

Teachers' Guide

JENNIFER ARMSTRONG

performer, writer and artist-in-residence

Sufi Creation Story

I adapted this story from the telling of Mayan storyteller, Floating Eagle Feather.

In the beginning, darkness covered the face of the void.

Out of this eternity of silence, the Creator laughed a great laugh and light was born. The Creator separated the light from the dark and made the heavens and the earth, hung the sun and moon and stars in the sky and brought forth mountains, rivers and trees. This was fun. The Creator chuckled as birds and elephants, seals and aardvarks, cream puffs and cocoa came into being. And it was good.

Next the Creator took love and laughter and wisdom into both hands and formed people. They were made in two varieties, male and female. Finally, the Creator took more love, more laughter and longing and made the souls.

The Creator spoke to the souls saying, "Climb into the bodies I have made for you." The souls looked at the bodies and back at the Creator and said; "You're kidding. You can't really mean for us to get into those heavy, lumpy things."

The Creator was mighty put out by this and spoke again in a loud voice, "Souls climb into the bodies. I have created you to be together." The souls looked at one another and back at the Creator and said; "Nope, ain't gonna do it. No way. We're not getting in there." They began to fly away into the heavens in all directions yelling, "You can't make us, nyah, nyah, nyah!"

The Creator sat down and seethed in passionate silence. The silence grew and deepened till finally, out of this great stillness, the Creator laughed another great laugh. In that moment, music and dancing and storytelling was born.

All the people took hands and began to dance and sing in great wheeling circles over the earth. The souls looked down from the heavens and said, "Hey, what are they doing? That looks like fun. We want to do that." The Creator said to the souls, "Come down, come live in the bodies and you can."

And so it was, slowly at first and then faster and faster, the souls flew down from the heavens and melted into the bodies. And thus it has been ever since, to hold body and soul together we sing and we dance and we tell stories.

(the beginning)

Dear Teachers and Parents,

This Sufi creation story is a powerful reminder to us all, that the arts are not extras but are essential to our living as whole and happy human beings.

Welcoming music, story and dance into the rhythm of our daily lives is the work I have dedicated my life to. I hope to sing and dance and share stories with you in your community in the years to come.

In this guide you will find ideas on how to encourage creative risk taking, lyrics to songs, stories, dances, philosophy and resources.

Yours in Song,

Jennifer Armstrong

800-943-7664

www.jenniferarmstrong.com

Classroom Discussion and Activities for Singing and Songwriting

Hello

(by Laszlo Slomovitz adapted by Jennifer Armstrong and sung on her CD, I Can Be Me)

chorus:

Hello, hello, hello
Hi, hi, hi
Hello, hello hello
Hi

In France they say
bon jour (bon jour)
In China they say
ni how (ni how)
In India they say
namaste (namaste)
In Zimbabwe they say
jambo (jambo)

In Mexico they say
hola (hola)
In Japan they say
konichiwa (konichiwa)
In Israel they say
shalom (shalom)
In Greece they say
kalamera (kalamera)

Sometimes we shake hands
we wave and we grin
we slap each other on the back
we say, hi, how 've been

In Germany they say
guten tag (guten tag)
In Lithuania they say
labas (labas)
In Russia they say
strasvecha (strasvecha)
and in Chicago they say
Hey dude what's happening?

(I've used phonetic spellings because I learned this song aurally and even using google.com I couldn't find correct spellings. My apologies.)

When Cows Get Up

(traditional, as sung by Jennifer Armstrong on her CD, I Can Be Me)

When cows get up in the morning they always say

Moo

That is what they say

When roosters get up in the morning they always say

cock-a-doodle-do

That is what they say

When pigs get up in the morning they always say

snort

That is what they say

When fish get up in the morning they always say

"kiss"

That is what they say

When dinosaurs get up in the morning they always say

roar

That is what they say

when we get up in the morning we always say

yawn

That is what we say

Discussion ideas:

- Do you know another way to say "hello"?
- Have you ever made up a secret handshake or greeting or language?
- Do you say hello, or nod or smile to clerks in stores, ticket agents, toll booth workers, people next to you on the bus or train or plane or passing you on the street? How does that make you feel?
- Can you think of times it might be unsafe or intrusive to greet someone?
- What unusual animal sounds have you heard?
- Have you ever trained an animal? What words could your dog, horse, chimpanzee, etc understand?
- What languages and animal voices are now extinct?

There are many songs that encourage song writing by asking for one word or one simple idea from individuals as we write the song together in a group. Here are a few of my favorites;

I Can Be Me

(© Jennifer Armstrong sung on her CD, I Can Be)

Chorus: I can be me better than anyone
 I can be me better than anyone
 I can be me better than anyone
 Yes, I can be me

1. I'm gonna sing, cause that's my way
 I'll sing all night, I'll sing all day
 I'm gonna sing whatever I do
 I'll be me and you can be you

2. I'm gonna dance cause that's my way
 I'll dance all night, I'll dance all day
 I'm gonna dance whatever I do
 I'll be me and you can be you

3. I'll play trombone, cause that's my way
 I'll play all night, I'll play all day
 I'll play trombone whatever I do
 I'll be me and you can be you

Mole in the Ground

(as sung by Frank Proffit, Beach Creek, NC and children from Maine to California.)

Wish I was a mole in the ground
Wish I was a mole in the ground
If I was a mole in the ground
I'd root this mountain down
I wish I was a mole in the ground

Wish I was an aardvark in California
If I was an aardvark in California
I wouldn't ever scorn ya

Wish I was a moose on the moon
If I was moose on the moon
I'd play bassoon with a baboon

Wish I was a dinosaur at the beach
If I was a dinosaur at the beach
I'd eat everything in reach

(continued)

Wish I was a cat in the sun
If I was a cat in the sun
I'd purr for everyone

Mama Lend Me Your Pigeon

(can be heard on Jennifer's tape; Tuneful Tales)

Mama lend me your pigeon to keep company with mine (2X)
My pigeons gone wild in the bush, my pigeons gone wild (2X)

Mama lend me your donkey to keep company with mine
My donkey is playing the guitar my donkey's gone wild

Mama lend me your bluebird to keep company with mine
My bluebird is playing football, my bluebirds gone wild

Mama lend me your lobster to keep company with mine
My lobster is tap dancing my lobsters gone wild

Mama lend me your two-toed sloth to keep company with mine
My two-toed sloth is baking cookies my two-toed sloth has gone wild

Follow-up Activities

- Draw a picture of one of these crazy animals.
- Sing one of these songs at home and make up more verses with your parents, brothers and sister, neighbors, friends...
- Talk about things you like to do or hope to do some day.

Music Resources

1. Childrens Music Network
www.cmnonline.com
2. Sing Out; the folk song magazine
www.singout.org

Classroom Discussion and Activities for Storytelling

I believe we are all artists. We are not born to be consumers of culture and resources but are born to be creators of beauty, and live original and fascinating lives. The story, Brigid O'Malley, speaks to this belief and is my signature piece.

Brigid O'Malley

This is Jennifer's version of the traditional Irish Folk tale; The Boy Who Had No Story.

Brigid O'Malley was hurrying down the road toward Sligo Fair. It was a beautiful day. The sun was shining, the birds were singing, why even the flowers were smiling and nodding their heads on either side of the road. But Brigid wasn't paying any attention. She was imagining all the good things she would buy at the fair. Why maybe she would get some new ribbons for her hair or a new shawl and there would be so many good things to eat.

Well now, what with all her daydreaming she didn't pay any attention to where she was going and she took a wrong turn. There she was, a long way from Sligo Fair and night coming on.

Now as luck would have it, as she came around the very next bend in the road, there was a wee cottage it's light shining a warm, welcome out the window. Brigid went right up and knocked at the door. A rosy-cheeked woman, dressed all in green, opened the door and said, "Brigid O'Malley! What brings you out here so far from home?" Brigid told her how she was going to Sligo Fair and took a wrong turn and she was that tired and hungry could she maybe spend the night and get a bite to eat and go on to the Fair in the morning? The woman said, "Of course Brigid. Sit here by the fire and make yourself comfortable."

Brigid was just getting settled and kicking off her shoes when the woman spoke again, "Now Brigid, why don't you sing me a wee song. It will shorten the time it takes to get the supper going." Brigid looked at her in amazement. "Me? Sing? I couldn't do that. I don't know any songs." Now it was the rosy-cheeked woman's turn to look amazed and she said, "You don't know any songs!? Oh dear." She thought a minute, looking worried and then her cheerful smile flashed out again and she said, "Well now Brigid, it will be all right. Why don't you tell me a wee story. That will do just as well and it will shorten the time it takes to get the supper going."

For the second time Brigid said, "Me? Tell a story? I couldn't do that. I don't know any stories." The woman echoed her amazement, "You don't know any stories?" Then her smile flashed out again and she said, "There now Brigid, it will be all right. Pull out the penny whistle or the harmonica, whatever you have in your back pocket. Give me a wee tune. That will do just as well and it will shorten the time it takes to get the supper going."

For the third time Brigid said, "Me? Play a tune? I couldn't do that. I don't play an instrument." The woman put her hands on hips and spoke out indignantly, "Brigid O'Malley, you come in here wanting a bite to eat and place to sleep and you can't sing a song, play a tune, or a tell a story? Be off with you then!"

She pushed Brigid right out the door. There was Brigid, back out in the night with nothing to eat and nowhere to go. She trudged round the house to the well in the back saying to herself, "I'll get a drink of water anyway." As she began lowering the bucket down into the well, a great wind sprang up out of nowhere. It picked her up off the ground and went whirling her away through the air, leaves and branches flying past her face till it thumped her down on a piece of lonely road. Brigid sat in the dust where she landed and looked all about her. She didn't know where she was. She couldn't see a thing, couldn't hear a thing... well, except for one thing! She could hear a baby crying. This baby was crying louder than you ever heard any baby cry in all your born days. Brigid got to thinking, "Where there's a crying baby, there's bound to be a mother and where there's a mother there's bound to be a place to spend the night and a bite to eat!" Brigid picked herself up and made for the sound of the crying.

Sure enough, she came upon another wee cottage its' light shining a warm welcome out the window and she went right up and knocked at the door. The mother came to the door and said, "Brigid O'Malley! The best singer in all of Ireland. Am I glad to see you. You can sing this baby to sleep and we'll all have some peace and quiet." Brigid stared at her in astonishment. She opened her mouth to say, "I can't sing." When what to her surprise, what came out of her open mouth was the sweetest lullaby you ever did hear. Now you weren't there that night, but if you had been, you would have heard something a bit like this;

*Sleep oh babe for the red bee hums, the silent twilight falls
Eval from the gray rock comes to wrap the world in thrall
Alyan vano my child my joy my love and hearts desire
The cricket sings you lullaby beside the dying fire*

And it was the sweetest scene you ever did see. The baby asleep in the cradle, the mother rocking in the rocking chair and the kettle just coming to boil on the hearth. But before Brigid could draw another breath that great wind came sweeping in again out of nowhere. It picked Brigid up and went whirling her away through the air, leaves and branches flying past her face till it thumped her down on another piece of lonely road.

Brigid looked all about her. She didn't know where she was at all. She couldn't hear a thing, she couldn't see a thing. Well except for one thing! She could see a wedding procession coming up the road toward her. When they came up to where Brigid was sitting in the road they stopped with a glad shout, "Brigid O'Malley! The best piper in all of Ireland. Are we glad to see you. You can pipe the bride and groom to the church as is right and proper." Brigid began to protest that she didn't know how to play the pipes, when they handed her a bagpipe. What could she do? She tucked the bag up under her arm. She took a deep breath and Brigid O'Malley led that wedding procession down to the church. Now you weren't there that night, but if you had been, you would have heard something a bit like this;

*Step we gaily on we go
heel for heel and toe for toe
arm in arm and row on row
all for Marie's wedding*

When Brigid set those pipes down, don't you know, that great wind came sweeping up

again out of nowhere. It picked her up off the ground and went whirling her away through the air, leaves and branches flying past her face till it thumped her down on another piece of lonely road. Brigid picked herself up and looked all around.

This time she saw a great gathering of folks in a field nearby. They were all sitting with their heads in their hands sighing and moaning, Brigid went right over to them and asked, "What is the trouble?" They looked up and shouted, "Brigid O'Malley! The best fiddle player in all of Ireland. Are we glad to see you! Now we can have our dance after all." "Well," says Brigid, "hand me the fiddle. I'll see what I can do."

She was learning you see.

Well Brigid lit into the most merry tunes you ever did hear and they were arming left and arming right and swinging their partners out under the moonlight and a grand time was had by all. Now you weren't there that night but if you had been, you would have heard something a bit like this;

*Dance to your daddy my little laddie
Dance to your daddy my little man
Thou shalt have a fish and thou shalt have a fin
Thou shalt have a haddock boiled in a pan
Thou shalt have a fish and thou shalt have a fin
Dance to your daddy my little man*

When at last Brigid lay down the fiddle... well I guess you know what happened! That great wind came sweeping up again out of nowhere. It picked Brigid up off the ground and went whirling her away through the air, leaves and branches flying past her face till it thumped her down right in the backyard of that very first house. Why the rope to the bucket was still in her hands!

Brigid went running up to the house shouting, "You'll never guess what happened to me! You'll never guess what happened to me!" That very first woman, all dressed in green remember, said, "Why Brigid, come in. Sit down. Tell me all about it." And Brigid did.

She told how the wind picked her up and thumped her down and she sang a lullaby. How the wind picked her up and thumped her down and she played the bagpipe for a wedding procession. How the wind picked her up and thumped her down and she played the fiddle for a dance and how the wind picked her up and thumped her down and here she was, right back where she started.

"Well Brigid," said the woman, "Why didn't you tell me all that in the first place? Supper is ready."

Brigid had a good supper and a good night's sleep too and the next day she went on to Sligo Fair. I'm here to tell you she went right past the booth with the shawls. She didn't even look at the ribbons. No, Brigid O'Malley went straight to the instrument maker. She bought herself a

fiddle and she learned to play it too.

And from what I hear, she's traveling around the country with a song to sing, a tune to play and a story to tell and I'm hoping the same thing can be said of all of you sitting here today.

[End]

Discussion Ideas

- Have you ever done something you didn't think you could do? What happened?
- Does Brigid remind you of yourself?
- What unusual things have happened to you recently?
- Brainstorm places you hear stories; libraries, schools, theaters, political rallies, kitchen tables, family gatherings...
- Share favorite Fairy tales and Folk tales; Cinderella, Little Red Riding Hood, Goldilocks and the Three Bears...
- Ask your parents to tell you the story of your birth or of your name...
- Think of how you tell a story every time you say, "Guess what happened..."
- Brainstorm the different kinds of stories there are, for example; Folk Tales, Myths, Legends, Personal Stories, Fables, Tall Tales
- Go to the library and check out some fairy tale collections and short story collections.
- Read Cynthia Rylant's book, *When I Was Young in the Mountains* and make your own books of memories. (Remembering through our senses is often most evocative. Favorite smells, favorite childhood hiding places, a song your parent or grandparent sang, etc.)

Storytelling Resources

1. NSN National Storytelling Network
www.storynet.org
2. www.yellowmoonpress.com
3. www.augusthouse.com
4. www.storyarts.org

Discussion and Activities For Dancing

I think dancing is the most joyful way imaginable to strengthen community ties. I called a dance for teachers at a school one September (as a welcome back event) and at the end of the night a woman came up to me and said, "I've taught at this school for fourteen years and this is the first time I took hands and looked into the eyes of everyone who works here. I loved it!"

I also call dances at family nights. Children dancing with their parents is a wonderful sight to behold. It's a feast of laughing and smiling.

Here a few of the best loved dances in my repertoire.

Alabama Gals

Coming through in a hurry, coming though in a hurry
Coming through in a hurry Alabama Gals

I don't know how how I don't know how how
I don't know how how Alabama Gals

I'll show you how, how, I'll show you how, how
I'll show you how, how Alabama Gals

Ain't I rock candy, ain't I rock candy
Ain't I rock candy Alabama Gals

Long ways set for six couples.

- 1. Head couples sashay down the set and back up*
- 2. All turn R hands with their partner and back with a L*
- 3. Head couples cast off and lead down to bottom of set*
- 4. Head couples make an arch and all come through,
(2nd couple is now head couple and dance starts again)*

Ama Lama Cuma Lama

Ama lama cuma lama cuma la pizza (2X)
Oh no no no not the pizza (2X)

Eenie meenie dixie keenie ooh boo burata meanie
atcha latcha ritcha ratcha x, y, z (2X)

Lean way back you gotta hump on your back
Do the camel walk, do the camel walk...

One big circle.

- 1. Clap your own hands together, clap your neighbors hands to each side*
- 2. One person comes into the center and makes up a motion on repeat everyone comes into the center doing what the first person did*

I usually have six to eight children lead a motion and then we end with leaning way back and putting one hand on our hip the other out in front and walking around getting quieter and quieter saying; do the camel walk, do the camel walk.

Heel and Toe Polka

(Can be heard on Jennifer's CD; Dancing and Dreaming)

Heel and toe, heel and toe, slip four slips into the middle
Heel and toe, heel and toe, slip four slips back out
It's RRR it's LLL it's both, both, both and knees, knees, knees
Then turn your partner all the way round and walk on to the next

One big circle facing your partner

- 1. With inside foot go heel toe, heel toe and slip into the center*
- 2. With outside foot go heel, toe, heel toe and slip back out*
- 3. Clap R hands, L hands, Both hands, Clap hands on knees*
- 4. Two hand turn your partner all the way around and then pass R shoulders to go on to a new partner*

Sit Down Square Dance

(Can be heard on Jennifer's CD; I Can Be Me)

I play the tune Soldier's Joy and call this dance but you can simply sing calls to a familiar tune like Skip To My Lou;

All join hands and lean to the left, come on back and lean to the right
All join hands and lean to the left, doing the sit down dance

Clap your hands above your head, clap your hands above your head
It's way up high you clap your hands doing the sit down dance

All join hands and come into the middle, and now everyone come back out
Into the middle with a great big shout, doing the sit down dance

Etc. etc. whatever you want to call!

Dance Resources

1. Step It Down

by Bessie Jones and Bess Lomax Hawes

University of Georgia Press ISBN 0-8203-0960-5

2. Chimes of Dunkirk, Jump Jim Joe and Down in the Valley

New England Dancing Masters Productions

www.dancingmasters.com

802-257-1819 (books and tapes)

3. Country Dance and Song Society of America (CDSS)

17 New South Street, Northampton, MA 01060

413-584-9913