

Storytimes and Transitions with

Lessons for Early Educators from Youth Librarians

with Amadee Ricketts



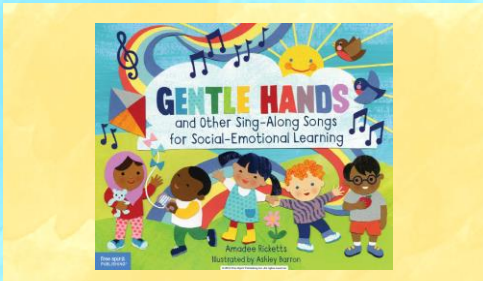


Education

- Master's degree in Library and Information Science
- Coursework in children's literature, storytelling, and public services
- ...but not child development

Experience

- Fourteen years in youth services
- Thousands of public storytime sessions for all ages
- Hundreds of outreach visits and programs



Key topics for this session

Making storytimes and circle times more lively, inclusive, and fun:

- Strategies to build in flexibility and social-emotional awareness
- Making the most of music, rhyme, and rhythm
- Boosting storytimes with interactive reading techniques





What can librarians and early childhood educators learn from each other?

More than you might think!

New approaches to storytime in public libraries



First introduced in 2004, ECRR marked a dramatic shift in the way libraries approached early literacy

- Research based
- Focused on caregivers
- Built around **six skills**

- ECRR2 (2011) improved on the original:
 - Parent-friendly language
 - **Five practices**



A successful library storytime generally includes these elements:



Picture books

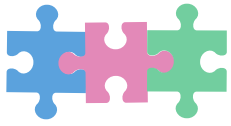


Songs



Rhymes
or fingerplays

I would use the same elements to plan a class visit or outreach storytime...



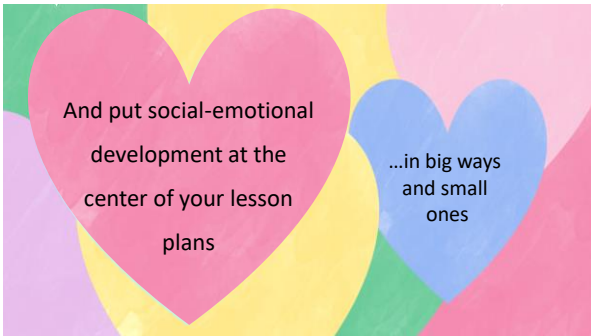
but not every classroom reading time calls for every component.

Whatever else you add
or subtract, the most
important element is

HEART

(social-emotional awareness)






And put social-emotional
development at the
center of your lesson
plans

...in big ways
and small
ones

We will touch on the central elements of storytime:



Picture books
Songs
Rhymes
or fingerplays

...but shift the order and emphasis to fit today's topics

Make the most of music!

Singing is a key part of storytime for several reasons:

- *Singing helps children hear the smaller sounds that make up words*
- *Singing engages auditory learners and encourages participation*



Poll

Question: Is singing a regular part of the day in your center or classroom?

- Answers:
- a.) Yes
 - b.) No
 - c.) We sing occasionally

Music and memory

The biggest reason to include singing in storytime:

- ***Singing is a uniquely powerful way to teach new concepts and vocabulary***

This is true because there is a deep connection between music and memory





Let's try a quick experiment

Do you know your ABCs?

You might want to grab a pencil, or just get ready to type a couple of letters.

There are two questions. Please come up with the answers as fast as you can!

Which letter comes first, Y or W?

W – the order is W, X, Y, Z.

How many letters fall between N and R?

3 – O, P, and Q.

Let's look at the answers.

Now let's consider how you got there so quickly:



Poll

Question: To answer the questions about letter order, did you sing or think about the alphabet song?

- a.) Yes, I sang the song.
- b.) Yes, I thought about it.
- c.) No, the song did not cross my mind.



For most people, thinking of the tune is the easiest way to remember the order of the letters.

Music provides "hooks" for memories and information and also connects strongly with our emotions.

The combination of these things makes it especially valuable in working with young children.





Get caught singing!

Songs are an important element of storytime, and they can serve the same role throughout the day:

- **Welcome song**
- **Cleanup song**
- **Storytime song**
- **Goodbye song**



Along with easing transitions, songs can help establish positive routines and set children up to succeed.

Can't I just play an MP3?

Recorded music can be a lot of fun and has a place in most early childhood classrooms. But it is no substitute for singing!

Singing:

- *Builds a personal connection with children*
- *Allows you to adjust pace, tone, and content*
- *Helps children take an active role*






Back to storytime!

To theme or not to theme?

PROS: Adds structure
Simplifies planning
May add variety and interest

CONS: Can lead to inflexible thinking
May contribute to weak book selections



Select your books

Set yourself up for success!

- Look for books that are bright, brief, and interactive.
- Pull more books than you think you need, so you can adjust for your group (more on this in a moment).
- *ALWAYS* read through a book at least once before reading it aloud to a group.

- Choose books you are excited about sharing.
- Remember that *how* you read is nearly as important as *what* you read.



"Amadee's Storytime Picks" booklists highlight titles that work especially well with the interactive reading techniques we'll look at shortly.



- Look for books that feature a wide variety of children and families.
- Include different kinds of books—stories, poems, nonfiction, wordless books.

Looking for new favorites? Children's librarians keep up with the latest releases, and they love to talk about books!

When it's time for a story, we...

- Each find our spot in the circle
- Sing a special song
 - "If You're Ready for a Story"
 - "Listening Ears"
- Take a moment to calm down
- Know what to expect
 - Visual schedule or clear verbal cues



Both!

Having a clear routine gives kids a chance to shine.

Adding flexibility *within* the routine lets you tailor the experience to your group.

Set flexible expectations:

Some children learn best when they sit still and listen. Others need to keep moving. That's okay!

If a behavior does not harm anyone or actively interfere with other children's learning, err on the side of adaptability.

Build in flexibility by "bracketing" your book selections:

very short / medium / longer
mellow / medium / energetic
silly / medium / serious

This makes it easy to adjust on the fly, and ensure that the pace and tone are right for your group.

Having a good selection of books matters more than sticking with a topic.

Add flexibility with good transitions:

- rhymes* songs* fingerplays
- props puppets
- movement activities simple games



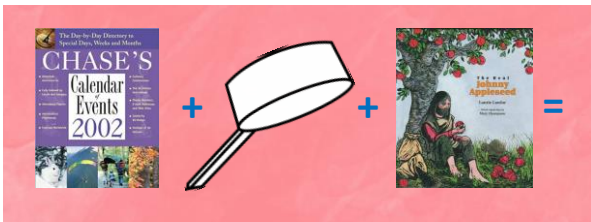
Add flexibility with buffer time:

When possible, give yourself a few minutes of leeway. Having a great time? Go long! Kids are done? Wrap it up!

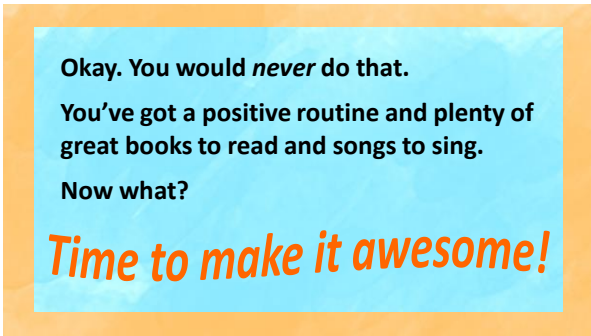
Now for an example of why flexibility is key:

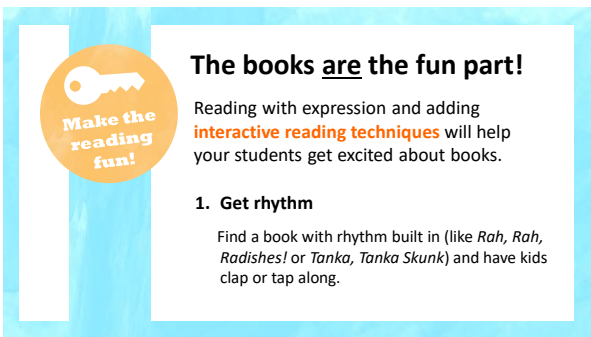


How **NOT** to do it... starring yours truly









2. Say it again

Find a book that includes a repeated word or phrase (like *Hooray for Hat!* by Brian Won or *The Cow Loves Cookies* by Karma Wilson).

Share the repeated element with kids and ask for their help repeating it.

Be prepared for *extreme participation!*

3. Sing out

Find a singable book and sing it!





4. Embrace repetition

Does your class love a certain story? Read it again! If the story lends itself to interpretation, try reading it, telling it, and singing it. Then make a craft project about it and read it again.

5. All together now

Find a book that lends itself to choral reading (like *I Went Walking* by Sue Williams) and have children repeat the words after you.

6. Ask questions

Give your students a chance to get involved by asking questions about a story as you read.

Asking open-ended questions (“How is Elephant feeling now?”) and giving children a chance to respond is called **dialogic reading**. It gives kids a chance to feel invested in a story.

7. Mix it up

Add fun transition activities and feature many kinds of books!



Add rhymes and fingerplays!

Like songs, rhymes help children hear the smaller sounds in words.

They are also excellent memory aids.

Many children's books and songs rhyme, giving you the benefits of rhyme combined with other great elements.





Fingerplays and movement activities are great for transitions because:

- They "get the wiggles out" and release energy before calmer activities.
- They give the whole group an easy way to get on the same page.
- Like songs and rhymes, they help children with different learning styles connect with the subject matter.



Ready to put it all together?

