

You Can Teach Yourself With Stories

Re-tell yourself every story you have ever heard. Let the stories run through your mind. Now recall every story you have ever told. Is it possible to reinterpret and attach new meaning to the stories you have heard throughout your life? Is it possible that what your story meant to you means something completely unique to your listeners? Is it even possible to remember all the stories of your life? If you are older than ten it's probably starting to get difficult. I collect stories, not just at the library, but also in my mind. Some of those stories always seem to filter to the top. They have more meaning to me. I once knew a man that had Alzheimer's. I would take him to the Foodland grocery store in Juneau, Alaska to drink coffee for an hour on Wednesday afternoons. He told me the same three stories every day. Those three stories had come to define time and place in his mind; they were like a touch stone. I just added another story to the world, and it was a very short story about stories. Some stories certainly are better than others. "You can teach children through stories." is painted on the wall of the Children's Library at Columbus Public Library. Stories can teach us about ideas, emotions, experiences and events. A skilled story teller can craft characters that help teach and guide people of any age. Storytellers can bridge gaps in experience. In a world that can be complex, threatening, even dangerous stories can help. The Grimms' Fairy Tales, written for children, contain valuable yet terrifying stories. The father and stepmother of Hansel and Gretel, facing hunger and poverty, take the children into the woods, and abandon them to die! In Little Red Riding Hood the main character is eaten by the wolf along with her granny, a print of the original cover hangs above the library's stairs. Beyond the mental exercise of a good book the story it contains can help us define our own thoughts and feelings about a subject, an idea, even a situation. Wisdom and age are often synonymous but stories really help us progress. Stories can even help to speed the process; as Oscar Wilde points out, "With age comes wisdom, but sometimes age comes alone." The library can help you connect with a great story. One of the amazing things about libraries is the records that are produced for each item in the collection. A library record can contain a near limitless number of descriptors. All of the descriptors follow authoritative terms, national and international standards, and are maintained with great care. All of the information contained in the records is indexed making the collection discoverable by readers. During the month of May the library will be launching a new catalog, a new place to search all of the records held by the library. One of the features it will include is the ability to quickly and easily limit search results and browse by subject. The system allows the searcher to see all of the library's stories about a subject of interest. Just a few examples include treasure troves, secrecy, self-realization in women, psychopaths, and the frontier and pioneer life of Nebraska. Another incredible thing about libraries is the privacy they provide their users. Privacy is a hot commodity these days. Internet search companies, service providers, and those who host content are saving and selling our interests, worries, and curiosities daily. The library does not keep track, we want nothing to stand between you and discovery. Feel free to enjoy any story.

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