

Do Tell Story Swap Summaries

December 10, 2024

Vicky Ness started the evening with a pocket story – a short story a teller can always have ready to tell for any occasion. Hers was the tale of a strange peddler who came to town offering what he called the Elixir of Life. It was a smelly, disgusting brew. Would people drink it?

Beth Wakelee told a traditional fairy tale from The Jupiter Tree, in which the hero tried to find a situation that would make his flesh crawl. And he did!

Renu Narayan came to us from India to share a story about a cat who wanted to find the best and strongest friend. Was it the lion? The elephant? Or someone else altogether?

Sharon Elwell told a personal story about her 7 th grade student and his bad luck pants. Rose Owens told a story she wrote about the Santa Train that goes through Appalachia every year and a child who learned the best gift.

Sree Karuna joined from India to tell the story of a wife who learned how to win the heart of her grumpy husband.

Katy Mangan closed the evening with a solstice story that begins with the goddess of winter, the Cailleach, turning Eduardo's world cold and ends with a sunrise promising a return to light and warmth. A perfect ending for a December evening of stories!



TELLABRATION!™ 2024

DO TELL STORY SWAP SONOMA COUNTY

TELLABRATION!™ Summaries – November 12

Joining with storytellers in 40 states and nine countries, more than 300 groups are telling stories during the annual November TELLABRATION!™. The Do Tell group shared a delightful evening. We were joined by Ken Foster in Utah and Marian Ferrante, both of whom were founding members of our group in 2011, and Alicia Retes, our guest teller, who told her first stories with us a few years ago and has gone on to be a professional teller in libraries throughout California.

Alicia Retes, drew on her ethnic heritage, which includes Yaqui, the “fighting farmers,” from whom she took the story of a man who sold his brother to perform as a bear. The betraying brother gets an unexpected recompense.

Meg Brown also drew on her heritage to tell the story of her grandfather, a merchant marine during World War II, who saved his ship, which was sinking in the freezing water of the North Atlantic, because tea – his lifeline – was on that ship.

Katy Mangan shared a personal story of her “Sacred Stones and Sites” pilgrimage to Scotland. We were shivering as she recounted her visit to the shrine of the Cailleach – the goddess of winter – and what she learned from that challenging adventure.

Vicky Ness told a “gentle, slightly magical” story of the spirits of the past and the spirits of the future who share a profound respect for a struggling teenager, whose life represents the present.

Brandon Spars ended the evening with a hilarious story of his disastrous honeymoon, when he took his Indonesian bride to visit his grandmother’s cabin in a remote area of Missouri.



Do Tell Story Swap Summaries

October 08, 2024

We had a great night of storytelling!

Vicky Ness opened the evening with a story she composed about a woman who wanted a beautiful kimono to wear to the August Bon festival. As she helped cook, clean up, and assist others attending the festival, her kimono became stained. Her husband taught her an important lesson about those stains.

Rose Owens, a professional teller, joined us from Livermore. She shared a Chinese folk tale about a boy who wanted to paint the most beautiful things he saw and eventually got a magic brush. After that, everything he painted became real, with surprising consequences.

Meg Brown told “The Widow’s Broom,” a story by Chris Van Allsburg. The widow gets a broom that cleans for her and does many more tasks. Is it a good thing or – as her neighbor Mr. Spivey believes – an evil thing?

Sharon Elwell told an O. Henry story about Stubby Smith, a cold, penniless vagrant in search of a warm bed.

Renu Narayan called in from India to share a story about a girl who traded her luck claw pendant for an irresistible blue umbrella with unexpected results.

Genevieve Franklin shared a personal story about her dog Chipper, who was bitten by a rattlesnake and lived to share her life.

Do Tell Story Swap Summaries

September 10, 2024

September 10 was a short evening of stories. Many of our tellers and listeners were anxious to watch the presidential debate on TV, so we met only briefly. But the few stories we heard were memorable (and much more relaxing than the debate proved to be).

Renu Narayan called in from India to tell us about a master high in the mountains who instructed his students, “Remember that with everything you think, everything you say, and everything you do, someone is always watching you.” The students wondered who that mysterious watcher might be. Is it God? Angels? Parents? The master himself? The surprising answer makes for a delightful story.

Deb shared a story she is writing about foxes and wolves who share territory because wolves eat sheep and foxes eat chickens. When their relationship becomes a matter of debate, coyotes have an opportunity to grab the territory for themselves.

Meg Brown told a folktale called “The Little Rooster and the Turkish Sultan,” about a rooster with a magic stomach who tricks the powerful sultan into giving him a diamond.

Do Tell Story Swap Summaries

August 13, 2024

Meg Brown kicked off the evening with a delightful tale of a grumpy mother-in-law who hoped to get rid of two daughters-in-law, Moon Flower and Lotus Blossom, by asking them to bring her impossible gifts.

Brandon Spars told an Indonesian folk tale, very reminiscent of Cinderella, about two sisters with opposite personalities who faced the same challenge in different ways and with different results.

Ken Foster shared a Persian folktale about one of his favorite characters: Nasreddin. Nasreddin was invited to a banquet at the sultan's palace where he was treated differently when his clothing was different.

Katy Mangan told a story of her character, Eduardo, and what happened in his world when the grain harvest was poor, and the village had to cooperate to find another source of income.

Renu Narayan called in from India to tell a story she wrote about a young singer who learned how to express her own talent.

Sharon Elwell told a Just So Story about King Solomon and his encounter with a butterfly with an argumentative wife.

Genevieve Franklin ended the evening with a story she put together extemporaneously about her mother becoming a curandera.

Do Tell Story Swap Summaries

July 9, 2024

Our host, **Brandon Spars**, opened the evening – and ended it as well - with the delightful story of how he met and courted his wife. Thirty-five years ago, he was a volunteer English teacher in Bali and Irma, his future wife, was his student. After some hilarious misadventures with the language, Brandon won her.

Renu Narayan zoomed in from India with charming hand puppets to tell the story of a bird who lost his song. The song traveled to other animals: a butterfly, a fish, an elephant, and even a camel before finding its way back.

Beth Wakelee shared an old English folktale called “Tops and Bottoms,” in which a farmer makes a successful deal with an imp.

Laura McHale Holland told an original story about an empty cardboard box that arrives unexpectedly and produces a wonderful gift.

Sharon Elwell told an old story of a neat little woman for whom everything seemed to turn out just right.

Vicky Ness has invented another charming story of nine-year-old Edmond, whose dream was to become a toll taker on the New Jersey Turnpike – until he is attacked by a uniform.

Katy Mangan shared a Scottish tale of Limping Norman, whose name is changed after an adventure with the Little People – the fairies.

Do Tell Story Swap Summaries

June 11, 2024

Beth Wakelee began the evening with a delightful Scandinavian folk tale called “Backing Up Your Story,” from the book *Apples from Heaven*. A boastful husband gets himself into trouble, but his wife saves him, proving that “a rooster can crow, but it’s the hen who delivers the goods.”

Ken Foster called in from Ephraim, Utah, to share a story about a stingy baker in Peru who wanted to charge his neighbor money for enjoying the delicious aromas of his baked goods.

Meg Brown told a Norwegian folk tale about a hand mill that wouldn’t stop grinding.

Renu Narayan called from early morning in India to tell an original story she shared with children about dinosaurs who fought each other until a tiny mouse taught them wisdom.

Sharon Elwell told of a prince in search of a wise bride.

Sree Karuna joined us from India to share the story of a cockroach who felt that wigs, false eyelashes, and bright lipstick made her more attractive.

Genevieve Franklin told us about her journey to become an undesignated kidney donor.

Vicky Ness gave us an original story of Jewel – a woman whose heart was broken when her three hens – Arabella, Zina, and Butterball – were killed by a predator. Could she ever find joy in living again?

Katy Mangan shared a story of an Oliver Trout – a strange visitor who came during the summer solstice, when things “are not always what they seem to be.”

Do Tell Story Swap Summaries May 14, 2024

It was a great night of stories!

Beverly Schwartz started the evening with a heartwarming personal story of an experience she had as a teacher. Her third-grade students surprised her with a Mothers' Day party to honor the idea that she had been like a mother to them.

Beth Wakelee shared a North Carolina folktale from Richard Chase about an old woman who fooled three robbers.

Elaine Stanley told about a coyote who got revenge on dogs who wouldn't let him in to the dog party.

Laura McHale Holland gave us an Irish folktale of a woman under a fairy spell who had an unsolvable dilemma. Her story included a lovely folk song Laura had written herself.

Renu Narayan called in from early morning in India to tell the story of a young man with the problem of settling on a career.

Sharon Elwell told a personal story of an orchid no one wanted.

Sree Karuna called from India to share the story of a hummingbird who tried to put out a forest fire and inspired a miracle.

Meg Brown shared a Norwegian folk tale about a young bride who was challenged to spin, and weave, and sew. Her kindness resulted in a happy result.

Deb shared a scary story of a near-drowning experience in her childhood that taught her a lot.

Do Tell Story Swap Summaries

April 9, 2024

Neshama Franklin, a newcomer to the group, enchanted us with a story about everyone's favorite witch: Baba Yaga.

Sharon Elwell related how a storyteller changed a long bus ride from an ordeal to a fascinating adventure.

Renu Narayan called from early morning in India to delight us with the story of a confrontation between a temple deity and a terrible singer.

Vina Breyfogle called attention to the fact that the seed spores of trees on the ground were only half-visible in the shadows during an eclipse.

Vicky Ness told a moving story about three women: young Elsbeth, her mother, and her grandmother, as they experienced Easter.

Sree Karuna called in from India to share the story of a generous wise man and his beloved horse, Sultan.

Katy Mangan took us into Eduardo's magical world to share a story about "Old Willem," the gardener of the magic walled garden.

Do Tell Story Swap Summaries March 12, 2024

Ken Foster joined in from Ephraim, Utah, to share a delightful Indian story about an unambitious youth whose father gave him a challenge to prove himself. Could he buy a single item at the market that one could eat, drink, chew, plant, and feed to a cow? The boy came home with such an item. What could it have been?

Vicky Ness let her inimitable imagination run wild in the story of a crumbling old haunted-seeming house that was beloved by its community. A developer took it down to replace it with shiny, clean buildings, but the town had different tastes.

Sharon Elwell called from Bremerton, Washington and told a personal story of a brief encounter on a dark night.

Renu Narayan joined us from India with a legend of twin children who went on a perilous quest to recover a golden singing bird.

Katy Mangan shared a prequel to the Eduardo legend, telling of his grandmother Eleanor, and her unfulfilled wish for a granddaughter to carry on her great knowledge of women's magic and mysteries.

Brandon Spars, our genial host, ended the evening with a personal story of a river near their family vacation cabin, and the effects of the river over generations from his grandparents to his children.

Do Tell Story Swap Summaries February 13, 2024

Beth Wakelee shared a folk tale that Linda Yamane pieced together from several Ohlone legends about how Eagle solved the problem of the great flood with a single feather.

Laura McHale Holland told a charming story of a lonely couple in a wintry land who built a snow child.

Sharon Elwell took us back to 1952 and what seemed to her to be a perfect summer day.

Katy Mangan took on the persona of her British friend, Shirley Anne, to relate how the search for mistletoe to celebrate the solstice led to a great discovery.

Vicky Ness told us about Abner and his problem with mumbling rocks in his garden, which led him to a great discovery and a new friend.

Elaine Stanley bamboozled us with a “stretcher,” an autobiographical story that delighted us as it became wildly impossible.

Do Tell Story Swap Summaries January 9, 2024

Co-hosts Katy Mangan and Vicky Ness filled in for Brandon Spars, who is traveling abroad with his high school students.

Kenneth Foster zoomed in from Ephraim, Utah, with a Cuba folk talk about the great god Obakala and his search for someone to be the god of our specific world. His helper, Orula, was tasked with preparing the best possible meal for him. Succeeding at that task, Orula was asked to prepare the worst possible meal. Turns out the two meals were the same – and for a very interesting reason.

Vicky Ness told of a woman named Midge who entered an invention in a community makers' fair called "Lean into the Future." Her fascinating invention taught the townspeople that what they needed was what they had all along.

Beth Wakelee called in from Hawaii to share a Suquamish folk tale about gossiping clams.

Sharon Elwell took us through transitions in music that changed the lives of her family.

Laura McHale Holland told part of a novel she's writing about a French trapper and his battle with noisy frogs.

Genevieve Franklin shared a piece she has written about Our Lady of Guadalupe, who has become a ubiquitous symbol of hope to Latino people everywhere.

Kenneth Foster ended the evening with a favorite story of 1953, when a forgotten wagonload of pollywogs upended their family life.