



DISTRICT ONE StoryMasters

It was festive! The fire was burning in the fireplace. Fruit and sweets were served. Beautiful poinsettias and flowers were everywhere. And most importantly, stories! Our last meeting in 2018 was filled with diverse stories by storytellers both upcoming and polished.

Mallery McMurtrey shared Toastmasters history – how a woman became a Toastmaster when the organization didn't allow women to join. **Margaret Mitchell's** delightful story entitled "Following My North Star" told us what character counts. What? Clothes are not one of them? The tech guru, a.k.a. **Uche Akotaobi**, brilliantly demonstrated how Internet inequality, ahem, I mean, Internet neutrality, works.

We were also treated to two icebreaker stories from newly joined StoryMasters. **Chanel Kenneybrew** told us how she has achieved her dream of becoming a film director...after making a detour, detour, and detour. (Yeah, we all have done that.) **Katie Watkins** fired up her inspiring story with marvelous sensory descriptions. That was definitely a contender for the International Speech Contest.

StoryMasters and friends, the year 2018 was such a jubilant year thanks to your continuous support. THANK YOU!

StoryMasters Upcoming Meetings

In Japan, we say if we talk about next year, the ogre will laugh, but I don't care if he laughs or gets upset because the next year is around the corner and we are planning our Open House in February!

StoryMasters (3720 Monteith Drive, View Park)

January 13th @ 3pm – 5pm

February 10th is our Open House.

Save the date and stay tuned. Details coming soon!



Have a happy holiday season and let's start your new year with fine stories and evaluations. Looking forward to hearing your stories in 2019!

Upcoming District 1 Events

Division F Speech-A-Thon

The November Speech-A-Thon was another big success thanks to StoryMasters who participated. Big thanks to Tina Tomiyama who led the first hour as Toastmaster.

Join the next Speech-A-Thon!

January 18th @ 6pm – 9pm

LAPD Ahmanson Training Center

Refreshments will be served.

RSVP: Janet Kemp at

janetkempd1toastmasters@gmail.com

Toastmasters Leadership Institute (TLI)

January 26th @ 7am – 4pm

Cal State University Dominguez Hills
Margaret Mitchell and Tina Tomiyama will conduct a Speechcraft workshop.

Keep checking the [District 1 website!](#)

Registration will start soon.

Area F1 & F2 Tall Tales and International Speech Contest

Save the date! The speech contest season is just around the corner. Our Area Contest is set for March 23rd. Start writing an outrageous 3-5 min. story or an inspirational 5-7 min. story.

“All In The Family?”

When I first met Tina Tomiyama years back, she was already a polished speaker, but she has made remarkable progress to become such a fine storyteller in the past few years. Her first two-woman show with Ann Buxie at the Institute of Musical Arts on December 1st was luscious, engaging, refreshing, and all the above! Oh, I was beyond proud of myself that I can call her my friend! After her successful show, Tina shared a behind-the-scenes story.



The Miracle Pony

What’s your favorite part of “public communications”? What are you best at? Can you think on your feet? Do you enjoy writing? Is memorizing and delivering a speech easy for you? Are you naturally funny? Can you accept feedback? Do you get a kick out of crafting a story with something important to say?

For me, writing is fun (mostly). I enjoy reading my stories to others, and accepting feedback feels good because it helps me improve. But memorizing and delivering a story *without notes*? Oh no. No no no no. Dear StoryMasters, I have a confession to make. After 17 years I’m still terrified to work without a script. You awe me when you get up there and speak without notes. How do you do it?

At “*All in the Family?*”, an hourlong storytelling concert about mixed marriage that Ann Buxie and I offered recently, Ann and I were each slated to tell two long stories and several short ones, with transition dialogue. I was in despair. How was I ever going to memorize more than 3,000 words?

Blessedly, our teacher Barbara Clark showed me how to create a “pony.” A pony is a 3x5 card with just the titles and first words or keywords of your stories, in order, placed next to your water glass. When you draw a blank, you stop (as if thirsty), sip your water, and sneak a quick look at your pony.

Type is easier to read than cursive, so I printed out my pony and rehearsed with it to make sure I could read it surreptitiously. It worked! In fact, just having a friendly little pony around calmed me to the point that I remembered almost everything. (I did drop two paragraphs of one story but no one noticed, not even me.) It’s a miracle!

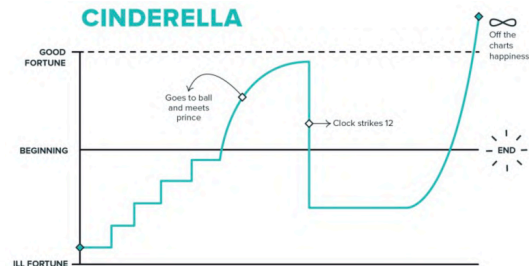
Tina Tomiyama

Storytelling Stub ~ The Shapes of Stories

Emotional arcs are intriguing. The writer Kurt Vonnegut mapped story arcs by hand two decades ago. Instead of focusing on plot, he analyzed the emotional trajectory of each story, based on what happens to the protagonist. His master's thesis in anthropology was rejected by the University of Chicago ("It was rejected because it was so simple and looked like too much fun," Vonnegut explained.) But he continued to carry the idea with him for many years and his idea has resonated with researchers.

In 2016, mathematicians and data scientists examined 1,737 works of fiction and found six common emotional arcs:

1. Rags to Riches (rise)
2. Riches to Rags (fall)
3. Man in a Hole (fall then rise)
4. Icarus (rise then fall)
5. Cinderella (rise then fall then rise)
6. Oedipus (fall then rise then fall)



What's more, they also found that some story arcs were considerably more successful than others by comparing total downloads of all books from Project Gutenberg. "Rags to Riches" may be popular among writers, but it may not be the emotional arc that readers reach for most. "Icarus," "Oedipus," and "Man in a Hole" were the three most successful emotional arcs.

What's your favorite emotional arc to read? Why?

References:

[Kurt Vonnegut on the Shapes of Stories](#) (If you like dry humor as much as I do, you will love his talk!)

[The emotional arcs of stories are dominated by six basic shapes](#)

Editor's Note

How many times do you practice before telling a story in public?

I think that I practice storytelling more than most people because English is not my first language. Knowing words doesn't mean that I can pronounce them properly. American pronunciation and intonation are totally different from Japanese. A wrong rhythm can distract an audience from processing my story. I need to go through each word and sentence before memorizing and replace them if I cannot make them work. As an ESL (English as a Second Language) speaker, I need to work extra hard. A good thing is that the more I practice, the more I get comfortable on the stage. A bad thing is that the more I practice, the more I get bored! Sometimes I find myself feeling disengaged with my story while telling a story on the stage.

Practicing is a science.

That's what my writing teacher told me when she sensed my boredom while practicing. She shared a [story about an 11-year-old boy](#) who practiced cello for three hours a day for six months working on a four-minute piece. 540 hours' practice for one little piece? Wow, that's a lot!



But the story gave me a new perception about practice. I see how the art of practice can be implemented in storytelling. The art of practice...that will be my next project. Science makes everything intriguing, doesn't it?

Miyo Yamauchi