes, Heath) has focused on the nature of narratives told by children in classrooms. My examination of the last fifteen years of ERIC reports showed no study on the stories teachers told about themselves. That being the case, I decided to combine the world of folklore and the world of the classroom and investigate the personal experience narratives told by Jane, Candace, and Mary. I defined personal experience narratives as did Sandra Stahl (1989): "a prose narrative relating a personal experience; it is usually told in the first person, and its content is non-traditional." I sat in the three teachers' classrooms from September 1990 to June 1991 recording such stories and asking myself the following questions:

What stories do teachers tell their classes?
What is the content of the stories?
Do they seem to have a purpose?
How do teachers see their stories?
When are the stories told?
Why are they told?
What do they seem to be about?
Does their content change over time?
Do teachers seem to tell the same sorts of stories or are stories a product of individual artistic expression?
How do teachers see themselves as storytellers?
I realizing the following dissertation will barely touch one aspect of a very complex phenomenon. By focusing on teachers, I deliberately ignored a whole range of related questions (What is the class culture into which the stories are told? What narratives, if any, do the students offer in response?) and in so doing, undoubtedly impoverished the richness of any communal storytelling event. I have made a conscious decision to try to illumine a part rather than to simplify and obscure the whole.

The study will attempt to analyze teachers' personal experience narratives in their classrooms, settings and tellers that seem to have been largely ignored. I acknowledge my debt to folklore scholars, who have done much of the existing work on personal experience narratives and will offer a beginning discussion of how these teachers' personal narratives seem to fit into the existing scheme of things. Are they told to foster intimacy? (Stahl, 1989) To organize experience? (Britton, 1970, Arendt, 1958) To amuse? Illuminate? Educate? Expand? (Bauman, 1986) Ultimately, are these three teachers storytellers, as defined by Ruth Sawyer and Marie Shedlock early in this century: master communicators of the human condition.

This dissertation is written as an early exploration of the nature of teachers' narratives.
CHAPTER II
Review of Relevant Literature

In Which Useful Research Is Described and Discussed

"Tell me where is fancy bred. Or in the heart or in the head?"
- William Shakespeare, The Merchant of Venice, Act III, scene ii

Any discussion of the work done on personal narratives necessarily involves an excursion into the realms inhabited by philosophers, folklorists, linguists, novelists, and other observers of the human condition. The question is not so much who to include but who to deliberately ignore. I am grateful to Elizabeth Fine’s outline of the major trends in modern thinking on the folklore text (1984) for providing a cohesive framework from which my thinking could build and depart. I also acknowledge my debt to Courtney Cazden (1988) and Shirley Brice Heath (1983) whose careful studies of language in classrooms lead me to look, and fail to find, any comparable study on teacher’s personal experience narratives.

To name any beast is to begin to know it (as Joseph Campbell and Ursula Le Guin explore in their writings). So, then, any study of a particular form of narrative must

11
build on an understanding of the nature of narrative itself. A narrative is a recreation of a past event. As Labov (1972) so clearly explores, a narrative to be a narrative must order time. Events happen in sequence and changing the sequence fundamentally changes the narrative. Changing events renders the original narrative false. Labov's study of African-American narratives in Harlem (1972) carefully analyzes both the nature of the temporal sequencing and the structure of the narrative itself - orientation is followed by complicating action which is followed by resolution and a coda. Evaluation of the narrative is on-going and the narrator may comment on the events even as the narrative progresses. Folklorists may approach oral narratives in a variety of ways. Researchers such as Van Dijk (1982) break a narrative into a series of episodes and analyze those, Kirshenblatt-Gimblett (1975) and Bauman (1986) consider the context of a narrative to be a key element in understanding it. For the purpose of this study of teachers' stories, Labov's work on the structure of narrative will serve as a framework for the transcription and one level of analysis. I wanted an approach that would allow me to assess the complexity of each teller's stories. I had originally planned to use Labov's framework to analyze each of the stories I included in the study. However, apart from making tedious reading, I found his analysis of story structure more useful in
comparing tellers' storytelling styles. Labov breaks each story into components: orientation (sets the scene for the story, includes elements such as the characters, time, place), complicating action (plot elements, events in the story), evaluation (narrator's comments on plot events, meta-narration), resolution (climax, how story ends), and coda (the implied or stated moral). I used his framework to see how elaborate a given teller's stories were, but did not subject individual stories to such analysis.

Once narratives are defined, their locus in the universe becomes tricky. What constitutes an adequate description of any given narrative? Why was it told? And whose narrative is it anyway?

The folklorists have been embroiled in the debate of the nature of adequate description since the birth of their discipline. As Fine (1984) so systematically outlines, Malinowski begot Bateson who begot Goffman and Bauman. All four searched for a frame that would adequately encompass a given narrative event. Their aim was to provide a thick enough description (Geertz, 1976) so that the reader might begin to understand the events that had taken place. The impossibility of the task was always acknowledged, but the goal was and is ever-present. Geertz writes (1976, p.224):

"The ethnographer does not, and in my opinion, largely cannot, perceive what his informants perceive. What he perceives, and that uncertainly enough, is what they perceive 'with' - or 'by means of,' or 'through'... or whatever the word should be. In the country of the blind, who are not as unobservant as they look, the one-eyed is
not king, he is spectator."

The struggles of that spectator lead to the rise of the currently dominant school of folklore scholarship, the performance school. Its most well-known proponent is Richard Bauman (1977, 1986). To the members of this school (which also includes Dell Hymes, Susan Stewart, Barbara Kirshenblatt-Gimblett, Dan Ben-Amos, Erving Goffman, Kenneth Goldstein, Sandra Stahl, Dan Barnes, Alan Dundes Patrick Mullen, Amy Shuman), the context in which a narrative is told and the style in which the teller tells it are as important as the words of the text itself in understanding a narrative event. Bauman writes (1986, p. 3):

"Oral performance, like all human activity, is situated, its form, meaning, and functions rooted in culturally defined scenes or events - bounded segments of the flow of behavior and experience that constitute meaningful contexts for action, interpretation, and evaluation."

This study accepts the viewpoint of the performance school folklorists and so steps directly into two problems. If a narrative is incomplete if presented only as words, how are the other aspects of the event to be communicated? And if an individual teller is the primary shaper of an individual narrative event, then how can that narrator's ownership of that story be both acknowledged and respected? The struggle to communicate the incommunicable meets the struggle to compromise the inherently political.
Linguists such as Dell Hymes, Dennis Tedlock and Deborah Tannen have developed elaborate schemes to communicate the characteristics of spoken speech. They are concerned with depicting complex, linguistic elements in an oral narrative. In transcribing the teachers' stories, I have relied rather on the work of Barre Toelken (1969) whose transcriptions of Navaho Coyote narratives seem to strike a nice balance between readability and appreciation of the nature of spoken art. As I have done in presenting stories, Toelken rarely breaks up the words in a story. He includes features such as audience response or characteristics of the teller's voice (gruff, laughing, etc.) in brackets or parentheses.

The political problem of story ownership may even be thornier. Both Dell Hymes (1975) and Amy Shuman (1986) have carefully investigated the nature of teller rights. For Hymes, the interpretability, the reportability, and the repeatability of a story is what defines a performance. Shuman continues the discussion in her study of adolescent fight stories, in which the right of an individual to tell a given story was found to be all-important. I decided to take the position that the teller is the ultimate owner of the story, following the tradition of Hymes and Shuman and echoing the viewpoint of Ojo Arewa and Alan Dundes. Dundes and Arewa stressed the importance of trying to record information from an informant's point of view and stated
(1964, pp. 71-72) that "folklore is used primarily as a means of communication, and it is as communication that it needs to be studied." My acceptance of the tellers' primary ownership can be seen in this dissertation in the changing of the teachers' names, the right given each teller to exclude any story from the dissertation, and my chapter devoted to the teachers' views of themselves and their stories. I have included my response to their stories in the fictional section on each teacher.

The primacy of folklore as an effective, universal means of communication, stated by Dundes and Arewa and echoed in the work by Dell Hymes on folklore as communicative events (1975) and Barbara Kirshenblatt-Gimblett on parables (1975), leads directly to the type of narratives studied in this dissertation: personal experience narratives. Sandra K.D. Stahl (1983, 1989) has written elegantly and eloquently on the nature of personal experience narratives and the importance of studying them. Her description of the form of personal experience narratives (1983, p. 268) served as the inspiration for my dissertation form:

"Whatever the experience, the story itself is a narrative creation of the teller, and it uses not only the experience itself as a base but also many traditional aspects of storytelling - predictable form, evidence of cultural and personal stylization, conventional functions. This combination of nontraditional content - the teller's unique experience - and the traditional aspects of form, style, and function is what makes the personal experience story a challenging research topic in contemporary American folklore."
Reading that quote convinced me that an analysis of personal experience narratives lies both in the realm of folklore scholarship and in the realm of constructed fiction. Thus, I will analyze the stories by building on the work on Hymes and Shuman on tellers' rights, the work of Erving Goffman (1981, 1974) on the use of frame to shape narrated experience, the work on Labov on the structure of oral narrative. In Hymes and Shuman's work, who owns a story, who has the right to tell it, becomes a central question. Shuman's study of adolescent fight stories found that questions of story ownership could lead to violence. For Goffman, when a story is told, the story's surrounding frame of tone and event, is central to its understanding. Changing contexts can make a story take on different tones and meanings. I will also acknowledge the work of Stahl, who expresses their power and beauty, and presents them as products of fictionalized lives.

A narrative of a past life event is, by necessity, a construction, and any study that did not acknowledge the inherent fiction in any account of oneself would, I think, be missing an essential component of why people tell stories about themselves. James Britton (1970, p. 222), writing on the power of language, quotes Hannah Arendt:

"For us, appearance - something that is being seen and heard by others as well as by ourselves - constitutes reality. Compared with the reality which comes of being seen and heard, even the greatest forces of intimate life - the passions of the heart, the thoughts of the mind, the delights of the senses - lead an uncertain, shadowy kind of
existence unless and until they are transformed, deprivitized and deindividualized, as it were, into a shape to fit them for public appearance. The most current of such transformations occurs in storytelling and generally in artistic transposition of individual experiences...

Goffman (1981, p. 152) echoes the transformational nature of storytelling:

"Storytelling, of course, requires the teller to embed in his own utterances the utterances and actions of the story's characters. And a full-scale story requires that the speaker remove himself for the telling's duration from the alignment he would maintain in ordinary give and take..."

Similarly, my writing a fictional chapter will emphasize both the themes I see in the stories and the innate separation of the stories from the teller's everyday world. It is my hope that the form of my dissertation will both contribute to the existing research on personal experience narratives and emphasize the aesthetic nature of all constructed narrative (Britton, 1970).

This dissertation, then, is both a research report and a sort of transformation. It hopes to meet part of the goal stated by Stahl (1989, p. 120):

"Personal experience is transformed to cultural experience through the telling of personal narratives, and folklorists document this transformation. They help the world witness an individual's most fundamental yet difficult task - the momentary 'breakthrough' from personal reality into cultural reality. Stories of personal experiences represent one of the most impressive displays of cultural breakthrough. Through them, individuals assert their connections to other people, the social base of even these original accounts of seemingly idiosyncratic behavior."
Chapter III

Methodology

In which the mechanics of the study are presented and discussed

"Give your evidence," said the King, and don't be nervous, or I'll have you executed on the spot."
- Lewis Carroll, *Alice's Adventures In Wonderland*

This dissertation will examine the personal experience narratives, stories about their own lives, told by three teachers to their classes over the period of a school year, September through June. Most research on oral narratives has been done by folklorists rather than educational researchers, but my approach will be more of a hybrid ("neither fish nor fowl", as the bard would say). I plan to use taxonomies developed by folklorists, but I also plan to fictionalize the stories and tellers.

Drawing on the performance school of folklore, I will attempt to place the stories in context, when and where they took place and will attempt to indicate some of the texture (pitch, stress, gestures) behind the text. Using models developed by Labov and Goffman, I will examine the shape of the story. Accepting the poetry of the stories,
the indefinable aspect of art, I will write the stories and
tellers in novelistic form. I will also include a chapter
devoted to the tellers’ view of themselves, acknowledging
the narratives’ primary owners. The courage to try to
write a dissertation in multiple forms comes from reading
Van Maanen’s *Tales of the Field* (1988), a primer for
writing ethnography, in this case fieldwork using some
ethnographic techniques, in various forms. He writes in
the *Tales* (1988, xi):

"While I had long been aware of the practical troubles
I faced when trying to convince readers of the authenticity
and worth of my writing, I had little inclination to do
much more than shrug my shoulders and get on with solving
representational problems piecemeal as I faced them passing
across my writing desk. I now regard these problems as
downright central to the ethnographic enterprise, certainly
as central and consequential as any problems faced in the
field. In a sense, to consider these writing issues
seriously and systematically pushes conventional notions of
method - including the overrated criteria of apparency and
verisimilitude - both forward and backward in time."

I too have placed the problem of finding the written
form that matches the research question at the center of my
dissertation. My methodology was designed to gather and
report data in ways that were, if not completely sensitive,
at least aware of the issues and problems involved in
gathering stories in natural settings.

**Selection of Participants**

There is no way, it seems to me, to make a study of
personal experience narratives anything other than a
celebration of individual tellers. I made no attempt to
randomly obtain teachers to record. Instead, I went to the traditional source for hearing good storytellers, the community surrounding them. Patrick Mullen and Richard Bauman, for instance, discovered master storyteller Ed Bell because "Ed Bell's renown as a storyteller extended up and down the coast from Indianola for miles in either direction." (Bauman, 1986) I did try to get teachers of varying grade levels, but the primary qualifications were a willingness to have me come into their classrooms and a recommendation that they were "good tellers" by people who had worked with them - instructors, librarians, fellow teachers. Accordingly, I decided to spend the year with three teachers, one in middle school, one in a fourth grade and one in a third grade classroom. The middle school was in an affluent suburban environment, the fourth grade was in an urban setting, and the third grade was in a small college town. All three teachers have strong family ties; two come from large Italian families, one is from a close-knit black family.

All participants were assured they could withdraw from the study at any time. They were also assured their identity would be protected. They were all told they had the right to veto the use of any story and they would be shown anything I wrote. Their consent form is included in the appendix.
Site Access

I was required to submit copies of my research proposal to the relevant supervisors, but in general had little problem accessing the sites. The attitude of the school principals was that if the teachers were willing to have me in their classrooms, they had no problem with my being in the schools on a long-term basis.

Gathering the Data

I collected the stories by sitting in the three classrooms during the school year. I tried to visit the classrooms weekly, although class field trips, teacher illnesses, weather, etc. made that lofty goal impossible. Each visit lasted approximately two hours. I offered to tell stories in the classrooms, aware that it might create an artificially rich storytelling setting, but also feeling I should offer the teachers something in return for their generosity. I also felt my formal storytelling was different from personal experience narratives and that my being in the classroom over such a long period of time would cancel out any "novelty factor." I told stories weekly in the third grade classroom, once each in the other two classrooms.

I tried to make data gathering as unobtrusive as possible. I sat in each classroom, generally on the side, took fieldnotes and taped the personal narratives as they occurred. I transcribed the recorded narratives, using
Toelken's transcriptions of Coyote stories as a model, and attached them to my fieldnotes of what occurred in the classroom that day. I kept a running record of what occurred when, and also drew diagrams of the classroom and noted what was on the wall and written on the blackboard. I did not videotape the storytelling, although the visual component of videotaping might have richly enhanced the stories' meanings (as seen in Elizabeth Fine's transcriptions of a story told in one of her folklore classes). However, in negotiating entry, all the teachers and administrators I talked to were extremely relieved to not have video equipment in the classrooms. The teachers were willing to share their stories, but wanted their identities to remain anonymous. I concluded my study with an interview with each of the teachers, during which I asked them how they saw themselves (as teachers and as storytellers) and how they saw their stories. An outline of the interview questions is included in Chapter V. Two of the interviews were informal, held over dinner, one was held during a free period at the teacher's school.

The strength of the study, I feel, is its longitudinal aspect. By visiting the classrooms over months (and in and out of weeks and almost over a year) I became a familiar figure and was able to participate in the organic changes of the classroom over time. While not a true participant observer, I was seen by the students as a
selection of the stories

I chose to analyze only a sample of the stories told by each teacher. I wanted to include stories that were told at different points through the school year and also stories that I felt reflected the kind of stories each teacher told. I collected a total of fifteen of Mary's stories, twenty-one of Jane's, and eleven of Candace's. Candace told longer, more elaborate stories than either Mary or Jane. Jane and Candace told stories throughout the year. The majority of Mary's stories were told during the fall and early winter. Mary's stories were frequently stories about events that had happened to members of her family; Jane's were often short vignettes of current family events; Candace's were always formal presentations of her past experiences.

Presentation of Results

The complex nature of people and the stories they tell necessitates for me an equally complex method of presenting my research findings. No simple reverse axiom ("beauty is truth, truth beauty") awaits the fledgling folklore researcher. I plan to first analyze the stories, using models suggested by Goffman (1974) and Labov (1972). What happens in the stories? What events? How are they framed (presented to the audience)? Then I will place the stories
in a wider context, accepting the point of view of the performance school of folklore (exemplified by Bauman, 1986). Transcriptions of stories need to reflect the whole storytelling event, where the stories were told, when, how, and by whom. A wider lens for a story somehow focuses attention mostly directly on the teller herself. I will then try to convey a sense of the tellers in my words, fictionalizing their lives and their resulting stories. For this voyage into the land of Tracy Kidder and A.S. Byatt, I will rely on the viewpoint of Van Maanen, that only through multiple perspectives can truth be approached. My construction of the tellers, however, is necessarily partial and necessarily flawed. I will then present a separate chapter based on concluding interviews with each of the teachers, acknowledging, as did Hymes and Shuman, that the right to tell any story rests ultimately with that story's teller. I will conclude the study with suggestions for further investigation, recognizing that any study raises more questions than it answers.
Chapter IV
Results

In Which the Stories Are Presented in Three Forms

"Get your facts first, and then you can distort 'em as much as you please."
- Mark Twain to Rudyard Kipling, quoted in Kipling's From Sea to Sea, 1899

This chapter will present stories told by each of the teachers, Mary, Jane and Candace. Building on the perspective of Van Maanen (1988), each teacher's stories will be presented in three different forms. First the selected stories will be analyzed in terms of their narrative structure. Using Labov's work on the narratives of African-American adolescents (1972), the stories will be fitted into a sequence diagram: orientation, complicating action, evaluation (which is ongoing), resolution, and coda:

orientation - time, place, setting
complicating action - plot events
evaluation - comments on plot events
resolution - plot climax
coda - implied or stated moral
- - - - indicates ongoing evaluation
The purpose of using such a form for the stories will be to fit them into existing work on personal experience narratives and to see how the coda shapes the content of the narrative. For two of the storytellers, Mary and Candace, the coda, the underlying moral that defines the story, is the primary reason the story is told. Jane's stories have a much looser form and a less clear moral lesson.

The stories will then be placed into the context in which they were told. As Bauman (1986) and other folklorists have argued, a story can not be understood as an isolated event. It is a performance - where, how, when, and by whom it is told are as important to its meaning as the words it contains. The stories then become what Van Maanen would term "realist tales." I present my fieldwork, my research in the three classrooms, to give the stories what Goffman (1974), based on the work of Gregory Bateson, would call a "frame." The context of a story helps define it.

Finally, the stories will be presented as fiction, a version of Van Maanen's "literary" tales. The aim will be to use the stories, plus insights I gained by watching and talking to the teachers over a school year, as a vehicle for further exploration of the teachers as characters and tellers. Van Maanen writes:

"Regardless of whether or not the author is present in the text, literary tales leave no doubt that a single,
creative, and willful voice is shaping the work. There is something of a free-spirited authenticity to literary tales that other tales of the field lack. Because the author is not tethered by an institutional pole, claims of pure and open inquiry are imbedded in the work. Literary tales are not written for tenure, grants, or a Ph.D. Writers of literary tales present their topical concerns on the basis of personal appeal and curiosity. These are unfettered by disciplinary logics or academic career aspirations. Involvement, receptivity, and what seems to be an openness to experience are the means of getting a story rather than the means to shape-up a theory or satisfy the dictates of received traditions. The attraction of such a stance coupled with the excitement that can be whipped up as the story is presented in writing is considerable" (1988, p. 134):

It is this viewpoint, backed by writers like Tracy Kidder, Ursula Le Guin, James Britton, and A.S. Byatt, that informs this method of presenting the stories.

Stories by each teacher will be presented in these three ways; the chapter will be organized by teacher and each teacher’s stories will be presented three ways in each teacher’s section. The presentation of the stories in different forms is done in the belief that seeing an event through multiple perspectives leads to a clearer perception of the whole. There is no truth to be seen, but there are multiple truths to be considered.

Mary

Narrative Structure

The stories Mary tells her students are formal with a strict time sequence. Events move forward with no switchbacks. Her point of view as narrator is ascendent. Just as she does not move back and forth in time, so she
does not move in and out of other characters viewpoints.

The educational purpose behind the story is stated directly. Her version of Labov's triangular structure is rigid—she sets the scene, she outlines the plot, she gives a coda. Four of her personal stories show Mary's narrative style. She first addresses her class:

"There was a voter's guide in Sunday's paper and I lifted the voter's guide out and read that and took it to the polls with me today. I took it into the voting booth with me because there was a simulation—imitation—of the booth. And the voter guide had exactly what I would see in the booth. So I marked my voter's guide up. Then when I stepped into the booth, I just held my voter's guide up and then just marked everything the way I had marked it at home. I spent some time thinking about how I would vote. Even though you are registered to a party, you can vote for anyone. If you are a registered Democrat, you can vote for a Democrat or a Republican. If you are a registered Republican, you can vote for a Democrat, too. We also have a school levy on there and I think we will all be waiting anxiously for the returns to come in on the school levy. Because either way, either way, it's going to make a difference in our lives."

Her narrative is clear-cut. She begins with an orientation: yesterday she saw a voter's guide and used it today when she voted. A clear series of plot events (complicating action) follows: she marked the voter's guide, explaining how it helped her in the voting booth. There is a resolution: she marks her ballot. She offers an evaluation of ballot marking, stating you can vote for whatever party you want. She directly states the coda: voting is important because political decisions can change lives.
Mary goes to the voting booth and carefully votes for her chosen candidates and issues, using her previously marked ballot. She votes, and closes her narrative with an implied celebration of our democratic process (you can vote for anyone) and its importance (the school levy will affect day-to-day life regardless of its outcome). We have no sense of where the voting booth was or who else was there. The straightforward structure of the narrative supports the theme of the story - that Mary saw her civic duty and did it. Even when she is telling a story with strong emotional content, her strict time sequence and adherence to the narrator’s point of view remains intact. She also makes certain the point of the story is known. She tells about a troubled period in a friendship:

"It was a rocky road... a couple of years ago, I received a letter, an angry letter, what I would call an angry letter, it was real angry. And, um, she and I grew up together. In elementary school, we went through high school together, started to go our separate ways towards the end of high school, went two very different routes in college, then got back together as friends in our adult life after college and it was during our adult life that she became upset with me about some things and she wrote me an angry letter a couple of years ago and I - I'll tell you something - it was hard for me to re-read that letter. I read that letter and it was just so powerful that I just wanted to put it away and never see it again. I destroyed it. I didn't save it. Sometimes I save letters - in fact, I still have the letter from my service member in my purse. I carry it around with me and I re-read it every now and then. And, um, the one that made me feel so bad, I destroyed it. And it took months for us to even communicate verbally after that. I tore it up. I got rid of it I was so angry. I read it one last time and then I got rid of it. And, um, I did not even respond to it. I didn't respond in writing and I talked to other people about the letter, but I never picked up the phone and talked to her. And it was months later when she got back
to me and I said 'I'm still having a hard time recovering from that letter' and it took us a while to iron things out. Um, well, I don't want to get too personal. She has, um, she has a couple of children. And her last child, um, I was a godmother to the last child. And, um, I'm still not exactly sure but I think she put a lot of anger into that letter - that wasn't exactly me but she directed some comments about how infrequently I had visited and made some inferences about how little I cared for him because I wasn't going to see him as often as she thought a godmother should and it was that kind of a letter. A very, very angry letter. And I retaliated by not responding. I just kind of closed all communication. And then finally she reopened, she reopened communication and we finally ironed things out. But it, um, took a long time. And I would say there wasn't any damage done from it except that it really, really made me mad. So letters can be very, very powerful."

Again, the audience has a clear sense of the temporal sequence of events. It is the narrator's anger and actions that propel the events forward, what might have caused the friend to write the letter and later recant it is not speculated upon. The point of the story is the power of print and that power is shown through one letter's effect on its reader, the narrator. Mary's stories are sharply focused both in purpose and in point of view. She tells a story from her childhood:

"Well, what happened to me. You know how it is in the supermarket? Now, you can laugh, but I think that's how Opal felt. Um, the supermarket has that glass case where all the food is. What typically happens is that the people go up and look in the case and the person working is elevated, looking down and I've been in a situation where I've been ready to order - and somebody tall just walks right up behind me and they have eye contact with the clerk and they know right away. They look at that person and say 'may I help you?' and I have to say 'excuse me, I'm down here.' The first few times - more that a few times - that happened I can remember being very frustrated and very angry inside and then one day my father - I remember going into the house in a flurry - angry - and telling my father
how angry I was, that it happens all the time and why do big people do that because he's big and he said, 'Speak up, you have to learn to speak up' and easier said than done. It took a long time before I finally found myself in the same situation again and I said, 'excuse me, but I've been waiting.' And you know, people are really very nice. I found out that sometimes they really aren't aware that little people are down there."

This story breaks slightly from the usual temporal structure. She begins in the present time and then shifts to her childhood. Also she includes quotes from both herself and her father. The story has twin morals, that you must stand up for yourself and that people are basically nice. The story affirms a world in which people aren't cruel, just unaware of unexpressed needs.

Her story of substitute teacher similarly affirms that the world can be good, if people learn about each other:

"He was sent to an, um, very poor country to work with those people and when I was teaching at the high school a few years ago, he had returned and I talked to him and he said he was looking for substitute teaching jobs and I called on him one day when I was not going to be able to be in school to be my substitute. He went into my room and worked with the ninth graders and the next day... he was a friend of my brother so I regarded him almost as another brother... and I went into the classroom and I said to the kids the next day - 'You had a substitute yesterday, how did you like Mr. D?' And do you know what they said? - 'Mrs. H that guy is weird.' Even though I knew him, I said 'weird', I said. They said 'he was really weird.' I said, 'Well, what was weird about him?' And they said, 'Well, um, first of all, he wore a scarf. I mean, how many guys around wear a scarf?' And, and, um, I waited a little longer and then I told them, I said 'We're good friends.' He grew up right there, but, but - that is my point - he has lived and been in the Peace Corps for about seven or eight years when he tried to return the United States. And, um, of course, I made it a point to tell him what some of the teens' comments were. We were able to laugh about it and he said that he had heard that there were certain cultural differences that he had assimilated, acquired, in
the different countries that he had been in, that are different from what we're used to. When I talked I heard T — over here say, 'Well, is he gay?' No. What I'm trying, trying to get at is that with all the work you people have done with Mr. R concerning cultural components, it is truly — that you would sit and make judgment calls about someone — its disappointing. Mr. R and you have worked so hard to work on the cultural components, that you may, that we may, learn cultural differences. All that because Peace Corps is capitalized."

Again events follow each other with few switchbacks. An old friend appears, she has him teach in her class, that class judges him, she talks to him about their perceptions and the story concludes with the directive that tolerance is necessary. She does parenthetically explain their relationship, that he was a friend of her brother and so seen by her as another relative. For Mary a story is a series of events, told in a straightforward manner with little elaboration in the form of characterization, setting, or shifts in time, that are related to a class in order to illustrate a certain clearly-stated moral. The clean structure of the narrative supports the straightforward purpose of the story's telling.

Performance Approach

Mary's stories are formal conscious performances by a teller who has generally thought about what she will say beforehand. The stories are an outgrowth of the material that is being taught in the classroom. They are not a spontaneous response to classroom events but rather the product of a teacher who plans what she will cover in class.
and how she will reinforce what she wants to teach.

Her middle school classroom is similarly formal, lending itself to a theatrical, nearly scripted style of storytelling. Although the classroom has moveable walls and the desks could be arranged in any configuration, the set-up of the classroom did not change during the school year. Desks were arranged in two sets of two rows with a center aisle that the desks faced. The blackboard was on one wall, Mary's podium that she generally stood behind was against the other wall - those two walls were parallel to the rows of desks that faced either the windows or the outside door. The room was arranged so that the classroom's hierarchical nature was clear. The students knew Mary's role, that of a teacher and storyteller who has clear lessons to teach them.

The four stories presented in the previous section will be presented again. This time, the transcriptions will include interruptions by the students, emphasis given by Mary to certain words (words that are underlined), and pauses in the story (indicated by dashes for short pauses and ellipses for longer pauses). Before each story is written in this section the previous events in the classroom, the story's context, will be stated. Such an approach gives a fuller sense of the story's meaning and reinforces the formal nature of Mary as storyteller and teacher. Not surprisingly, the world of the classroom
seems to reflect the nature of the stories and storytellers that inhabit it.

Mary’s story about her visit to the voting booth was told in November, election day. One of the class members was a rabid Republican Party supporter who had been teasing Mary to tell him who she would vote for for governor. It was mid-morning and the class had responded to the teasing with a general discussion about why anyone should even bother to vote. "What does it matter?" said one girl. "It’s important," said Mary, "I get all excited on election day. I remember when I was 21 and I first registered to vote. It was right after I’d taken a political science class and I went right out and registered." Someone then asked her how she decided who to vote for. She responded with the story:

"There was a voter’s guide in Sunday’s paper and I lifted the voter’s guide out and read that and took it to the polls with me today. I took it into the voting booth with me because there was a simulation - imitation- of the booth. And the voter guide had exactly what I would see in the booth. I just held my voter’s guide up and then just marked everything the way I had marked it at home. I spent some time thinking about how I would vote. Even though you are registered to a party, you can vote for anyone... If you are a registered Democrat, you can vote for a Democrat or a Republican - if you are a Republican, you can vote for a Democrat, too... We also have a school levy on there and I think we will all be waiting anxiously for the returns to come in on the school levy. Because either way, either way, it’s going to make a difference in our lives."

It is interesting that she saw the student’s request as needing factual, content-driven information rather than a philosophical response on the duties of citizens in a
democracy. Knowledge, like her narratives, is clear and linear.

Her most emotional story, that of her friend's angry letter, similarly serves a clear pedagogical purpose. The story was told later in November when the students were about to read letters F. Scott Fitzgerald wrote to his daughter while she was away at school. The students had begun writing to soldiers stationed in the Persian Gulf and there had been general talk about how it felt to receive letters. One of the students said that getting a letter from a soldier who had asked him to send Kool-Aid so he would have something to drink, had "made him feel like a dork." Mary said that comment reminded her of a letter she had once received from a friend and told her letter story:

"It was a rocky road... a couple of years ago, I received a letter, an angry letter, what I would call an angry letter, it was real angry. and - um - she and I grew up together. In elementary school, we went through high school together, started to go our separate ways towards the end of high school, went two very different routes in college, then got back together as friends in our adult life after college and it was during our adult life that she became upset with me about some things and she wrote me an angry letter a couple of years ago and I - I'll tell you something - it was hard for me to re-read that letter. I read that letter and it was just so powerful that I just wanted to put it away and never see it again. I destroyed it. I didn't save it. Sometimes I save letters - in fact, I still have the letter from my service member in my purse. I carry it around with me and I re-read it every now and then. And - um - the one that made me feel so bad - I destroyed it. And it took months for us to communicate even verbally after that. <students ask, how did you destroy it> I tore it up. I got rid of it I was so angry. I read it one last time and then I got rid of it. And - um - I did not even respond to it. I didn't respond in writing, and I talked with other people about the letter, but I never picked up the phone and talked to her. And it was months
later when she got back to me and I said, 'I'm still having a hard time recovering from that letter.' And it took us a while to iron things out. <students ask, 'Why was she mad at you?' 'yeah, tell us'> Um, well, I don't want to get too personal. She has - um - she has a couple of children. And her last child - um - I was godmother to the last child. And - um - I'm still not exactly sure but I think she put a lot of anger into that letter - that wasn't exactly me but - she directed some comments about how infrequently I had visited and made some inferences about how little I cared for him, because I wasn't going to see him as often as she thought a godmother should and it was that kind of a letter. A very, very angry letter. And I retaliated by not responding. I just kind of closed all communication. And then finally she reopened, she reopened ironed things out. But it - um - took a long time. And I would say there wasn't any damage done from it... except that it really, really made me mad... So letters can be very, very powerful."

Mary's story is told to reinforce the power of letters, to legitimize studying letters between F. Scott Fitzgerald and Scottie. She not only states the coda, she emphasizes it by the stress she places on words. Also, for students accustomed to listening to her usual well-modulated, well-controlled voice, the fact that she is not completely in control of the telling of the events, indicated by her stumbling over how she and her friend's relationship changed during school, her frequent use of um to diffuse relived anger, and her repeated emphasis on words that express the emotional side of the tales - her anger, her talking it over with other people, the months it took for it to be resolved, would show dramatically the force of one letter. The performance elements of the story change it from a story of past anger to a story of relived rage.
Mary’s story of her childhood experience at the supermarket was likewise triggered by a class assignment. The class was reading the short story, "The Baroque Marble," in which a young girl, Opal, carefully saves to buy a prized artifact only to find that the store owner, not taking seriously her promise to buy it, had sold it to someone else. It was later in the winter and the students, out doing holiday shopping, had many stories to tell of salesclerks who had ignored them 'because we’re just kids.' Mary sympathized with them and told her story:

"Well, what happened to me. You know how it is in the supermarket? Now you can laugh, but I think I know how Opal felt. Um, the supermarket has that glass case where all the food is - what typically happens is that people go up and look in the case - and the person working is elevated, looking down and I’ve been in a situation where I’ve been ready to order - and somebody tall just walks right up behind me and they have eye contact with the clerk and they know right away. They look at that person and say, ‘May I help you?’ and I have to say. ‘Excuse me, I’m down here’ - it took me - it took me a long time to say ‘excuse me, I’m down here.’ The first few times it happened - more than a few times - that happened - I can remember being very frustrated and very angry inside and then one day my father - I remember going into the house in a flurry - angry - and telling my father how angry I was, that it happens all the time and why do big people do that - because he’s big - and he said, ‘Speak up, you have to learn to speak up’... and easier said than done. It took a long time before I finally found myself in the same situation again and I said ‘excuse me, but I’ve been waiting.’ And you know, people are really very nice... I found out that sometimes they really aren’t aware that little people are down there."

This story seems to be told to offer a experience shared with the students that directly ties to the experiences of a character in the assigned short story.
Mary's telling is distant, she stresses only one word, indicating the importance of taking action to gain respect. The story is told for its relationship to the story, rather than its emotional importance to Mary. Again, its educational purpose is paramount.

Mary's story of her friend, the substitute teacher, also followed. Although more obliquely, a class assignment. It was now April. The class had been given an assignment on punctuation, on capitalizing proper nouns. The class took turns reading corrected sentences. A mispronunciation of "Pacific Ocean" as "Specific Ocean", accompanied by class laughter, prompted Mary to remark "my husband has problems with that word too and he's forty-four years old." The Pacific victim then correctly capitalized a sentence with "Peace Corps" and Mary said, "Somebody I went to high school with went into the Peace Corps." The boys in the class, by now a cohesive chorus, responded with comments: "Was he gay?" "Was he a hippy?" "Did he go to college?" Mary continued:

"He was sent to an - um - very poor country to work with those people and when I was teaching at the high school a few years ago, he had returned and I talked to him and he said he was looking for substitute teaching jobs and I called on him one day when I was not going to be able to be in school to be my substitute. He went into my room and worked with the ninth graders and the next day...<students ask, was he a boyfriend of yours?> He was a friend of my brother, so I regarded him almost as another brother... and I went into the classroom - he came into the classroom - and I said to the kids the next day - 'You had a substitute teacher yesterday, how did you like Mr. D?' and you know what they said, (softly) 'Mrs. H, that guy is weird.' Even though I knew him, I said,'Weird', I
said. They said, 'He was really weird. I said, 'Well, what was weird about him?' And they said, 'Well, first of all, he wore a scarf. I mean how many guys around wear a scarf?' And, um, I waited a little bit longer and then I told them, I said, 'We’re good friends.' He grew up right here in lovely —, but — that is my point — he has lived and been in the Peace Corps for about seven or eight years. When he tried to return to the United States and, um, of course, I made a point to tell him what some of the teens’ comments were. We were able to laugh about it and he said that he had thought — that there were certain cultural differences that he had that there were certain cultural things that he had assimilated, acquired, in the different countries he had been in that were different from what we’re used to (speaks faster). When I talked I heard T over here say, 'Well, is he gay?' No. <students laugh> But — shh, shh — his sexuality is not the question. <much laughter> No. What I’m trying, trying to get at is that with all the work you people have done with Mr. R concerning cultural components, it is truly — that you would sit and make judgment calls about someone — it’s disappointing — Mr. R and you have worked so hard to <’no, no, no,’ from students> ... um, shh, shh... I think Mr. R will want to work on the cultural components, that you may, that we all may, learn cultural differences. All that because of Peace Corps being capitalized."

In this story, including the student comments makes the story much more alive, Mary clearly told it both because its memory was triggered by the words "Peace Corps" but also as a reaction to the students’ blithe assumption that anyone in the Peace Corps had to be gay or a hippy. Including the students as a counterpoint to the story shows the ongoing viability of such stereotypes. The story is told to foster tolerance; its intolerant reception shows the limits of all obviously moral tales. Without a sense of the story as performance, without the voice of its audience, the limits of story as lesson would be less clear.
Stories as performances become three-dimensional events rather than flat words. Mary's stories become responses triggered by concrete classroom events. The moral lesson behind the telling becomes more clear.

Fictional Approach

"The Letter"

Mary twisted the paper in her hands. "How dare she," she thought, "how dare she." The best approach, the one her husband would certainly take, would be to throw the letter away and not think of it again. But Mary couldn't quite do that, not when it was Carol. She opened the pink notepaper again. Only Carol would write such a nasty letter on such inappropriate paper. The fuzzy Persian kittens smiled at Mary as she read, for at least the tenth time. "Dear Mary, Next Saturday, as you probably don't remember, is John's first birthday. He is wonderful, so smart, everyone who sees him says so. I'm sorry that your busy schedule has kept you away from our house, but I'm sure adolescent children are more interesting than your baby godson. I had hoped to offer him a chance to know you, my friend since grade school days. I see clearly now that wish will be impossible. I hope that your own children and husband remain devoted to you. Sincerely, Carol."

It really was a very Carol-like letter. She remembered when she first met Carol, as the two shortest
first graders in their large Catholic school. "We have to stick together, that way there will be two of us against any one of them." Any other friend was greeted with suspicion, "I saw you talking to Stephanie. I'll bet she doesn't know that you're afraid to go into grocery stores." And Mary stayed best friends with Carol because it was easiest and because she knew too many embarrassing secrets. They were best friends until high school when Mary, who generally did what her parents and the nuns expected her to do, feared the horrible fate that undoubtedly awaited Carol. Carol smoke, Carol drank, Carol went out with boys who were just "not nice", as her mother would say. Mary was generally guarded by her older brothers and their friends. Her brothers' friends became semi-brothers to her and although they might do potentially exotic and appealing things like join the Peace Corps, they were too closely related to become romantic figures. Only Tom, who Mary later married, slipped through the guards. He was a fringe member of her brothers' crowd, a friend of a friend who went away to boarding school. Tom teased Mary and kissed her under the football stands when she was a senior and then went away to the Navy. And Mary went to college, the local university. She could live at home, much cheaper, and care for her now-aging parents.

The college world of the sixties was difficult for Mary. The students seemed unrealistic. Didn't they know
the world was imperfect and unchangeable? What really mattered was working at something you loved and caring for someone you loved. She studied and worked and made few friends with the more radical members of her classes. Which included Carol. Mary wore skirts and ironed shirts to school because she went to her job after classes ended each afternoon. Carol wore faded jeans and a workshirt and Hush Puppy boots. Her hair was perfectly straight and waist-length. She was still short, but she looked like some sort of big child while Mary looked like a small adult.

But strangely, about the time she began to get letters from Tom, Carol began to talk to her. Tom wrote about exotic places and about how much he longed to come home. Carol talked about home and how much she longed to see the rest of the world. Mary saw that Carol fought so much because she had nothing to value. Her parents saw no reason for her to be in school when she could be working or married. Mary listened. She was the one who encouraged Carol to go on to grad school; she was the only person who went to Carol’s wedding. And Carol was one of hundreds of guests at Mary’s wedding to Tom the summer after Tom came home.

But lives are not static. Carol was busy writing her poetry and restoring an old farmhouse with her architect/farmer husband. Mary was busy teaching,
adjusting to life with a man who had seen much more of the
world than she, and solving assorted family crises. And
then her children came, much wanted but very demanding.
When Mary thought about Carol, which was rarely, she
imagined the quiet of a farmhouse and the click of a
typewriter. A pastoral life. So she was shocked when
Carol called to tell her that her husband had left and that
she was pregnant. "It’s better this way," said the old
defiant Carol. "If he doesn’t want the responsibility of a
child, then that child and I don’t need him. We can grow
together." "Please, let me know if you need anything,"
said Mary and she meant it. And so she was present at the
birth of John Yeats Brown and given the role of godmother.
Carol and the baby went back to the farmhouse.

Mary went back to Tom, who didn’t understand why she
had to be the delivery room coach ("it’s not as though
you’re a relative") and the children. And with Tom’s new
job and the children’s school activities and her mother’s
surgery it was just easier to forget about Carol. Forget
that she was alone with a crying baby in a house with
echoes. Until she got the letter.

It’s not fair, thought Mary. She thinks I don’t care
and I do. Her parents and her children and her husband
remembered her every day, talked to her everyday, asked of
her everyday. She had no empty rooms in her life. And she
had no newly-published books of poetry.
Jane

Narrative structure

In contrast to Mary's stories, Jane's stories lack strict structure. They may range back and forth in time and often contain parenthetical comments for the assumed audience. They rarely have any directly stated purpose. Instead they seem informal, conversational, parts of her life that Jane shares with her class. She tells them about her day-to-day life, such as the trials of living in a house with vintage wiring:

"We have to put the battery in <the smoke alarm> - my husband always puts the battery in. When you're cooking - you're cooking something and Mmmr - it's loud, it's supposed to be obvious like that - it wakes you up. My kid came home yesterday, or was it last week, evidently the fireman had talked to them last week - he was, he said "Mom, we don't have a smoke detector in the basement." We have one on the second floor, we have one on the main floor - on our living room floor - and don't have one in the basement. I don't know what they run, I think they're less than $20. It would probably be a good idea because in our basement we have fuse boxes - I'd say we have the washing machine, the dryer, and the water heater. As the fireman said, there are pilot lights on by the gas water heater. There's always a little flame down there... And our wiring is old. We find right now that back then they didn't even - I'm not sure what you'd call it - peat - to run today's appliances. You know, we put in some air-conditioning. Last summer we didn't put it in because my husband was kind of worried about the wiring and, you know, air conditioners do draw a lot of power for our poor little system. And that's something we've got to do - you couldn't tell by the look if you walked into our house that something new was done, that you just spent $2000 but it's something we need to look at... OK, this is the end of the gramma stories. Who knows from last year what I mean by gramma stories? Or by this year - what do I mean Mara? That's right, any plain old kind of story. Mr. C was my kid's teacher last year. They'd be having a test and the kids - you know, a word would come up and during their spelling test and they'd say 'Oh, I remember when my gramma was a da-da-da ' or 'last night' and he just called all
these kinds of stories gramma stories. And I like to hear 'em but we've got to get on with our day. OK? And that's the end of the gramma stories."

Jane's stories are much more free-wheeling than Mary's. This story contains not a linear chain of events but rather a web of related incidents. The smoke alarm reminds her of the condition of the rest of the house and the fact that her child had a fireman talk to her at school reminded her of another teacher and another school year because that incident summed up the sort of story she was telling, a gramma story, "any plain old kind of story." The story is elaborated by piling incident upon incident rather than by giving further details about one event. The end of the story is clearly signalled, "that's the end," but what the audience was supposed to learn from the story is left to the audience. She is a more distanced narrator, the points of view of her husband and her child and her child's teacher are all presented. Her stories seem to be an organic part of life in her classroom, of her relationship with her students. When a moral is stated directly, the story's overall tone is humorous. She continues her house trials:

"We thought it was our washer at first, its always wet there, but the water kept seeping in. It was this - old house basement. It's low land - it used to be swamp - so we dug a ditch - a drain - around our house. See, a lot of houses in cities do not have sump pumps. <Here> - we have sump pumps - what does that do, Mike? I know, every time I do laundry - water, water all over. I didn't know what to do - I went aargh! I called my father-in-law - I said 'You can deal with these things - I'm from Cleveland, we don't
have sump pumps.' 'Jane, check the plug.' The sump pump - sure enough, it was soon after my wedding - so I ran back and forth and plugged it in - sure enough, the sump pump started pumping again and oh, I called him right back and I said, 'Oh, thank you, thank you - I would have never known what that was ... So anyway, boys and girls, ditches is an important concept."

This story is told from her viewpoint, her city skills prove inadequate to her new condition, a fact her father-in-law underlines by telling her to just go check the plug and a fact that she cheerfully accepts by thanking him. The story seems to be told as much as a joke on herself as an example of the importance of drainage.

She tells a story about her daughter:

"I don't want to mention names, but this person doesn't like to go to one class she goes to on Mondays. Now, now. And she made the mistake of saying 'I hate this class. I don't feel good.' I said, 'You said the wrong thing first.' She's always been like that - I can remember second grade. She'd always get sick. She didn't like school for a while. So the first year I taught second grade, I'm backing out the car. I'm backing the car out of the driveway. 'AAH', she's yelling. And finally she admitted, 'I hate second grade. I hate it.' And I stared her down and said 'so do I.' "

Again the story ranges through several time frames. Her daughter hates a current Monday class, hated a class in the past, and had an encounter with Jane at a specific moment in the past. The human emotions are most important in Jane's stories what people said and did are more important than details of time and place, which can be bent and collapsed at will. Her stories have a free form sense of time and place. The lines on Labov's triangle are
Her plot events do not seem to march forward in straight lines but rather take tangents as related events occur to Jane.

Her stories are tied by their fluid structure and their celebration of day to day events. She tells about life with an aquarium:

"Yesterday, I asked my daughter if she would fix her fish tank. Boy, she’s been losing fish right and left. Four neons, two whiteclouds and her betta or beta. We think the beta ate the little guys. Or there’s something wrong with the filter or the PH is too high. I don’t know. We can’t figure it out. We’re bummed. But we’re getting an under gravel filter. We have a separate bowl for little fish. She got a little teeny, tiny fish. I told her I thought she should maybe go for something a little longer, but wither the beta ate him or he got sick and died. I don’t know."

This story has a more strict time sequence than many. It begins at a definite time, "yesterday," and follows the sequence of events that led to the decision to purchase the filter. The point of view is basically that of the narrator, Jane. Although she says that "we’re bummed," "we can’t figure it out," she makes a point of saying that she had suggested buying a bigger fish and the conclusion, that the mystery is unsolved, is told in her words. The story has a clear conclusion but no clear moral.

Jane’s stories are best defined by their near stream-of-consciousness quality. People and times and events and opinions are woven together. She tells a story to illustrate subject/verb agreement:
"Here's an example and this really bugged me. You know I don’t care for Bart Simpson much, well. I also don’t care for rap much. That's not my thing. I don’t think I can say what you want to enjoy. Um, anyway, so she listened to this tape that a girlfriend brought over — and, and my kids were saying — what was it? — 'ring, ring, goes the bell' — or something — it's kind of an old Chuck Berry tune. And my kids were insisting that it was 'ring, ring, go the bell.' 'Ring, ring, goes the bell.' That sounds right. Does that sound right? Does that sound funny to you? Kathleen? What should it be? Kathleen? OK. 'Ring, ring goes the bell.' Know why it sounds funny? I don’t know. My daughter was saying 'ring go, like Ringo Starr.' And I said, 'No, it's ring, ring goes the bell.' If you turn that sentence around, sometimes they put the verb first. Usually what goes first? I said 'ring, ring goes the bell.' What part of the sentence usually goes first? The subject. So what is we turn the sentence around — 'The bell goes ring, ring.' We have a singular subject so we need a singular verb to go with it. So, the bell go or goes ring, ring. What sounds better?"

The story is told for a clear purpose and ends with a rhetorical question. It follows a fairly strict time sequence, interrupted by Jane's commenting on Bart Simpson and the right of people to choose their own music, if not grammar. She doesn't like Bart or rap and her students may not know who Chuck Berry is, but her role in this story is to be mediator between her potentially ungrammatical students and the correctly grammatical world. She calls directly to me, the other adult in the room, to confirm her viewpoint.

For Jane, stories are slices of her life, past and present (often contained in the same story). Events move freely throughout time and multiple points of view are included. She is in dialogue with her audience and with the characters and events within the narrative. Her
stories seem best represented by a three-dimensional figure rather than by a flat triangle.

Performance Approach

Jane's stories are informal and seem an integral part of the ongoing of the classroom. Her tellings seem to be triggered by specific, unpredictable events, and once triggered, the stories range freely over time and space. Jane's stories are much richer for knowing their context, they seem more complete when not separate from the whole.

Jane's classroom seems fluid and informal also, indicating perhaps her basic view of the world. Students' desks are clustered in groups of four and five and the position of those groups rotates throughout the classroom weekly. The walls of the classroom are covered with posters and drawings - some drawings Jane has made of the students, some of the student's drawings. Class projects often spill over from the tables along the walls onto the floor - Washington D.C. monuments, castles, posters for reports sat on the floor at different times during the year. Jane herself rarely sits at her desk, but rather ranges throughout the classroom. She frequently walks while she is telling a story. The stories are told in an improvisational manner - she frequently interrupts the forward flow of the narrative with asides to the audience or with a tangential tale. She frequently breaks the frame of the story - students are told to listen, she may tell a
related tale. Yet she remains in the role of teller. Her voice is highly expressive and she underlines her enthusiasm for sharing stories by widening her eyes, or grimacing her face. She uses facial expression to further support the characterizations in the stories or the drama of the stories’ events. In Jane’s classroom, a storytelling event is woven into the fabric of ongoing classroom events.

Her story about the smoke alarm was told one October morning after two firemen gave a lecture/demonstration on fire safety to the school assembly. The class had returned to their classroom and were talking about how "neat" the demonstration of spontaneous combustion had been. One of the girls said she was going to get her stepfather a smoke alarm for his birthday. Jane nodded her head, said "yeah, great," and began her story:

"We have to put the battery in - my husband always puts the battery in - when you’re cooking - you’re cooking something and MMRMM - it’s loud, it’s supposed to be obnoxious like that - it wakes you up. My kid came home yesterday - or was it last week? - evidently the fireman had talked to them last week - he was - he said - 'Mom, we don’t have a smoke detector in the basement.' We have one on the second floor, we have one on the main floor - on our living room floor - and don’t have one in the basement. I don’t know what they run, I think they’re less than $20. It would probably be a good idea because in our basement we have fuse boxes - I’d say we have the washing machine, the dryer - and the water heater. As the fireman said, there are pilot lights on by the gas water heater. There’s always a little flame down there."
Jane's story was interrupted with a general discussion of what had set off the smoke alarm in the students' houses - "whenever my dad cooks steak," "once when my mom forgot she was making cookies." Jane nodded and then continued her story:

"And our wiring is old. We find right now that back then they didn't even - I'm not even sure what you'd call it - peat - to run today's appliances - you know, we put in some air conditioning - last summer we didn't put it in because my husband was kind of worried about the wiring and, you know, air conditioners do draw a lot of power for our poor little system. And that's something we've got to do - you couldn't tell by the look if you walked in our house that something new was done - that you just spent $2000 but it's something that we need to look at...

<students interrupt with stories about their air conditioning, when they got it, why they like it> OK, this is the end of gramma stories. Who knows from last year what I mean by gramma stories? Or by this year. <hands go up> What do I mean Mara? That's right, any plain old kind of story. Mr. C over at - was my kid's teacher last year - <students ask if it was her son's teacher> No, Dierdre's - They'd be having a test and the kids, you know, a word would come up and during their spelling test and they'd say, 'Oh, I remember when my gramma was a da-da' or 'last night' and he just called those kinds of stories gramma stories. And I like to hear 'em - but we've got to get on with our day. OK? And that is the end of the gramma stories."

Fleshing out the context of the story elaborates the nature of life in Jane's classroom. She had no prior knowledge of the firemen's talk (a fact of life in schools, I found) but their speech served as a catalyst for classroom discussion. She did not underline the safety component of the assembly, but rather told about her family's discussion on how to make their house safer. The tone of this story is chatty, few words are stressed and
students’ comments are treated as part of an on-going conversation. She responds to their remarks with more of her story, the sort of form that conversations take. She does not reprimand them for talking so much but rather categorizes what they all have been doing as "gramma stories." To Jane, a storytelling event incorporates the responses of the audience to the teller.

Her story about the sump pump similarly incorporates audience response. It was late October and the class was studying local history, how the land around their town had once been a terrible swamp. One of the girls asked how you got rid of a swamp and Jane said you dig ditches. One of the boys responded that there were deep ditches by his house in the country where you could find all kinds of neat things. Jane said, without ditches, the water would "just seep in":

"I have this old - house basement. We thought it was our washer at first, it's always wet there, but the water kept seeping in. It was this - old house basement. It's low - it used to be a swamp (rising inflection) - so we dug a ditch - a drain around our house."

The class then chimed in with stories about when their yards had been dug up.

"See, a lot of houses in cities do not have sump pumps. <Here> - we have sump pumps - What does that do? <Hands raised> Mike? I know every time I do laundry - water, water, all over (shakes head). I didn’t know what to do - I went aargh! <class laughs>. I called my father-in-law - I said, ‘You can deal with these things - I’m from Cleveland, we don’t have sump pumps.’ ‘Jane, check the plug.’ (said calmly) The sump pump - sure enough. It was soon after my wedding... So, I ran back and forth - and
plugged it in and sure enough the sump pump started pumping again and oh - I called him right back and I said, 'Oh, thank you, thank you' - <clasps hands together> I would have never known what that was."

The students responded with tales of scary things that had happened in their basement. And Jane concludes: "So, anyway, boys and girls, 'ditches' is an important concept."

Again, the story was triggered by a spontaneous event, a question and resulting discussion about ditches. The story's frame is interrupted by Jane's asking what a sump pump is and by student stories about their ditches and basements. Jane stressed words that underline the desperation of her plight - she thanks her father-in-law for rescuing her from her ignorance. But the story is obviously meant to be seen as funny - she emphasizes the absurd. She shakes her head over the amount of imagined water on the basement floor and clasps her hands in a mock prayer for her father-in-law's delivering her from disaster. The story is funny without its performance elements, but placing it in the classroom shows the open nature of Jane's relationship with her class.

Jane's class is invited to see Jane as a person, as a teacher and mother who is sometimes angry and frustrated. It is December, the class is very excited about the upcoming holidays. The featured "Reader of the Week" (each student is honored for a week during the year) has said that his favorite book is Silverstein's Where the Sidewalk
Ends and has read his favorite poem, "Planet of Mars."

Jane thanks him and says her favorite poem in that book is "Sick" and then says:

"I don’t want to mention names, but this person doesn’t like to go to one class she goes to on Mondays. <Jane giggles> Now, now <class laughs with Jane>... And then she made the mistake of saying, ‘I hate this class. I don’t feel good.’ I said, ‘You said the wrong thing first.’ (Jane laughs). She’s always been like that... I can remember in second grade - she’d always get sick. She didn’t like school for a while. So the first year I taught second grade - I’m backing out the car, I’m backing the car out of the driveway. ‘AAH,’ she’s yelling. And finally she admitted, ‘I hate second grade. I hate it!’ And I stared her down and said, ‘So do I!’"

Jane’s funny encounter between her daughter and herself shares the theme of the poem "Sick", imaginary illness. Her telling the tale is prompted by her memory of the poem, her memory itself a response to the student’s presentation of Where the Sidewalk Ends as a favorite book. Her telling stresses the comic - she laughs at the beginning of the poem and teases the class, who by now has heard several stories about her family, about the identity of the faker. She stresses the passion both she and her daughter have about going to second grade, an affirmation of adult and child feelings. The story further affirms the "Student of the Week", his choice of book is celebrated with a funny story from Jane.

Class room events do serve as the catalyst for Jane’s stories. Student responses are accepted, both as inspiration for the stories and for counterpoint to on-
going tales. Many of her shorter stories were elaborations on spelling words, tests were given weekly. On one February Monday, she expanded on the word "asked":

"Yesterday, I asked my daughter if she would fix her fish tank. Boy, she's been losing fish right and left. Four neons, two white clouds, and her betta or beta. We think the betas ate the little guys. Or there's something wrong with the filter or the PH is too high. I don't know. We can't figure it out. We're bummed. But we're getting an under gravel filter. We have a separate bowl for little fish. She's got a little teeny, tiny fish. I told her I thought she should maybe go for something a little larger, but either the beta ate him or he got sick and died. I don't know."

Jane's recognize the frame of this story, the spelling test, and do not interrupt her story as they usually do. Although it is a formal occasion, with formal roles for teacher and student, Jane's story soon has a life of its own. She relates the whole series of events preceding her asking her daughter about her fish tank. She stresses two words, the original spelling word, asked, and the solution she and her daughter reached, an under gravel filter. The story seems part of Jane's ongoing sharing of her life events, she admits that they were upset by the fishes' deaths and that even now she is unsure of their cause.

Stories are inspired by a variety of occurrences - student comments, questions, spelling words, and as elaborations on pedagogical points. On a warm April day, Jane is explaining subject/verb agreement. Her classroom has remained dynamic during the school year, the configuration of the desks change, different projects and
posters encroach upon seating space. The class has come to
know each other well, students frequently tell stories
about their own families. Jane admits, "I came in here
over break, and I got so overwhelmed I just left," and then
tries to begin her grammar lesson. She is struggling,
students are staring out the window. She starts again:

"Here's an example and this really bugged me. You
know I don't care for Bart much, well. Dierdre...
<inaudible>... I also don't care for rap much... that's not
my thing... I don't think I can say what you want to enjoy
<Robby, you need to be listening to me>... um, anyway, so
she listened to this tape that a girlfriend brought over -
and, and, my kids were saying - what was it? - 'ring, ring,
goes the bell' - or something... it's an old Chuck Berry
tune... and my kids were insisting that it was 'ring, ring
go the bell'"... 'Ring, ring goes the bell'... that sounds
right. Does that sound right? Does that sound funny to
you? Kathleen? What should it be? Kathleen? OK. 'Ring,
ing, goes the bell.' Know why it sounds funny? I don't
know... my daughter was saying 'ring go, like Ringo Starr.'
And I said, 'No, it's ring, ring goes the bell'... If you
turn that sentence around... sometimes they put the verb
first. Usually, what goes first... I said, 'Ring, ring
goes the bell'... What part of the sentence usually goes
first? <students answer, the capital, the subject> The
subject... so what if we turn the sentence around <Jane
writes on board>... 'The bell goes ring, ring'... We have a
singular subject and we need a singular verb to go with it.
So, 'The bell go or goes ring, ring'. What sounds better?"

Like the spelling words, stories told to illustrate
educational principles are recognized as uninterruptable by
the students. Jane stresses the words demonstrating the
purpose of the story - her kids' mistake, the proper use of
the verb "go." She interrupts her story to call a student
to attention, emphasizing its educational importance, and
to ask for feedback from class members. By this point I
have become an acknowledged part of the community, a weekly
storyteller, and can be asked questions directly also.

For Jane, stories are community events, inseparable, really, from their source if they are to be understood. They rely on the community for initial inspiration and generally, except when cast in a formal educational frame, incorporate community feedback into their telling. She shows her respect for her students, trusting them to learn details of her family life. Her classroom is part of her world, a world, judging from the informal structure of her narrative and their integral part in classroom life, that is not divided between school and home. When Jane is a teacher/storyteller she remains a wife/mother and events in her private world illumine events in her public one.

Fictional Approach

"Second Grade Blues"

How can a mother win? This year was going to be great; I knew it. I had a right to a great year, having finally and merrily gotten a divorce from the Charming Bum, otherwise known as Dierdre and Patrick's father. It wasn't that he was all bad, you understand, some women find men who would rather buy Dom Perignon than pay the rent irresistible. But somehow my going to work while he wrote (and wrote and wrote and wrote) his novel got to be old. And one fine spring morning I looked in the mirror and, after recovering from the shock that I didn't really look 19 anymore, I said to myself, "Jane, you don't need to be
this stupid. You’re already supporting the whole family, plus some obscure muse, and you will do much better with two less mouths to feed." I said two mouths but I wasn’t really sure if muses ate. And that fine spring morning I put on the suit my mother had given me last Christmas in the desperate hope I would leave teaching for a real job with IBM, backed my ever-faithful Beetle out of the driveway (why can’t men be like cars), and drove to the lawyer’s office. Being all dressed up with nearly nowhere to go, I then went to the local school board office. If I was going to be supremely independent, I might as well do it on more money than the Valley Country Day School was willing to pay me. In one day, I discarded educational theories and a husband, for the unexplored pleasures of adequate cash.

The public school system shocked me by calling within two days. Did I want to interview for a second grade job that had just become vacant. Did I? Back went on the suit, back out of the driveway went the car. And I was hired. On the spot. Had I been completely rational at the time, I might have remembered the old adage (if it doesn’t belong to Menken, it ought to) that things that seem to good to be true generally are. I didn’t care. I would be making twice the money I had been before, the school was just down the street from a wonderful old house I’d rented, Dierdre and Patrick could learn to read and write without
my paying tuition rates that would do Harvard proud. I couldn’t wait for fall.

And time, as it has a way of doing, passed.

I began to feel uneasy from the moment I walked into that school. I went to the year’s orientation meetings. It was the usual sort of event, the principal talked, outside speakers talked, and teachers sat and made lists in their minds of all the useful things they could be doing.

"What grade are you teaching, dear," asked one of the older teachers. "Second," I said brightly. "So she didn’t come back," said the woman. The room was absolutely quiet. I have a vivid imagination, but I knew everyone was staring at me, the better to identify the corpse at a later date. Really, I thought, how bad can it be. I’ve had 10 years of teaching experience, I’m a professional.

What I didn’t know was that the kids were too. They had successfully driven their first grade teacher to early retirement and the second grade teacher, seeing the handwriting on the wall, had opted to fulfill her lifelong dream of growing day lilies in the south of France. They were ready now for further conquests – me. What can I say of the attacks and counterattacks that fall? It was me or them and them was winning.

My own kids, yes on good days I did remember I lived with two kids, split 50-50 on their opinion of the new school. Patrick loved it, he had met a couple of fellow
frog researchers and spent most afternoons exploring truly disgusting ditches. Dierdre was different. She HATED it all - her teacher was mean, they did boring things, she couldn't even talk to her friends except at recess.

And so the fall went. The hope of September was followed by the reality of October. November brought that kind of bone-chilling unpleasantness that only a combination of cold rain and an awful classroom can bring.

One Monday I loaded the car with gear for an all day hike in the wet woods (I could always hope some of them would get lost). Patrick, sensing a great day for frogs, had already left for school. Dierdre was dawdling. "I hate school. I don't feel good," she whined. I ignored her. "I'm ready to go, the car is leaving and you'd better be in it," I said. She climbed in and sat next to me, her arms crossed across her chest. I backed the Beetle out of the driveway. "Mommy, you don't listen. I hate second grade. I hate it! I just HATE it!" I looked into my daughters flashing black eyes and shot back "So do I!"

Candace

Narrative Structure

Of the three storytellers, Candace is the most formal and elaborate. Her stories are literary forms. They have a clear setting, forward momentum, elaborated action, defined characters, and first person point of view. The stories also have underlying moral purposes, the sort of
explorations of ethical questions that define all great
literature. They are generally lengthy and so well-shaped
that they must have evolved over several tellings. Candace
tells of her childhood encounter with a haunted house:

"There was a pretty famous haunted house and they set
up this house every year and people would come from miles
and miles and miles around and it's a real house. Now, I'm
not saying this house was haunted but I am telling you that
it was very scary - it's old with grey paint falling off,
shutters are hanging to one side and it doesn't look as
though anyone's lived there for a million years so when I
was in junior high, friends of mine decided to have a
Halloween party because by that time we were too old to go
trick or treating door to door. Some of my friends used
to stand around and snatch bags of candy from little kids
which wasn't really nice. So my friends had a Halloween
party - and part of her party was that her parents were
going to take us to the haunted house. There were about
eight of us. We all got in the car and drove out to this
haunted house, And we were trying to be pretty cool about
it. 'Oh, yeah, I'm not afraid. It's no big deal, it
doesn't matter.' 'Cause first of all it cost $3 to get in
and I thought 'Oh, come on,give me a break, is this a real
haunted house, 'cause I don't think ghosts would charge you
to get in - you could just walk in for free.' But I had to
pay my $3 to get in. When we first walked in the door, it
was very, very dark. They had all the windows blackened so
there was no light coming in. There was a tall man - at
first I thought it was a statue. After everyone got in the
man said, 'Welcome to the haunted house,' Then he just
stood there and then the door closed. I couldn't see my
hand in front of my face. I couldn't see anything. And I
screamed - aaah - just as loud as I could. And my friend
said, 'Now Candace don't act like that.' And I said,
'Look, I didn't want to come here in the first place. I
thought I would come to your house - a little Halloween
candy, a little cake, a little ice cream. Nobody told me
about a haunted house. I really would like to go home.'
But it was too late. You were not allowed to go out the
same door where you went in. You had to go through the
haunted house to get out. So my friends and I decided to
hook our elbows together and stay close. And we could hear
chains creaking and after a while we could hear - ooooh -
ah! ha! ha! And I thought, 'This is it, I'm never going to
see seventh grade. My mother told me to stay out of
trouble nd this is it.' We were made to go upstairs and
look through all the rooms. There was someone rocking from
side to side, the curtains were blowing at the window -
they had all kinds of stuff hanging 'round and one room had boxes. There was a lady there and she said, 'Welcome to the haunted house. I've been invited to cook for you.' And there was a box and you stuck your hand in and there was squishy, gooshy stuff in it - 'my eyeball stew' - and there was all kinds of green stuff on my hands. 'Now put your hand over here' - there was long, stringing, slimy I-don't-know-what. 'Uh-huh,' she said, 'these are maggots that I got out of the graveyard.' They're like little worms. So she let us put our hands in lots of boxes and on the way out she gave us a bag. 'Now don't open the bag until you get out. There's a little treat I cooked for you.' Well, I laid my bag on the floor by the door on the way out because I had decided I didn't want anything this woman had cooked. I got outside and screamed and cried and did all that - got outside and got in the car. My friend saved her bag - she opened her bag slowly. Inside the bag was a piece of paper that said 'trick or treat.' There wasn't any candy or nothing. And I said, 'I want my money back. This is a total rip-off!' And of course the girl's mother who was driving the car asked me to please stay in the back seat. Three years later I was in high school and I was really hard-up for money. I went back and got a job at the haunted house and they let me work there. So I collected money and I found out all the things that scared me three years ago - I found out how they did some of them. The eyeballs were grapes in jello. It was squishy, just like eyeballs. So things that might scare you when you are younger, when you find out what they are, then they aren't so scary.*1

Candace's story follows closely Labov's model. She sets the events in time, her sixth grade year, and place, a local haunted house. Episodes follow a chronological time sequence - her friends decide they are too old to trick or treat, they go to the local haunted house, they go through the haunted house, Candace revisits the scene as a high school employee. The trip through the house is told from Candace's perspective, she gives the listeners her internal dialogue as she copes with rising fear. She offers a coda, that fears may be conquered through knowledge. The story
is told for a purpose, but its telling is a literary celebration. Candace includes humorous elaborations, her assuring herself a real haunted house would be free, her direct quotes from the stories characters, all designed to build the suspense of the story. Her language shows the sort of shaping that is present in folktales, stories that are told and retold until they become set pieces, complete with formal phrasing and repetitive language. Candace says, for example, "and people came from miles and miles and miles around" and "Look, I didn't want to come in the first place. I thought I would come to your house - a little Halloween candy, a little cake, a little ice cream." Candace’s story follows a time-ordered structure and uses carefully chosen language. It has a clear, first-person point of view. The narrator’s adventures and lessons, from a time in her past, are presented.

Candace’s stories have morals, stated in their codas, but they are framed in elaborated stories of her childhood. Candace tells of her first encounter with mincemeat:

"You know when you see something that looks like something you’ve never seen before and the cook says, 'Taste it, it's really good.' It really take some courage to believe it, to taste it.

My mother was a OK cook, there were lots of days when things didn't turn out quite right and I'd look at the plate and say, 'What is it' and she'd say, 'It's a new recipe, I got it out of your Aunt Sadie or Grandma or Aunt Lucy or somebody.' I tell you the first time she ever made mincemeat pie. It doesn't look like something you'd eat. First of all, it's brown. She made it later, around Thanksgiving. So we lived in an apartment building. We didn't have a dog, we didn't have a cat and I didn't even have pockets in my pants. I didn't know what I was going
to do with this, but she said, 'You can't judge a book by its cover.' And I thought, 'There aren't any books on this table. Just this nasty looking pie - this absolutely terrible looking pie.' She explained that things might look bad, but you still need to give it a chance. Well, needless to say, I got my napkin, I put it in my lap, and my dad cut the pie. And he gives my sister a piece, she's little so she doesn't know any difference - she eats just about anything. My mom gets a piece. And I drink a little of my juice. And I look around - waiting to see if anyone's going to pass out. Dad gets out the salt and pepper - so my dad puts salt and pepper on it and starts eating. He put salt and pepper on everything - so you can't always trust him. And he's talking like, 'Oh, yeah, this is really good.' And he says, 'Try it. You can't judge a book by its cover.' So then I drink some more juice and I cut a little piece - a leeeetle piece. 'That's not a big enough piece to try - here let me do it.' Takes a fork and cuts a piece and says, 'Here, open up.' So now my mouth's open and he puts it in and I say, 'That's not bad. This is pretty good.' So I got a little more - mincemeat is not bad at all. So I eat it all - it's really great. And I said, 'Can I have some more?' My mom says, 'No, eat your carrots.' Carrots I know - they taste funny, I recognize them. My way to deal with carrots is to get them off my plate, put them around the outside of my plate. It wasn't my turn to clear the table so by the time they found out that's where they were, I'd be long gone. They'd lift up the plate and there'd be a circle of carrots. But you can't always look at something and tell what it's going to be like. The first day of school I looked at all of you, I could have thought to myself, 'Oh I know what she's like' or 'I know what he's like.' But isn't it better to get to know someone and not let their appearances, the way they look, make up our minds for us.

This story too has a straightforward linear structure. Candace sets up the story's events by commenting on her mother's marginal cooking skills. From the introductory remarks, the story moves to the appearance of the mincemeat pie and the pressures exerted on Candace to try it. The story's moral appears in the middle of the story, when both parents tell her "you can't judge a book by its cover" and is then made universal at the end of the
story when Candace talks about her first meeting the audience, her students. Again, the story is from the point of view of young Candace, the narrator. She does break her frame of a past event by speaking directly to her audience - she opens the story with her remarks about the students experiences with strange lunchroom food, she states that her father salted everything and couldn't be trusted, she assures them that she knew all about carrots. The story does move forward in time, with events piling on events, until the conclusion and moral are reached. Word use is lyrical and precise - "it really takes some courage to believe it, to taste it", "Carrots I know - they taste funny, I recognize them." To listen to Candace is to hear the beauty of Labov's structure - events are perfectly ordered in time. And the time of the story is always Candace's past. She tells what she was like when she was young and what her family and friends and the people around her were like. But she doesn't talk about her current life.

She tells about a friend's near disaster:

"Where I used to live, in Washington D.C., I lived in an apartment complex. My friends and I used to climb the tree all the time. The only thing that used to save me was that - um - the branches of the tree almost touched the roof of the apartment building. And on one side there was a door... if you've never lived in a really large apartment building, it's sort of hard for you to understand. But the roof kind of looked like this and on the roof there's a little thing like this and there's a door and if you go inside the door there are steps going down to the different floors of the apartment building. There'd be a door here and then you'd go down a little bit - and there'd be
another door... and another door... OK?

That's how it was. And there was this tree and this
tree had a branch so that I could climb up the tree and
once I got up there I could jump down to the roof, which
wasn't very far. So I didn't have to climb back down the
tree. Well, the building super - his name was Mr.
Johnstone - I think it was Johnstone, I really don't
remember for sure. It wasn't Johnson, didn't want us
playing on the roof anymore. So what he did was - lock the
door. So my friend Danny and I were up in this tree. I
jumped down on the roof and then had to climb back in the
tree. And my friend Danny said, 'Just climb on down.' So
I stood there actually sat there - and Danny said, 'Don't
look, just jump.' So he jumped. And when he jumped, his
arm got caught in the fence and he got cut all the way
around, it almost cut right through. Blood was everywhere.
He didn't cry or scream or anything because he was afraid
to tell because he wasn't supposed to be up the tree. So
he thought he could hold his arm and maybe nobody would
notice. But there was Miss Maddie who lived down on the
first floor. Miss Maddie didn't miss anything, ever.
Ever. Ever. It could be happening down the street and
around the corner and three buildings over and she would
know about it. Miss Maddie saw Danny and ran out of the
apartment building. Now do you think I was going to jump?
I didn't want my arm ripped out of the socket, so I sat
there for a long, long time. And every kid that went by
I'd call, 'Hey, I'm stuck in this tree.' And they'd look
up at me and say, 'Just jump' and I'd say, 'No, I don't
want to get my arm ripped off.' So I wouldn't jump out of
it. Well the only bad part was after we got to be adults.
After we got older - the only thing that held his arm on
was some cartilage and if he hadn't had that - cartilage
next to the shoulder blade, shoulder blade bone, he would
have lost his whole arm. He was very, very fortunate. And
to this day - we, we stay in touch and I get a Christmas
card from him and he still doesn't have the complete use of
that hand and that arm.

But anyway Danny went to the hospital, forgot I was in
the tree, didn't think of me probably until two or three
days later. I could have still been in the tree for all
Danny cared. He didn't send back help - if Danny had been
stuck in the tree, I would at least have sent back the fire
department. I would have said, 'Yeah, I know my arm is
falling off, but I left my friend stuck in the tree.' But
he did not care and he and I still argue about that. So I
sat there for a long time - and I know it was acrophobia, I
was definitely afraid to get down. Oh, I don't know how
long I sat there. Then Miss Maddie started yelling, 'I'm
going to tell your mamma.' So my mother came out and she
said, 'Come on, get down.' And I didn't want to get down
and get yelled at. So I started crying. Boo, hoo, hoo.
'I'm dying up here.' So there was a man - Mr. Johnstone still wasn't around - to get the door open. Or Mr. Johnston, I don't remember what his name was. But there was a man, we just called him The Man. The Man - we can't find the super - which is short for superintendent - but anyway - janitor/custodian, we couldn't find him - and a man who lived on eighth floor - he was able to get the lock broken off the door. And I jumped off the tree and onto the roof. My mom said, 'Let's go home now.' And Miss Maddie said, 'I'd beat her. I'd get a big stick and just beat her because she's been ornery.' And I thought, 'Why won't she mind her own business. Doesn't she have something else to do?' Because she went right back downstairs and got back in the window and watched the rest of the day. And so I didn't get into any trouble. Mother said, 'Now, stay out of the tree.' And to this day, I don't climb up on things. Never climb on ladders, I don't even stand on chairs. The work you see, Miss Ivy put up. I don't do that. The pictures that she has up there - you might get them back in June - and you might not. Depends on whether I can get someone in the room to take it down.

The story follows a forward time sequence. There seems to be no stated moral, although the consequences of rampant tree climbing are more than clear. She quotes characters in the story directly, although the center clearly remains with Candace, the narrator. She mocks her self-absorbency as she states that if she were Danny, lying in the hospital she would not have forgotten her stranded friend. The story is a fully detailed slice of Candace's past life and introduces her listeners to life in an urban apartment building, its physical set-up, its cast of characters. Words are chosen and repeated for their contribution to the story's overall tone. This story, which handles the tragedy with an over layer of humor, succinctly characterizes Miss Maddie: "Miss Maddie didn't miss anything, ever. Ever. Ever."
Candace's shorter stories show the same structure. They are told from the point of view of the young Candace, establishing an "I was young once too" bond with her audience, her class. Although they have clear morals, their careful construction saves them from being purely didactic tales. They follow narratives in sequence, with few ellipses to another time or place.

She tells another apartment building story:

"My mother told me whenever she left the apartment, 'always lock the door.' She said, 'Because all the people that live here and need to get in here have keys. I don't care who's on the other side of the door - you don't open the door.' We lived in an apartment building that had eight floor. So one day she had gone downstairs in the basement where the laundry room was. And when she left, I locked the door. Soon there was a... and I said, 'Who is it?' 'Candace, open the door.' Said, 'Can't do it.' 'Open the door.' I said, 'You told me, everybody has keys who needs keys and they can open the door. How do I know you're my mamma. You might be someone who comes around and steals children.' I said, 'I can't tell if you're my Mamma or not or whether I should let you in.' 'Get a chair, look out the peep hole, you will see.' So I got a chair, looked, and thought, 'Should I let her in?' 'Candace! Candace! if you don't open this door right now.' And I had to open the door. She had forgotten to take her key. So she scolded me. And that night at the dinner table it came up in discussion, Dad said, 'Well, I think you did the right thing. Mom said lock the door when she leaves, don't open it for anything.' So next time she had to take the key. And she never forgot her keys again."

This story's events are in linear order, with action advanced by dialogue rather than narrative description. It seems the most folkloric of stories - a plot echoed in folktales like the "Three Little Pigs" or "The Wolf and the Seven Little Kids" which state the hazards of open-door policies. Its coda states a lesson learned from
experience, another common device of folktales. Candace’s stories always have a strong formal structure. Whether long and with elaborate descriptions and characterization or shorter with more dialogue, they remain compelling because they are so carefully crafted.

Candace tells of her participation in a momentous historical event:

"My father was a police officer. So the two things I remember most about the civil rights movement was the conflict between people in other places. Our neighborhood didn’t have any problems so it was real hard for me to understand other places. See, we didn’t have a problem in our neighborhood, but then most of my neighborhood, all except for one family - or two families - they were all mostly African-Americans - so we didn’t have problems on our street. By my dad did have a problem at his job. Because being an African-American person he had to do his job. There was a lot of rioting, a lot of anger. But the one thing I remember the most about the civil rights movement was going to hear Dr. Martin Luther King outside of the Washington Monument. My dad picked me up in his cruiser. He used to ride a motorcycle and I was disappointed when he picked me up in his car. And he was going to work and I had to sit with the secretary until it was time for him to come back and we would go on to hear Dr. King. And he felt that was something that was very important. So I remember going, my dad and I walked over - it wasn’t very far. And there were so many people - I had never seen that many people in my whole life. Black people, white people, old people, young people, kids, babies, everybody. And we were pretty far away, so I wasn’t really able to see. I kept asking my father, 'I can’t see, I can’t see', so my dad picked me up and put me on his shoulders and he let me sit on his shoulders so I could see. Although it was far away, I got a chance to see Dr. King. I don’t remember all the things he said - I wasn’t paying much attention - and I really, really hate that now. I wish now I had paid attention to some of the things that he said. I still couldn’t understand why there was a problem."

Her hearing Dr. King is told from the perspective of a young girl. She doesn’t really listen, she regrets missing
a ride on the motorcycle, she complains about not being able to see. She gives the events as they occurred to her - leaving school, waiting for her dad, walking over to the monument, watching the people. Her language remains concise and well-chosen: "I had never seen that many people in my whole life. Black people, white people, old people, young people, kids, babies, everybody." And her coda offers an addenda to the Dream speech - "I still couldn't understand why there was a problem."

For Candace, stories are told sequentially, their words carefully chosen, their purposes to transmit morals that a young narrator would experience and a young audience understand. Whatever the length of the stories, they remain compelling, the listener follows the chain of events wondering what will happen. Her shortest stories are still rich story events. She tells of safeguards in a policeman's house:

"You know it's tough but my father was a police officer. And wherever he hid his gun, I found it. And not only the gun, but the bullets, also, because you know they were in separate places. But you are of an age that you can be educated to never, ever touch a firearm."

And of an unpopular neighborhood girl:

"When I was growing up, there was a little girl living in our housing complex. She lived with her aunt and her mother and father. I don't know if they were dead or missing. But, I forget her name, Ursula, and Ursula would be in trouble all the time. She couldn't get along with the other girls in the neighborhood. And my mother always used to say, 'You don't understand, Ursula is not like you, you need to be extra nice to her.' So I tried. But then I realized one day. My father was a police officer."
One day he got shot. There was a knock at the door and there was another police officer standing at the door. They don't tell you why they are there, for all you know they could be dead. My mother put on her coat and she left. It was then that I realized what if something happened to my dad. Then I realized I'd be mad at the world. And it wasn't so hard to be nice to Ursula after that. So I had a chance to see what it was like to not have one parent."

Both stories offer a summation of events leading to a powerful coda. No more elaboration is given than is necessary to support the point of the story. All children are curious about guns and older children must realize their danger. Sometimes events in people's lives make them angry at the world, to understand the events is to understand the anger.

Candace's stories fit neatly into Labov's narrative triangle, a setting is established, events lead to other events, the tale is concluded with a resolution and coda. The stories are formal, first person tales with carefully-chosen phrases and consistent point of view. They have the elegance of a folktale or well-crafted short story.

Performance Approach

Candace's stories, like the events within them, are part of a tightly woven fabric. Her classroom is rich with multiple stimuli. Posters and student work cover the walls and bulletin boards. Animals in cages are scattered throughout the room. There are two computer work stations as well as a math center for hands-on activities. The desks are arranged in a circle, Candace's desk is at the
edge of the circle as you enter the room. Students may be doing assorted activities simultaneously, but Candace has class events orchestrated so that the school day flows smoothly. She outlines the schedule for the day each morning on the blackboard, using colored chalk. The times of the day's classes, the morning journal-writing topic, and the importance of that day in history are written on the board.

All the stories I collected were presented in a formal setting. Candace sat on a stool, facing the circle of students. She gave a carefully controlled performance, her pacing was deliberate, her voice modulated, and students were expected to sit and listen as though at a theatrical event. She paused for laughter, as any good actress does, but did not incorporate student response into her story. For Candace, storytelling and classroom life are shaped, formal occurrences. The challenge of the teacher-storyteller is to shape them so that students are given the most freedom to explore their content.

Candace's haunted house story took place after a read-aloud session in early October. She had read the book, *Garfield and the Haunted House*, a lift-the-flap book, that a student had brought in. Candace always accepted what the students brought in to read and gave the readings care and thought. The class then went into their Circle Time, during which period class concerns and problems were
discussed. There was a general discussion about things the class found scary and then Candace, who was sitting on her stool facing the circle began her story:

"There was a pretty famous haunted house and they set up this house every year and people would come from miles and miles and miles around and it's a real house. Now, I'm not saying this house was haunted but I am telling you that it was very scary - it's old with grey paint falling off, shutters are hanging to one side and it doesn't look as though anyone's lived there for a million years - so when I was in junior high - friends of mine decided to have a Halloween party because by that time we were too old to go trick or treating door to door. Some of my friends used to stand around and snatch bags of candy from little kids which wasn't really nice. So my friends had a Halloween party - and part of her party was that her parents were going to take us to the haunted house.... There were about eight of us. We all got in the car and drove out to this haunted house, And we were trying to be pretty cool about it. 'Oh, yeah, I'm not afraid. <said loudly> It's no big deal, it doesn't matter.' Cause first of all it cost $3 to get in and I thought 'Oh, come on,give me a break, is this a real haunted house,' 'cause I don't think ghosts would charge you to get in - you could just walk in for free.' But I had to pay my $3 to get in. When we first walked in the door, it was very, very dark. They had all the windows blackened so there was no light coming in. There was a tall man - at first I thought it was a statue. After everyone got in the man said, 'Welcome to the haunted house,' <uses deep, slow voice> Then he just stood there and then the door closed. I couldn't see my hand in front of my face. I couldn't see anything. And I screamed - aah - just as loud as I could. And my friend said, 'Now Candace don't act like that.' And I said, 'Look, I didn't want to come here in the first place. I thought I would come to your house - a little Halloween candy, a little cake, a little ice cream. Nobody told me about a haunted house - I really would like to go home.' But it was too late. You were not allowed to go out the same door where you went in. <oooh, from class> You had to go through the haunted house to get out. So my friends and I decided to hook our elbows together and stay close. And we could hear chains creaking and after a while we could hear - ooooh - ah! ha! ha! <imitates fiendish laughter> And I thought, 'This is it, I'm never going to see seventh grade. My mother told me to stay out of trouble and this is it.' We were made to go upstairs and look through all the rooms. There was someone rocking from side to side, the curtains were blowing at the window - they had all kinds of stuff
hanging 'round and one room had boxes. There was a lady there and she said <uses screech voice>, 'Welcome to the haunted house. I've been invited to cook for you.' And there was a box and you stuck your hand in and there was squishy, gooshy stuff in it - 'my eyeball stew' - and there was all kinds of green stuff on my hands. 'Now put your hand over here' - there was long, stringing, slimy I-don't-know-what. 'Uh-huh,' she said, 'these are maggots that I got out of the graveyard.' They're like little worms. So she let us put our hands in lots of boxes and on the way out she gave us a bag. <uses screech voice again> 'Now don't open the bag until you get out. There's a little treat I cooked for you.' Well, I laid my bag on the floor by the door on the way out because I had decided I didn't want anything this woman had cooked. I got outside and screamed and cried and did all that - got outside and got in the car. My friend saved her bag - she opened her bag slowly. Inside the bag was a piece of paper that said 'trick or treat.' There wasn't any candy or nothing. And I said, 'I want my money back. This is a total rip-off!' And of course the girl's mother who was driving the car asked me to please stay in the back seat... Three years later I was in high school and I was really hard-up for money. I went back and got a job at the haunted house and they let me work there. So I collected money and I found out all the things that scared me three years ago - I found out how they did some of them. The eyeballs were grapes in jello. It was squishy, just like eyeballs. So things that might scare you when you are younger - when you find out what they are, then they aren't so scary."

Candace stresses words that underline the suspense and irony of the story and changes her voice to build the suspense. She is control of the telling at all times and the students recognize it. They are absorbed as an audience and respond with a chorus of OOH! at an appropriate moment. The story's telling was triggered by the season, nearing Halloween, the discussion of scary things, and the book about Garfield in a haunted house, but it was a more polished performance than a story told for the first time. Candace continued the teller role begun by
her reading the book to the class – she had text to impart to the class.

Similarly, the story about her mother’s mincemeat pie comes after a class discussion of the kind of courage shown in a short story, "Brother to Win." It is told a couple of weeks after the haunted house story. Fall holidays are on people’s minds and the class is beginning to get to know each other. They talk about advice they would offer the characters in the story, about how the characters need to be brave. Candace again sits at the edge of the class circle:

"You know when you see something that looks like something you’ve never seen before and the cook says, ‘Taste it, it's really good’, it really take some courage to believe it, to taste it.

My mother was an OK cook, there were lots of days when things didn’t turn out quite right and I’d look at the plate and say, ‘What is it’ and she’d say, ‘It’s a new recipe, I got it out of your Aunt Sadie or Grandma or Aunt Lucy or somebody.’ I tell you the first time she ever made mincemeat pie. It doesn’t look like something you’d eat. First of all, it’s brown. <oooh, from class> She made it later, around Thanksgiving. So we lived in an apartment building – we didn’t have a dog, we didn’t have a cat and I didn’t even have pockets in my pants – I didn’t know what I was going to do with this, but she said, ‘You can’t judge a book by its cover.’ And I thought, ‘There aren’t any books on this table. <class laughs> Just this nasty looking pie – this absolutely terrible looking pie.’ She explained that things might look bad, but you still need to give it a chance. <Candace says, ‘People whose hands are up, you are being rude.’> Well, needless to say, I got my napkin, I put it in my lap, and my dad cut the pie. And he gives my sister a piece, she’s little so she doesn’t know any difference – she eats just about anything. My mom gets a piece. And I drink a little of my juice. And I look around – waiting to see if anyone’s going to pass out. Dad gets out the salt and pepper – so my dad puts salt and pepper on it and starts eating. He put salt and pepper on everything – so you can’t always trust him. And he’s talking like ‘Oh, yeah, this is really
good.' And he says, 'Try it. You can’t judge a book by its cover.' So then I drink some more juice and I cut a little piece - a leeeetle piece. <class laughs> 'That’s not a big enough piece to try - here let me do it.' Takes a fork and cuts a piece and says, 'Here, open up.' So now my mouth’s open and he puts it in and I say, 'That’s not bad. <class laughs> This is pretty good.' So I got a little more - mincemeat is not bad at all. So I eat it all - it’s really great. And I said, 'Can I have some more?' My mom says, 'No, eat your carrots.' Carrots I know - they taste funny, I recognize them. My way to deal with carrots is to get them off my plate, put them around the outside of my plate. It wasn’t my turn to clear the table so by the time they found out that’s where they were, I’d be long gone. They’d lift up the plate and there’d be a circle of carrots. But you can’t always look at something and tell what it’s going to be like. The first day of school I looked at all of you, I could have thought to myself, 'Oh I know what she’s like' or 'I know what he’s like.' But isn’t it better to get to know someone and not let their appearances, the way they look, make up our minds for us."

Again, Candace offers a formal performance as part of class events. The story is tied to the discussion on courage, but it also represents her thoughts about how the class needs to learn to listen to each other. She has a story to tell - the class laughs at appropriate times, but their role is audience, not teller. When they attempt to interrupt with stories of their own about things they thought looked bad, they are reminded that they are to listen when people are talking, that they are to be polite. Stories are told for their lessons and also to help students learn to be appropriate audiences.

Candace’s story about her friend Danny’s fall is in response to a student’s question about the meaning of acrophobia. Candace had said she NEVER stood on chairs, in response to a request that she get something for a student
on top of a cabinet. "Why not?" "Because I have acrophobia". She then said that she had climbed many trees, though, and in fact, there was one tree. She then went to the blackboard and drew a picture of the tree that stood over her apartment roof. She then sat down and began her story:

"Where I used to live, in Washington D.C. - I lived in an apartment complex. My friends and I used to climb the tree all the time. The only thing that used to save me was that - um - the branches of the tree almost touched the roof of the apartment building. And on one side there was a door... if you’ve never lived in a really large apartment building, it’s sort of hard for you to understand. But the roof kind of looked like this <elaborates on her tree drawing> and on the roof there’s a little thing like this and there’s a door and if you go inside the door there are steps going down to the different floors of the apartment building. There’d be a door here and then you’d go down a little bit - and there’d be another door... and another door... OK?

That’s how it was. And there was this tree and this tree had a branch so that I could climb up the tree and once I got up there I could jump down to the roof, which wasn’t very far. So I didn’t have to climb back down the tree. Well, the building super - his name was Mr. Johnstone - I think it was Johnstone, I really don’t remember for sure. It wasn’t Johnson, didn’t want us playing on the roof anymore. So what he did was - lock the door. So my friend Danny and I were up in this tree. I jumped down on the roof and then had to climb back in the tree. And my friend Danny said, 'Just climb on down.' So I stood there actually sat there - and Danny said, 'Don't look - just jump.' So he jumped. and when he jumped, his arm got caught in the fence and he got cut all the way around, it almost cut right through. <class says, OOOOH> Blood was everywhere. He didn’t cry or scream or anything because he was afraid to tell because he wasn’t supposed to be up the tree. So he thought he could hold his arm and maybe nobody would notice. But there was Miss Maddie who lived down on the first floor. Miss Maddie didn’t miss anything, ever. Ever. Ever. It could be happening down the street and around the corner and three buildings over and she would know about it. <class laughs> Miss Maddie saw Danny and ran out of the apartment building. Now do you think I was going to jump? <class choruses, NO!> I didn’t want my arm ripped out of the socket, so I sat there
for a long, long time. And every kid that went by I'd call, 'Hey, I'm stuck in this tree.' And they'd look up at me and say, 'Just jump' and I'd say, 'No, I don't want to get my arm ripped off.' So I wouldn't jump out of it. Well the only bad part was after we got to be adults. After we got older — the only thing that held his arm on was some cartilage and if he hadn't had that — cartilage next to the shoulder blade, shoulder blade bone, he would have lost his whole arm. He was very, very fortunate. And to this day — we, we stay in touch and I get a Christmas card from him and he still doesn't have the complete use of that hand and that arm.

But anyway Danny went to the hospital, forgot I was in the tree, didn't think of me probably until two or three days later. I could have still been in the tree for all Danny cared. He didn't send back help — if Danny had been stuck in the tree, I would at least have sent back the fire department. I would have said, 'Yeah, I know my arm is falling off, but I left my friend stuck in the tree.' But he did not care. I giggles> and he and I still argue about that. So I sat there for a long time — and I know it was acrophobia, I was definitely afraid to get down. Oh, I don't know how long I sat there. Then Miss Maddie started yelling, 'I'm going to tell your mamma.' So my mother came out and she said, 'Come on, get down.' And I didn't want to get down and get yelled at. So I started crying. Boo, hoo, hoo. <class laughs> 'I'm dying up here.' So there was a man — Mr. Johnstone still wasn't around — to get the door open. Or Mr. Johnston, I don't remember what his name was. But there was a man, we just called him The Man. The Man — we can't find the super — which is short for superintendent — but anyway — janitor/custodian, we couldn't find him — and a man who lived on eighth floor — he was able to get the lock broken off the door. And I jumped off the tree and onto the roof. My mom said, 'Let's go home now.' And Miss Maddie said, 'I'd beat her. I'd get a big stick and just beat her because she's been ornery.' And I thought, 'Why won't she mind her own business. Doesn't she have something else to do?' Because she went right back downstairs and got back in the window and watched the rest of the day. And so I didn't get into any trouble. Mother said, 'Now, stay out of the tree.' And to this day, I don't climb up on things. Never climb on ladders, I don't even stand on chairs. The work you see, Miss Ivy put up. I don't do that. The pictures that she has up there — you might get them back in June — and you might not. Depends on whether I can get someone in the room to take it down." <class raises hands and students call out, "I will! I will!">
This story is an elaboration on the term "acrophobia" but it is also a sharing of the source of one of Candace's fears. The students get joy from the telling, they laugh and are appropriately disgusted with the idea of a severed arm. Their responses are appropriate during the telling and they erupt only when they recognize the story has reached closure. It is late fall and the students are aware of correct audience response patterns. Candace's stories offer compelling entertainment, in return for which students listen and do not interrupt the flow of the narrative. Candace's stories are tied to specific classroom events and are based on specific childhood incidents but they quickly range to the universal.

Candace's moral tale of her mother and the locked door followed her giving a class assignment. She had read aloud Judith Viorst's My Mama Says..., a book in which a boy wonders if his mother really does know everything she has told him about is true. She says there are no vampires, for instance, but what if she's wrong. Candace tells the class they are to use the book as a "story starter." They are to think about the book and then write about how their mothers once made a mistake. "For instance," says Candace, I call this story The Day My Mother Made a Mistake:

"My mother told me whenever she left the apartment, 'always lock the door.' She said, 'Because all the people that live here and need to get in here have keys. I don't care who's on the other side of the door - you don't open
the door.' We lived in an apartment building that had eight floor. So one day she had gone downstairs in the basement where the laundry room was. And when she left, I locked the door. Soon there was a... <Candace knocks three times on a chair> and I said, 'Who is it?' 'Candace, open the door.' <said in exasperated, fast voice> Said, 'Can't do it.' <Candace knocks again> 'Open the door.' I said, 'You told me, everybody has keys who needs keys and they can open the door. How do I know you're my mamma. You might be someone who comes around and steals children.' I said, 'I can't tell if you're my Mamma or not or whether I should let you in.' 'Get a char, look out the peep hole, you will see.' So I got a chair, looked, and thought, 'Should I let her in?' 'Candace! Candace! If - you - don't - open - this - door - right - now' <said in measured, exasperated voice> and I had to open the door. She had forgotten to take her key. So she scolded me. And that night at the dinner table it came up in discussion, Dad said, 'Well, I think you did the right thing. Mom said lock the door when she leaves, don’t open it for anything.' So next time she had to take the key. And she never forgot her keys again."

Candace tells the story to illustrate a specific assignment, to write about an incident in which the mother made a mistake. But it also is a humorous tale in which the child has power over the adult. The class applauded at the end, indicating their appreciation of its subversive nature. Including the dynamics of the telling, Candace’s sound effects and imitation of her mother’s frustrated voice, enhances the humor of the story. The child, as with all good fool tales, is simply doing what she has been told to do by authority. For Candace, a master storyteller, any story serves many purposes, purposes that she understands clearly and seeks to communicate through her choice of words and style in delivering them.
Her telling of when she heard Dr. Martin Luther King follows a more serious assignment. The class is allowed to write freely in their journals, but they have been given some limits: the entries are to include no killing, no guns, and no blood and guts. The boys in the class groan at this, but Candace answers. "There is a lot of emphasis in society on killing weapons, and blood and guts. We need to start imagining peace." The Gulf War has begun, the students are fascinated, and every room in the school except Candace's is decorated with yellow ribbons. She continues, "You will begin working on a civil rights assignment. I want you to find all the information you can on Medgar Evars." She then sits down and tells her story:

"My father was a police officer. So the two things I remember most about the civil rights movement was the conflict between people in other places. Our neighborhood didn't have any problems so it was real hard for me to understand other places... See, we didn't have a problem in our neighborhood, but then most of my neighborhood, all except for one family - or two families - they were all mostly African-Americans - so we didn't have problems on our street. By my dad did have a problem at his job. Because being an African-American person he had to do his job. There was a lot of rioting, a lot of anger. But the one thing I remember the most about the civil rights movement was going to hear Dr. Martin Luther King outside of the Washington Monument. My dad picked me up in his cruiser. He used to ride a motorcycle and I was disappointed when he picked me up in his car. And he was going to work - and I had to sit with the secretary until it was time for him to come back and we would go on to hear Dr. King. And he felt that was something that was very important... So I remember going, my dad and I walked over - it wasn't very far. And there were so many people - I had never seen that many people in my whole life. Black people, white people, old people, young people, kids, babies, everybody. And we were pretty far away, so I wasn't really able to see. I kept asking my father, 'I can't see, I can't see', so my dad picked me up and put me
on his shoulders and he let me sit on his shoulders so I could see. Although it was far away, I got a chance to see Dr. King. I don’t remember all the things he said - I wasn’t paying much attention - and I really, really hate that now. I wish now I had paid attention to some of the things that he said. I still couldn’t understand why there was a problem... That’s the civil rights assignment... all the information you can about Medgar Evars."

Candace’s straightforward story of her trip to the Washington Monument with her father, supports the dignity of the civil rights movement. Although she was too young to know or appreciate what was going on, it was an important event for her father and her telling emphasizes that importance. She stresses the number of people who were there, that she got to see Dr. King, that she now hates that she didn’t listen to what he said. The story is told to set the stage for students to discover the violence that accompanied Dr. King’s nonviolence, the destructive power of hatred. She doesn’t elaborate on the people at the speech, and she could have told funny stories about what they were doing there. Instead she keeps a serious tone.

Candace proved to be a master, also, in her handling of distressing local events. A toddler had been killed the day before when he played with his policewoman mother’s gun. A man who was running for mayor was visiting Candace’s classroom and the class had many questions for him - how was he going to protect kids? Was he going to punish the policewoman? The candidate said it was a very
complicated situation, that he knew the mother had punished herself enough. And Candace explained how easy it was for kids in a policeman's household to get a gun, even one that had been "safely" put away:

"You know it's tough but my father was a police officer. and wherever he hid his gun, I found it. And not only the gun, but the bullets, also, because you know they were in separate places. But you are of an age that you can be educated to never, ever touch a firearm."

The story is told matter-of-factly. Candace stresses none of the words. The point of the story is in the last sentence. Weapons are dangerous and Candace's students are old enough and smart enough to stay away from them. Implied in the telling is the requirement that students recognize how curious they are about guns and to not blame the policeman for events she undoubtedly tried to prevent. You, not other people, are your responsibility when it comes to blame. But not when it comes to compassion.

One late spring day, the class has a visitor who has missed the bus back to his school. Candace greets him warmly, introduces him to a couple of "the guys" and puts him to work with another boy on a computer graphics project. Later that morning, the class read a story about Emma, an orphan, and they talked about how they illustrator showed how Emma was feeling. "She looks sad because her head is down" said one of the girls, "and her dress is a dark color." Candace stood by the blackboard, put her hands behind her back and told the story about Ursula:
"When I was growing up, there was a little girl living in our housing complex. She lived with her aunt and her mother and father, I don't know if they were dead or missing. But, I forget her name, Ursula <said loudly>, and Ursula would be in trouble all the time. She was mad at the world. She couldn't get along with the other girls in the neighborhood. And my mother always used to say, 'You don't understand, Ursula is not like you, you need to be extra nice to her.' So I tried. But then I realized one day. My father was a police officer. One day he got shot. There was a knock at the door and there was another police officer standing at the door. They don't tell you why they are there, for all you know they could be dead. My mother put on her coat and she left. It was then that I realized what if something happened to my dad. Then I realized I'd be mad at the world. And it wasn't so hard to be nice to Ursula after that. So I had a chance to see what it was like to not have one parent."

Candace stresses words in this story that explain the character of Ursula, she was alone and angry, the intervention of her mother, that she should be nice to Ursula, and the events that allowed Candace to understand Ursula a little better - "then I realized I'd be mad at the world." She deliberately uses "mad at the world" twice, once for Ursula and once for herself. The story followed a reading of a story of an orphan, but like all events in Candace's class it has multiple inspirations and meanings. It similarly reflected the need to be kind to others who may be in distress, people like the boy who missed his bus and had looked glum when he walked into the classroom, because misfortune can happen to you. When Candace is at her most serious, her narrative becomes understated. She has a sense of the power of contrasting calm with nearly chaotic events.
To hear Candace tell stories is to participate in a literary event. She carefully chooses what she tells. The stories are connected to classroom events, but they are also set off in a theatrical frame. The students become the audience as Candace becomes an actress, choosing words and tones of voice that enhance the underlying message of the words. Her stories are designed to offer scenes from her childhood as means of exploring the humanity of the stories' characters and of her listening class.

Fictional Approach

My father was a police officer
And wherever he hid his gun
I found it
And the bullets also

My father was a police officer
And one day he got shot
There was a knock at our door
Another officer stood at our door
Telling nothing
He could be alive or dead

My mother put on her coat
And left
And then I realized if
Something happened to my dad -
I'd be mad at the world

I'd remember our going together to
Hear Dr. Martin Luther King
There were so many people -
Black people, white people, kids,
Babies, everybody
I kept telling my dad, "I can't see"

Now I can see
But I still
Can't understand
Why there is a problem
Chapter V
Discussion

In Which the Storytellers Discuss with the Researcher Their Views of Themselves

"When I add it there I can look and watch people, how they receive it. You know it doesn't take long when you're talkin' for someone to tell how they received what you're sayin', and, uh, I can almost all the time tell if that was good, better, or worse."
- Ed Bell, storyteller, quoted in Richard Bauman's *Story, Performance, and Event*

This chapter explores the three teachers' analysis of themselves as tellers and teachers, based on interviews conducted with each teacher at the end of the study. The premise of this chapter reflects the work of Amy Shuman and her mentor, Dell Hymes (1986). Tellers were seen to have primary ownership rights to their stories and to any analysis of those stories or their telling. Hence, their words occupy a central position - the interviews with the teachers are transcribed with little commentary, other than an introduction stating my initial views on their storytelling. This chapter offers the viewpoints of the tellers in their language. The interviews followed the following general outline:
Do you see yourself as a storyteller? 
Why do you tell stories? 
What is your view of yourself as a teacher? 
How does this view relate to yourself as a storyteller? 
Did having me in the classroom affect your storytelling? 

The interviews with Jane and Candace were held informally at restaurants over drinks. The interview with Mary was conducted over a two day period during her free time at school. 

The chapter will again be organized by teacher. I will first discuss my views of the teacher as teller and then I will allow each teacher to speak for herself. 

Mary 

Because of Mary’s careful, formal delivery I saw Mary as a practiced, conscious storyteller. I assumed she deliberately used stories she felt would underline her pedagogical purposes, but I assumed they were familiar stories that just occurred to her as the class progressed. Instead, she admitted that her choice of stories was part of her lesson planning process. I noticed her stories included both her childhood and current family life. I didn’t think having me in the classroom would affect her because she seemed to have each class so carefully
organized and planned and she knew me fairly well. Because Mary knew me, though, she wanted to help me get needed data.

Mary talked a great deal about her life as a teacher and mother. As she talked, I realized that the nature of her telling reflects, not surprisingly, her response to her view of life around her. For her life is a delicate balancing act. She talks about how stressed her life is:

"Don't you feel like you're wearing all these hats all the time? I want to be a good teacher and mother and daughter and wife. I don't want to give anything up and I don't see why I should have to. It's just that it's sometimes so hard to be everywhere at once."

I ask if her giving so much contributes to her burnout and she replies:

I think it does but I think why can't I do what I love? Why do I have to give something up?

For Mary, she teaches and tells stories for the connections it offers her listeners. It ties her to her students and to her past and present, it ties her students to the emotional level in literature. She is stressed because of the emotional demands that she puts on herself, but it is those emotional demands that she most treasures. She explains how she chooses her stories:

K: Do you see yourself as a storyteller?

M: Yes, yes I do. I'm always looking for a way to hook students into the story. So I think "What stories can I tell to lead them into the novel." I'm always looking for emotion. Any way to tug at the heartstrings. I see it metaphorically, pulling the heartstrings, exercising the
insides and exercise is good.

She elaborates the importance of the emotional:

M: There's so much control and there's so much manipulation in storytelling -

K: Yeah, I agree -

M: and you can't tell people what to feel -

K: No -

M: But I think you're probably pretty cognizant of where, what you want them to feel -

K: Right -

M: So you manipulate the conditions, you manipulate the words, and you make an attempt, I think, to manipulate their thinking, to get them to what you hope they feel from this story.

Mary sees herself as a storyteller who deliberately chooses both her stories and the way in which she tells them. I ask her if she sees herself as a storyteller:

M: Yes, but I don't think I'm a real storyteller.

K: You're not?

M: No, I'm not. You're a storyteller because you've taken stories and learned them for the art of retelling them.

K: Oh, see, I think - it's interesting - so what do you see yourself as?

M: There's not really an art, there's an art to what you do.

K: No, I really do think there's an art to what you do. You tell what you tell well and for the purpose that you say.

M: There's spontaneous, no, they're not always spontaneous.

K: No, they're not always spontaneous. You do them so well, that's an art, I think.
M: You do?

K: So how do you do it?

M: You lead into it — you lead into it. You don’t just hit them with it —

K: Right.

M: You lead into it. You lead into a story.

K: And you consciously do that? I mean —

M: Yeah, you’re right. You’re leading into something. You’re not just —

K: You do. So you’re setting them up? Right?

M: Yes. And then — um — the more you lead into it — I think the more it whets their appetite.

K: Yes, I think you always want a little bit of tension — not so much that you lose it. You know what I mean?

M: Yeah. And it’s dangling a carrot in front of them. I mean, if you metaphorically (laughs) thought of this as fishing —

K: OK, if you thought about this as fishing — then —

M: then you’d bait the hook —

K: Mhmm

M: You’d get your bait and your gear. Maybe that’s just — your bait and your gear and so forth. Maybe that’s just human experience, that’s having the story to tell, that’s having something that’s happened —

K: Right.

M: Or the — being consciously aware of a story — that’s your bait and your hook and your gear and all that. right?

K: Yeah. And I think it’s very ancient. Don’t you?

M: I don’t know.

K: They always had something they wanted to tell somebody?
M: You make allusions to the emotional - and then when you aren't - yeah, this is the best bait - um - they're the fish, right?

K: Mmmrm.

M: They're out there. Then you pick the worm that you are going to use as the words.

K: I think you do reel back and forth with your voice.

M: Yes. You control the conditions because you expect to hook them. You hook them. If they're on the hook, then you've done the job.

Mary does not see herself as a storyteller but she practices the process of storytelling with the master teller's concern for audience. She admits earlier in the interview that deciding what stories to tell is part of her planning a teaching unit:

K: Do you deliberately plan to tell stories?

M: Yes, I think of a way to hook kids into the story. I plan what stories I will tell. I especially use it at the beginning of a unit. Or when I sense I'm losing the kids' interest.

She plans to tell stories, but also admitted she "deliberately put in more stories" to help me with my dissertation. The stories may have been more numerous, but Mary is a conscious storyteller regardless of the quantity of the collected stories. She tells stories to connect her students to the world around. She carefully chooses her stories, she carefully tells them, because of their emotional power:

K: The thing is that storytelling has gotten to be big bucks in some cases. That's not what I think is
particularly interesting. You might as well go to a **stage**, you might as well see a **play**.

M: Mmmmm.

K: But I do like to hear stories -

M: Well, you know, I think that's a part of our culture too. My kids, Maggie is 10 years old, and she still says, "Mommy, tell me a story." "What story do you want to hear?" "Just make up a story." We'll be driving in the car, and she says, "tell me a story, mommy."

K: You did that, with your dad, right?

M: Yeah. And kids like stories. We grew up on stories. And they love stories about themselves.

K: That is their connection to who they are. That Eve Merriam poem, "the land without" - I can't, see I need to memorize more stuff. "Land without dreams, land without hopes, places where no one can live. Land without memories."

M: I know what you are talking about.

K: Yeah. I think it's true. So when kids ask you for stories, it's an affirmation of who they are.

M: It's a way to connect.

K: Yeah.

M: I mean in the classroom, it's a way to connect too.

K: Right.

M: It's a way to find meaning. It's part of that search for meaning.

K: Right.

M: And it's connecting them, referencing them to their world.

K: Right.

Mary sees herself as a connection between her students, the books they read, and her larger world. She
chooses the stories as part of her lesson plan, carefully considering their emotional impact and carefully telling them so as to draw the audience into that empathetic level. She is a mother and teacher and teller simultaneously — what she values is emotional understanding. She teaches, she cares for her children, she worries about having enough stories for my dissertation because she cares for that larger universe of the human condition.

Jane

I assumed Jane’s stories to be a spontaneous part of her everyday classroom life. It seemed to me that her life was lived simultaneously, that she did not separate her role of teacher from that of mother and wife and participator in world around. Her stories seemed to be unplanned, almost unconscious, responses to classroom events. Their existence was the result of free association, part of Jane’s sharing herself with her class.

Jane explains the source of her stories:

K: Do you consciously think of the stories you’re going to tell the kids or are they sort of spontaneous?

J: No, no — they’re usually all spontaneous. In fact, they caught me telling on — I don’t know if you were there — "You told us that one already!" <J uses whining voice>

Oh yeah, well. No, usually they come up in a spelling sentence. They start out that way.

K: I was going to say — ask — if you noticed that — because you do tell a lot of ‘em during spelling tests.

J: Yeah. And they said, um, most teachers, I imagine, read them out of the book.
K: Right.

J: A lot of teachers probably do. But I always try to make 'em up. I've always done that. Um, I think in every subject area, it just makes it more living. It makes the material more alive, I guess, and more interesting.

K: Is that why you tell 'em?

J: I don’t know, I don’t know that, I mean that’s just how I am.

K: That’s part of who you are?

J: Yeah. But I think looking at it objectively that’s what it must do to my class. I have very good parent support - I tell stories at conferences too.

K: Do you?

J: I talk about my kids - you know - and I think it puts them at ease.

For Jane, stories are a way of sharing herself and the joy of living. She talks explains why she tells stories:

K: Why do you think you tell stories?

J: It makes life interesting?

K: In what ways?

J: It makes - it probably - it makes me seem more real to the kids - she’s a mother, she’s got kids our age, she has problems, money gets tight. Ah, sometimes I’ll bring stuff like that up. You know, you know kids will talk about "my dad, my dad" - we would talk about alcohol in health class - and one kid said something about "my dad has beer" <J uses amused tone of voice> and I said, "Hey, is your father over 21?" "Yeah." "Well, that’s OK," I said, "even I have an occasional beer or two." And they’d say, "No, but he drinks the whole six pack." It’s just - I think it helps bridge the gap of - of generations, maybe? - and the age gap plus the gap of teacher, student. I think it helps us both communicate, both sides. I call 'em gramma - did I say gramma stories?

K: Yeah.
J: Gramma stories, right? I got that from Mr. C, Dierdre's old teacher, because whenever they'd have a test - or - spelling test in particular - he'd use a sentence and they'd always raise their hands and he'd say "that's enough gramma stories." You know, someone will talk about their gramma, someone will talk about theirs - and they're just called gramma stories when they go on and on at more inappropriate times. Sometimes you just have to take a break and listen to them.

For Jane, being seen as accessible is key to her role as both a teacher and storyteller. She explains how she sees herself:

K: How do you see yourself as a teacher?

J: Well, today I was at the swimming pool and, boy, all my students saw me in my bathing suit. <K laughs> And some of 'em got real shy. Hey, some of the boys, you know, they all say, "Hi, Mrs. ----" And how do I see myself as a teacher? I think, I think I'm approachable. I think kids know that. They also know I'm not going to put up with their malarkey. They must know I yell - you know I yell - a lot, but they also know they get a fresh start with me every day. But there's something about the way I do it. Maybe I yell at them like their mother does - you know, or something like that.

K: Do you see yourself as a mother to the kids or do you -

J: At times, but, but - someone who's a little freer than a mother would be. Like - like an aunt - you know - an aunt - at times.

K: A nice Italian aunt.

J: Yeah. Mamma F.

K: Mamma F.

J: Mamma F. But - um - there's something I know. The little kids all say "hi" to me and I know I never had some of them and the older kids tend to say "hi" to me. They know - a sense of humor is one thing, I think. A storyteller has to have a sense of humor and so does a teacher or forget it. I saw Jimmy today at the pool and he saw so shy. I couldn't -
K: Jimmy was?

J: Jimmy was - Jimmy who's in my face all the time - he was so shy. <K laughs> The last time, the last day of school, he sat right next to me in assembly by my feet - and I said, "You're going to bug me til the last minute of school, aren't you Jimmy?" And he said "Yep". <K laughs> And that was, he was... so where are we

K: Yeah. So then I was going to ask how does your view as an approachable, auntie-type teacher relate -

J: Auntie Mame!

K: That's right.

J: Rosalind Russell in "Auntie Mame."

K: It's my fantasy.

J: It's my - it's my favorite movie. My husband won't watch it. I taped it from TV and it just - I love it - you know, on my night alone - nobody was home - I just howled to "Auntie Mame." But it's got to be Rosalind Russell, you know - well, well, well, well, well.

K: She's another one of those aunts I wanted to be. so how does your view of yourself relate to how you see yourself as a storyteller?

J: Well. Look at, if Auntie Mame could spin 'em. She was a colorful person - and I think, storytelling adds color to your life, adds color to others, to the lives of others.

Jane tells stories to enhance life. She sees herself as a storyteller, but a spontaneous one. Jane says about her stories:

"Yeah, I very rarely think of consciously - ah ha! this would be a good story. I don't know, I just, it just comes out. It's just kind of who I am."

She may not consciously think of the stories, but she is clearly aware of her audience as she tells them:

K: Do you see yourself as a storyteller?
J: I guess, at times, I do. Um, I know I’ve got the kids in the palm of my hand when I either read to them
K: Right.
J: Or when I’m telling them about my life.
K: Right.
J: My - my kids - as soon as they hear Patrick or Dierdre they’re just there - I don’t know if you noticed that.
K: Yes, I did.
J: And they love it when I say "Daniel" - they think it’s really cool that - that - I say my husband’s name and they’re privileged to hear that. Uh, I guess, at times - I - I tell terrible jokes. <K laughs> But there’s been some good yarns. Somebody said that I did at one time and sometimes I race ahead and keep interrupting myself and don’t finish sentences and I don’t know why I do that - but I guess - eh - I guess I would consider myself a spinner of yarns. <uses self-mocking tone>

Jane is a self-aware storyteller whose storytelling is both an intentional technique to enhance communication and an unconscious part of herself. She worried about having me in the classroom at first, but quickly incorporated my presence into her classroom environment:

K: Did having me around affect your storytelling any?
J: No, I thought it might.
K: Yeah.
J: At first I thought - but then you were so - so easy - to have in my room - not that I didn’t notice you, but - I didn’t care, you know, if I yelled at the kids in front of you I didn’t care - I was very much myself. Um, maybe I thought about it if you were there a morning and maybe I didn’t tell any stories - you know - but that’s life.

For Jane, storytelling and teaching and her life form
a simultaneous, seamless whole:

K: You know, I saw your class and I see it, not as completely free form, but I think when you tell stories it's kind of free association, something leads to something.

J: Unhn. That's kind of the way I teach. I'm not one for teaching right out of the book. I wanna - wanna make it come alive for the kids.

Candace

When I observed Candace, I felt I was watching a master storyteller. Her stories seemed to have the perfect form that comes from repeated tellings. I imagined the stories were deliberately chosen for their content or theme and that while Candace may have been reminded of an individual story by on-going classroom events, the stories she told had been told before. I felt she must see herself as a storyteller and that my presence in her classroom had had a negligible effect on events.

Candace is an accomplished, reflective teacher with a very clear sense of her role in the classroom:

K: How do you see yourself when you teach?

C: I don't know. I never really thought about it. I, I know I'm a teacher - and I use that teacher slash facilitator - it's not like I'm really giving these pearls of wisdom, that I'm giving all this knowledge, you know, parting their head and pouring it all - all this stuff in. right? <K laughs> As much as I'm saying "here it is - right -let me show you how you best can achieve it if you want it. You know, I think teachers sometimes get stuck in the fact that all kids want to know long division. <K and C laugh> I mean, there may be some that have elected not to know it, for some weird reason, but -

K: But do you really think about what you're doing?
C: I don’t really think about it - I don’t know - I’m a teacher/facilitator -

K: So you never really thought about it - you just -

C: I always thought I would be a storyteller when I retire, but I never think of myself as a storyteller right now even though I know I do tell stories.

She has a clear sense of herself as teacher. She also has a very clear sense of the purpose behind her telling stories:

K: Do you think of the stories you’re going to tell - or do they just sort of -

C: Not always - sometimes - I mean a lot of it’s more spontaneous. So, if I’m telling a story during storytime

K: Right.

C: Or say, "I’m going to tell you a story about whatever, but if it’s just a spare moment kind of thing - that’s something I think fits, then I’ll tell that story, if it’s my life experience, then I’ll share that, and if it isn’t then I’ll try to make up some kind of scenario - kind of - as you’ve seen me do - especially with that math group, who struggle, I want you to know, to help and have some relevance to their life. Because if children don’t feel that what they’re doing has some authenticated relation to the world, it’s a waste of time. And I think we undersell children’s ability to know what they need to know and what they don’t. I think children have a good deal of knowledge about that. We always say what’s good, what’s good for you. I think that adults are the last - they know least about what’s good for children, sometimes. Kids know what’s good for kids.

K: So when you share parts of, parts of your life, is that to connect with what is real with you?

C: And how I made the connection.

K: How you made the connection -

C: How I made the connection. And it’s usually something related to my childhood. Yeah, most of the time, you know? Some stupid related things - um - which the kids like a lot.
K: Right.

C: They’re really involved with the fact that I was still a student and I could tell them student stories. They were excited. They were really excited about that. Um, but I don’t know how I view myself. I know I’ve been given the title teacher but I think that word does touch really everything that I do. To teach means not necessarily to tell - you know, and being told isn’t being taught - so I don’t know how much actual teaching I do. I think I do a lot of facilitating, a lot of guiding, a lot of - um - supporting, a lot of nurturing, a lot of suggesting, and in the process, the children learn and are more self-taught than being taught by me.

Candace tells stories to show children, whose instincts she trust implicitly, how she learned to cope with the world. The stories are told for a purpose and that purpose is tailored for each group of children she teaches:

K: When you - how do you learn the stories you tell? Do you see them or are they just such an organic part of you that you couldn’t not tell them that way or -

C: You mean, give me an example?

K: For instance the story you told about falling, about your friend falling off the roof -

C: Yeah, yeah, OK.

K: OK, when you’re telling that story - I mean, have you told it a number of times, have you edited it down, do you see it when you telling it, I mean how does it become one of your stories?

C: Well, I do see it when I tell it. As a matter of fact, when I tell it I’m reliving it, sort of. But I’m there. So, I’m in and out of it. I’m out as a narrator, then when I’m talking, I’m doing the characterization, I’m there. And I don’t always tell the same stories, ‘cause every group of children needs to hear different stories. Their stories are real individual, there are some parts of stories that they don’t need to hear - I may leave that part out and expand a little on another part - um - I think bout the story of my father and the gun -
K: Unhnh

C: And we talked about that - um - and the kids wanted to hear more about that later - and it was like - "What happened? Tell us more about your dad and the gun" and that type of thing or "Tell us again about when your dad got shot" because the children of today are living more and more with guns as part of their lives, they’re living more and more with people being shot and hurt every single day. They have a need to hear stories related to that and I think they need to hear more successful ones.

K: Right.

C: You know, where my dad got shot but he didn’t die you know that type of thing. There’s just so much tragedy.

K: Um, this class you had last year, what kind of stories do you think they needed?

C: They didn’t need as many fight stories. I mean -

K: No, Rickie does not need any more fight stories.

C: I would say, this group needed more... needed more stories that helped them remember that it’s OK to be a kid, that irrespective of all the pressures on them that it’s OK to be a child, that you can be very mature about things, but still be a child -

K: Right.

C: ’Cause I think the girls in my class were very mature little girls, especially for their age. And I was too, so they were able to relate to stories about developing their autonomy in a world of adults that wants to keep them in their place as children. Um, last year’s group, I think, needed more stories that helped them develop their interpersonal skills and how to just get along with each other and to realize that rules are made to protect them, because they were forever breaking not classroom rules but school rules... um, not crossing where the crossing guard was, hanging out of bus windows. One boy crossed in front of a bus last year, I mean walked behind a bus last year. Those kinds of things. A lot of it was just defiance of the rules.

Candace is a storyteller with mastery of her material and purpose. She barely noticed my being in her classroom:
"you see how many people are in and out of our building, so if I cared who was there, I’d be in trouble." She thinks about what stories to tell, what stories will serve both the educational and emotional needs of her students. Her telling transcends its initial purpose, though. She becomes an artist, consciously alternating between narrator and participating character. She is able to explain what makes a series of events a story:

K: Have you always told stories? Have you always done -

C: Yeah, I would say yes. When I used to be a secretary, people in the office always used to say to me - you know, you always have a story to tell. And a lot of it was life experience kind of stuff that was happening. But people always used to say "I love to hear you talk about whatever it is you talk about." Just going to the bank, it becomes a story. And I think... it’s the way you deliver details, the things, the ability to make it live for the persons that are listening. Well, you can talk about "I went to the bank. I withdrew money." <uses flat tone>

K: Right.

C: But you can also talk about the people that were in line in front of you and behind you, what you saw on the street on the way, who you talked to and who you didn’t talk to, what you were wearing. I mean all those types of things. Then make it a story, not just a telling of details of an event.

Candace has, perhaps, more artistic control of the medium of storytelling than Mary or Jane, but her elemental motivation remains the same. She too seeks to share herself, to make herself accessible to her students, to create an empathetic environment in her classroom. She talks about the need for teacher to appear to be real
Some people, a lot of teachers, are very cautious about being themselves. And that is why I think stories are a wonderful way to do that. When you get to know a friend, it's usually after you've sat down and had a few glasses of red wine - 'cause red wine is the tell-all - you notice I ordered white. <C and K laugh> But usually, you sit down, have a couple of glasses of red wine, and you start telling things about yourself. You start saying things about - and telling stories - I mean, when I was in high school, I did this, this, and this. And they say, "Oh yeah, when I was in high school I did that - or my best friend - or that guy was this way" or whatever - and you share bits and pieces of yourself and disclose bits and pieces of yourself through story. And I think that in a classroom, if you can do that, then that creates a window for the children to then get to know you. Now, windows can have shades and they can have blinds and they also can be stained glass <C laughs> - you know, you still can't see through them, so you have to be real careful that you don't create a facade, you know, making children think that you're going to make it possible for them to get to know you and then cut it off. It has to be a true, clear window that they can actually see. Then later on they become a door, because they can enter and then together they can share back and forth. And children share stories about themselves. I mean, why do you think it's teachers who are the ones who find out first who's been abused and who - those types of things - because they feel they have that rapport with the person - um - once when I taught first grade they loved to hear me tell over and over again was when I - was the story about my friend Brin and I who used to take the short cut home from school. And the principal told us on the very first day of school that there was a certain way we were not permitted to walk home. And we did it, we did it for months. Months and months and months. And part of it was jumping across a stream - it was sort of like a little creek and there wasn't a lot of water - more mud than anything - and I ran, and in the process of running to jump across, I slipped and fell into this murky mire. The water had basically dried up and I had mud from the bottom of my feet to the back of my neck, 'cause I'd sort of sl-i-i-i-d through. And having to go to school - 'cause I couldn't go home, my mother would kill me. She would have hurt me desperately. And trying to wash my clothes out in the rest room. My principal finding out and me lying to cover up for my friend 'cause she - He asked who else was with me and I said nobody, I was by myself. Um, and then I'm the one who had the maximum penalty. Something like the electric chair - 'cause I wouldn't tell on my friends. Um - so, it's those types of things that
get open in the air and then they see that you were a person. Because they just put themselves up here somewhere and the kids are down here and they're never approachable."

Mary, Jane, and Candace form a trio of teachers who share stories about themselves to help students approach teachers as human beings and the world as compassionate citizens. They consciously share stories to reinforce what they consider most important that students learn—that they are real people who care about their students.
Chapter VI
Epilogue

In Which the Researcher Muses on the Importance of Studying Stories

"Persons attempting to find a motive in this narrative will be prosecuted; persons attempting to find a moral in it will be banished; persons attempting to find a plot in it will be shot."
- Mark Twain, The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn

Musings on the retelling of stories

The writing of this dissertation represented, for the researcher/writer a sort of unholy compromise between the demands of the academy and the call of fiction. Ultimately, I chose to fictionalize the stories because it seemed to me to be the best way to explore the nature of the storytellers without violating their confidences. In the stories I chose to retell, I was able to make explicit sides of the character and family life that I could not state directly without betraying their trust. Thus the stories I wrote based on the stories they told, represent my response as an adult listener to the stories they told their students. I am quite certain children would not respond to the stories, or see the same themes, as I did.
Another’s future study should include such responses by the students. They could be asked what they thought about the stories; their stories told in response could be recorded. Also, I am quite certain another adult listener would write quite different fiction based on the stories told.

The fictional sections of the dissertation represent, of course, the most personal, idiosyncratic part of the study. I chose the stories to fictionalize, among the ones I heard, because to me, as researcher and fiction writer, they represented the best raw material to explore and make explicit a storyteller as a human character. In a sense, though, any study of any event is a personal response to that event, or series of events. I deliberately chose the stories I analyzed, among the stories told, because they seemed to capture the nature of the stories each teller told over time. I then arranged the stories, in a roughly novelistic form (simple forms leading to complicating forms and resolution, a sort of crescendo for each teller), within the dissertation. Stories went from flat to most elaborate (Mary’s stories to Candace’s). Each story was similarly brought to life - first the story was written as a collection of words, then it was put into the classroom context in which it was told and indications of its texture given. My intent in so arranging the stories was to lead the reader into the world of the classroom and, through fiction, into the inner world of the storyteller.
The study nods to the academy in presenting chapters on methodology and related research, steps that seem to me to be important in establishing fiction as a valid resonance of what I saw. Mary’s story of the letter, to me, represents the pull she feels between family responsibilities and the outside world. It is written in third person to reflect her formal, distanced storytelling style and classroom. Jane’s story about school for her and her daughter underlines her synthesis of public and private life. It is told in first person to underline her informal tone in storytelling and classroom management. Candace, the most polished and formal of the tellers, is represented by a poem. I could see no way to change the words she’d obviously so carefully honed over time and wanted a form that reflected the dignity of the event. I would have felt uncomfortable writing such fiction if I had not done the research that made me feel I knew these tellers at nearly a bone-deep level. Nevertheless, in writing the dissertation, I felt the tension between showing I had done substantial research, presenting its strengths and limitations, and finding a form that would make it live for its readers. This dissertation was the result. The struggle, I think, in future research studies will lie in finding ways to make the data live without violating the events and participants that created it. This dissertation is an early skirmish in that battle.
Musings on the telling of stories

This dissertation represents an early exploration of the nature of teachers' personal experience narratives. To date, the scholarship of such narratives lies with the folklorists, not with education researchers. The studying of the stories teachers tell represents, I think a rich mine for future studies of both folklorists and education researchers. This study could do no more than examine a very tiny part of an iceberg worthy of the Titanic. I studied three teachers in their classrooms over the period of an academic year. Some observations can be made, based on these three individual cases, but I must stress that these observations are only my perceptions of three teachers. Much more research on the nature of personal narrative in educational settings needs to be done - more teachers, more grade levels, observations that include whole days and whole weeks rather than the three to four hours I observed in each classroom each week. Perhaps the approach should be an ethnography of classrooms or courses where the researcher records all the stories told in a classroom. The biggest gap, I feel, in my study is all the stories I deliberately did not record because of access issues. For what happens, as Candace notes in talking about teachers knowing about events like child abuse, is that a classroom becomes a storytelling community. Teachers tell stories about their lives, create a climate
in which individual experience is valued and students, in turn, respond with stories of themselves and their lives. This study states that it placed the stories in context but, in truth, the richness of the true context was missed. Students did tell stories about themselves and, I think, those stories need to be included and studied before any sense of personal experience storytelling in classroom contexts can be gained. I did gain some insights as I studied and wrote about the stories, but I remain painfully aware of all that I missed. I chose to present the stories in three modes — narrative structure, performance, and fiction — as a way of capturing some of their richness.

What I saw during my study was a real attempt by teachers to share parts of themselves in order not only to elaborate an academic point (Mary’s story about voting, Jane’s story about the sump pump, Candace’s story about acrophobia) but also to present their ethical values. It seems that a willingness to share your life through story entails the sharing of what you truly value. On the surface the stories and tellers seem quite different. Mary’s classroom and stories have a much stricter structure than Jane’s; Candace’s stories are much more elaborate than either Jane’s or Mary’s. Such differences are, of course, expected. Telling personal stories is an intimate act that reflects the personality of the teller, as does the organization of the classroom. Looking at Jane’s
classroom, you would expect a different teller than the teacher in Mary's classroom. What I find interesting is what the tellers share - they all have deliberately chosen storytelling as a way to foster the empathetic side of their students. Reading their stories, or listening to them, you have a very clear sense of what this storyteller values. Candace tells the story of the orphan neighborhood girl; Mary tells the story of her being ignored at the grocery store; Jane tells the story of her daughter's hating school. You know what societal values they are supporting or attacking, but, also, you know that they value creating a climate where students can explore themselves and their values.

Based on my observations in the classroom, I feel storytelling study represents an invaluable way to study both teachers and classroom culture. It is significant, I think, that all three teachers, who stated in their interviews that they saw storytelling as a way to appear to be human, told many stories in the fall when the norms of the classroom are being established. They consciously used storytelling as a way to show the students not only aspects of their personality but also to emphasize that this was going to be the sort of classroom in which individuals and individual experience would be valued. To be a teller of personal experience narratives is to be a willing sharer of one's inner self. The three tellers I watched had very
different personalities and very different styles of classroom organization, but all three valued empathy above all else.

It seems to me, as the world for children becomes harsher and more uncertain, that classrooms should increasingly be places where stories of the inner self, of hopes and dreams and past triumphs or pains, are not only welcomed but fostered and encouraged. To foster storytelling is to foster what is human, that which ties us all together regardless of our status or age or ethnic group. We, teachers and students, need to learn about each other, need to learn to listen to each other, if we have any hope of understanding one another.

I think educational research can do much to foster tolerance in classrooms by studying stories. Investigation promotes legitimacy and so may encourage more storytelling.

To study the stories told in schools is to begin to understand what really goes on in a classroom, what is really valued and supported, what really fosters a climate in which students can grow and learn. Sandra Stahl (1983) eloquently states the importance of personal narrative study:

"Studies of personal narratives could help in the exploration of American beliefs and values... I am convinced that the personal narrative can be useful in discovering the more secular values of Contemporary Americans as well. Students can learn to assess the aesthetic values and techniques used in the telling of oral stories. Ethical values, personal goals and hopes, dominant themes and guiding principles - all these covert but
dynamic forces are hidden in these unassuming everyday tales. Curiosity charms us into asking why these personal experience stories are so pervasive in American culture... Obviously there are many reasons why we tell such stories. One outstanding reason is that through personal experience stories we articulate and then test the values that identify ourselves." (p.275)

This dissertation represents a beginning study of teachers' stories. It is written in the hope that others will listen to more such stories so that we may know not only who we are as teachers and students but who we hope to be.
APPENDIX A

PARTICIPATION FORM

I agree to participate in Kathleen Whalin's dissertation, "Stories Teachers Tell."

As a participant, I understand I have the right to veto the use of any of my stories and to read any and all parts of her dissertation. I understand neither my name nor the name and location of my school will appear in the dissertation. I have the right to withdraw my participation.

__________________________
researcher

__________________________
participant date
APPENDIX B

SAMPLE FIELDNOTES

11-7-90 Candace

blackboard: Marie
Curie’s birthday- chemist and physicist

Is your invention ready? Schedule journal- 10 things that make you laugh
journal pledge math
circle cards
recess lunch
com. arts
phys ed

desk arrangement:

xx xx xx
xx xx xx
xx xx xx
x xx xx
x

x(Candace’s desk)

9:15 sign Pledge of Allegiance
attempt singing "Star Spangled Banner"

9:30 go over division facts
   talk about how mathematical tables work, practice making one based on how many kids in class liked "Chuckie II"
10:20 silent reading

10:35 end silent reading. read chapter book aloud- Viorst’s *My mama says..*

C: "We need to pay attention to our story starter. I want you to write about how your mother made a mistake. I remember the day my mother made a mistake. I call it The Day My Mother Made a Mistake. (* recorded story)
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