VOL.10 | APRIL 2019

DISTRICT ONE StoryMasters

Our spring meeting was filled with uplifting stories and invaluable feedback.

Catherine Magruder taught us how important it is to embrace our name and who we are in her speech, "*Embrace What Is You*." Her personal story about building a connection with a girl in jail was powerful and beautiful. Yours truly gave an experimental speech titled "*What Happens on the Bus Doesn't Stay on the Bus*." I'm researching how to make a story interesting when I'm in the story, but this story is not about me and I needed StoryMasters' help. I can't wait to implement the brilliant ideas that I received today! **Katie Watkins** cracked us up with her speech, "*Judges Smudges – I Did Not Lose, I Am the Winner Winner Chicken Dinner with a Cherry on Top and Extra Biscuits for Good Measure!*" Oh, her facial expressions were priceless! You were definitely the winner, Katie! Through **Antoinette Byron**'s meditating speech entitled "*It's All in the Mind,*" we felt more calmness and clarity, which we all needed. Her perfect pace and voice were soothing.

We were also treated to two wonderful contest speeches again this month. Our own **Debbie Kenneybrew** and a guest speaker, **D'Lee Mayberry**, will be competing in the Division A Tall Tales and International Speech Contests on 4/27. Good luck, ladies!

I learned so much just by listening to everybody's speeches and feedback. Special thanks to our evaluators, **Padma Illangovan**, **Tina Tomiyama**, **Keith Jackson**, **Mark Walsh**, **Claudette Payne**, **Anna Ziss Patton**, and everyone who volunteered their thoughts!

I'm already looking forward to the next meeting! Are you?

Speech Contest Update!

Katie Watkins won the third place at Division F International Speech Contest on April 6, 2019. Katie, congratulations! Thank you for sharing your beautiful story and journey with us.

Check out upcoming Speech Contests that StoryMasters will compete in:

- 4/26: Division C Tall Tales Speech Contest **Jacki Williams-Jones**
- 4/27: Division A Tall Tales Speech Contest **Debbie Kenneybrew**

Upcoming District 1 Events

District 1 Spring Conference

Date: Saturday, May 18th

Time: 7am – 5pm

Location: Renaissance LAX Hotel

9620 Airport Blvd, LA, CA 90045

The Spring Conference is full of events! The next District executive officers will be elected; the District speech contest winners will be chosen; the Roy D Graham and Lydia Boyd Awards recipients will be announced; and the keynote speaker is the reigning World Championship of Public Speaking, Ramona J. Smith.

The tickets are on sale now!

Upcoming StoryMasters Meetings

StoryMasters

Every second Sunday at 3-5pm

3720 Monteith Drive

View Park, CA 90043

Upcoming meetings:

- May 12 (Mother's Day)
- June 9

Join us for the second Sunday to enjoy some wonderful stories and conversations with other storytellers.

Please RSVP to Tina Tomiyama at tomiyama2@mac.com so that we can save a seat for you!

Fun Facts about StoryMasters

StoryMasters will be celebrating our 8th anniversary next month. Let's see how much you know about StoryMasters. Did you know:

- Club's Original Idea: Tina Tomiyama
- Club's Co-Sponsors: Tina Tomiyama and Hiba Hamdan
- Club Name: Originally "Storytelling Club", changed to "StoryMasters", per Philip Wiest's idea
- Initiation Business Meeting: Sunday, April 10, 2011
- Club Charter-Membership: 25 members joined between April 10th and April 21st
- First Official Club Meeting: Sunday, May 8, 2011
- Club Chartering Date: Tuesday, May 10, 2011

Meet StoryMasters' Charter Members

I'm always thankful for that I found StoryMasters. I'm even more grateful to those who started the club. Without them, the second Sunday would never be the same! To make our anniversary even more special, some of the charter members who are not with us any more graciously shared some stories and wisdom with us.

The Story of StoryMasters ~ Hiba Hamdan

It took me few seconds to answer Tina Tomiyama's e-mail. "What a great idea, Tina!" I said. "Let me know how I can help."

Now, when my dear friend and mentor Tina says "Jump," I'd say "How high?" Tina always makes you jump to your success. That time, in 2011, I jumped and didn't even ask! I knew that her idea of creating a Storytelling-oriented club would be a huge success. Tina and I became the club's Co-Sponsors.

It only took 11 days, in April 2011, for us to gather signed applications from 25 members, which usually takes months.

On Tuesday, May 10, 2011, our Lt. Governor Marketing at the time, David Kitchen, e-mailed us: "It's official"! In only 1 month, StoryMasters became a Chartered club.

What was the secret for this huge and speedy success? It's just "Storytelling"!

People love to know about other people and hear their stories. In fact, our hearts and brains have been hard-wired on storytelling since we were children, and since our ancestors lived in caves. A well-told story grabs our attention, fascinates us, and moves us.

Stories help us clarify and communicate our vision, values, and successes. They're more believable than statistics. In fact, good stories have an emotional content that enables listeners to connect with the teller, while making meaning based on their own experiences. Stories don't just tell us about a situation or an individual; they show us.

In business, Leaders have found storytelling to be a highly effective management tool.

In movies and TV, it's all about storytelling! I've had the chance to experience this since 2017, when I started to work, part time, as Media Programmer for TV Santa Barbara. When previewing

the shows before I schedule them on our channels, I see how hosts and guests use storytelling techniques to better communicate their message. In media training, the first technique that TV producers and directors learn is to create a storyboard for their shows.

The power of storytelling was the reason why so many members, including myself, joined our StoryMasters club so quickly in 2011.

Today, eight years later, our past and new club members continue to learn or teach the best techniques for crafting compelling stories, and continue to share their brilliant stories that entertain us, teach us, and sure inspire us.

Happy Eighth Birthday, Dear StoryMasters!

Hiba Hamdan, DTM
Speaker, Speaking Coach, and TV Programmer

Living the Dream ~ Walt Grassl

They say never let the facts get in the way of a good story. But what if the facts make it a good story?

On Wed, Mar 20, shortly before 10 PM, I received an email from Miyo, asking me to contribute to this newsletter. Where was I? At a writers workshop conducted by "We Make Movies." Coincidence? I think not.

The workshop provides a venue for fresh pages to be read by professional actors — to encourage the writers and explore the material. It was my first visit, and I participated as an actor. I was hanging out with other Storytellers.

Storytelling and I have not always been friends. I started my life as an engineer. I was facts and data focused, not story focused. I first woke up to the power of story many years ago, when I was preparing a customer presentation with my program manager Mike Fleenor. He asked me, "What is the story of the presentation?" I looked at him like he had three eyes. He explained that there should be a theme: things are good, things are normal, or the train is coming off the tracks, and we need help.

Years after that, in Toastmasters, I learned to make a point and tell a story.

StoryMasters helped me learn how to do that better. I always enjoyed the excellent storytellers in the StoryMasters family.

Today, I spend more of my time telling stories through other people's words as an actor. I even got the male lead in a short film called "**I'm Telling Ya**" (trailer is on YouTube). My acting journey is still in its infancy, but I am still living the dream.

I am so grateful that Miyo reached out to me. I fondly remember my time in StoryMasters and can only imagine how things have grown. I hope all of you are living your dreams.

Walt Grassl
Speaker, Actor
http://waltgrassl.com/

Telling Stories at Work ~ Jon Caplan

A.P. Møller-Maersk, commonly known as Maersk, is the world's largest shipping company. On June 27, 2017 company computers started rebooting spontaneously. Nobody knew what was happening but within minutes the problem spread around the world – taking out more than 50,000 computers – and shutting down the company. Nearly a fifth of the world's shipping capacity, spread out over 800 ships and 76 ports, was unmanageable.

It wouldn't become clear until later what was going on. Russia had unleashed a cyberattack against Ukraine by spreading malware called NotPetya. Maersk was not the intended target. But there was a single machine in a single office in Ukraine that had a financial application installed that the Russians had used to spread the attack.

That was all it took to wipe out the entire company's operations. It took weeks and $400 million to repair the damage.

I work in cyber security. It is a complex field and one where you are working against active adversaries. There is much you need to know and much you need to do to protect against those adversaries. So how do we remember what is important and where the dangers are and what we need to do? We tell each other stories, like the one above. I left out the details that contain valuable lessons for those in the field. But the point is that by hearing stories, we get to see what others saw and feel what they felt, and in the end, we learn what they learned. And we get to do it the easy way.

Every field has lessons to pass along and there is no better way to pass them along than through stories.

Jon Caplan
Cyber Security Analyst

Upcoming Events

"More Than Just A Game" by Art Perkins — Storytelling

Date: April 27, 2019
Time: 2pm
Venue: Institute of Musical Arts
3210 W. 54st St, Los Angeles, CA 90043
Cost: $20 suggested
More Info: imalosangeles.com
Get tickets online before sold out!

Art Perkins, a former fullback with the Los Angeles Rams, and later, a recruiter for the Baltimore Ravens, is now a thoroughly entertaining storyteller. He's one of my favorite storytellers. His stories always put smiles on my face.

In this one-man show, he provides a hilarious and insightful look at his perilous journey from a Texas high school to the National Football League.

All the Feels — Storytelling

Date: May 14, 2019 (every second Tuesday)
Time: 8:40pm – 9:55pm
Venue: Café Tropical (back room)
2900 W. Sunset Blvd, Los Angeles, CA 90026
Cost: Free
RSVP: miyoccino@gmail.com

This is one of my favorite themed storytelling shows. Each storyteller gets assigned an individual emotion randomly, and crafts a story inspired by the emotion. It's a great brain exercise! It makes me think twice about all the emotions.

If you want to tease your brain, join me for the upcoming show!

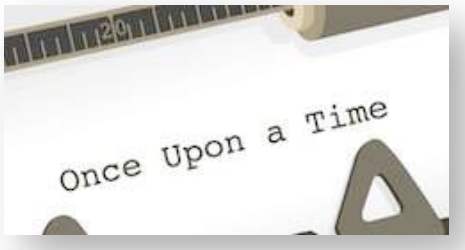
Storytelling Stub ~ How to Create Killer Opening Lines

Last month, I wrote about story ending. "What about opening?" some people asked. Opening is as important as ending. You can lose your audience/readers in the first minute with a dull opening. Once you lose them, it takes time to get their attention back. In the worst case, they may never come back.

How can we hook our audience in? Here are some different opening styles:

- Storyteller's Opening: draw the reader into a story – one that's already in progress
- Pitch Style Opening: make a surprising claim and promises a big result
- Suspense-Creating Opening: make the reader feel curious to follow the story
- Compelling Question Opening: ask a question that's provocative and make the reader think
- Surprising Statement Opening: make a bold statement

Why don't we try a different style once in a while? Sometimes, change is good!



Reference:

1. How to Write a Winning First Sentence
2. How to Write Strong Opening Lines
3. 7 Ways to Create a Killer Opening Line for Your Novel
4. 34 Compelling First Lines of Famous Books

Editor's Note

I and It: Where Are We Heading?

I've been paying attention to Artificial Intelligence (AI) for some time now. At first, it was a harmless and entertaining existence. Now as it becomes smarter, it could pose a serious threat, especially to us, writers. A couple of years ago, it was already fooling us as a counselor or a date. If you knew how to trigger an error, you could tell that it was not a human being, but many people were opening up to it without even knowing that they were talking to a machine. It was still entertaining then. But it's not laughable any more. The recent development called GPT-2 was remarkable as well as scary. It is capable of generating coherent paragraphs of text without needing any task-specific training. If you give it the first line of a story, it'll complete the rest. The scary part of the technology is its flexibility. The model is 'chameleon-like' and easily adapts to any tones or styles; news articles, research reports, Q&A, novels, and etc. If you give it a fake headline, it writes a fake article with fake statistics and quotes in seconds. The technology is not released due to "safety and security concerns," but it's already out there. I think that it's just a matter of time before the information is leaked.

How far does it go? Is it going to publish books? Screenplays? Movies? If we "steal" its writing, is it still called plagiarism? Even if we set a rule, can anybody detect it? I have so many questions!

Writing is not only about being read. The writing *process* (thinking, writing, improving, correcting, and sharing) is also important. So is the story behind the story. Even for this short segment, "Editor's Note," I usually rewrite a couple of times. Sometimes the final product is totally different from where I started because what I really want to say is becoming clearer through the writing process.

I'm hopeful that those values will never change, but this is just the beginning of evolution. I need to keep my eye on it.

Miyo Yamauchi

StoryMasters meets on the second Sunday of each month at Tina Tomiyama Residence (3720 Monteith, View Park, CA 90043)