



Student-Centered Campfire Activities

It is not an overreach to say that campfire and evening drama programs are mainstays of residential programming. These are times when students can join their voices in song, create shared moments and jokes from skits, and access the wide range of emotions that music and drama provoke. Social and emotional learning (SEL) is already happening during campfire programs. What follows are two ideas for how you can support SEL development by allowing students to take leadership in creating the moments to be shared.



Fractured Fairy Tales

Campfire activity

This is a student generated, often very creative campfire activity that works for most ages, elementary to adult. For school groups, encourage an adult to join each group of students. Depending on the group size, this can easily take 30-45 minutes, so factor that into your planning.

Materials

List of well-known fairy tales, enough to split into 4 to 5 groups of 4-8 people, though you can create larger groups if necessary. Each fairy tale should be written on a slip of paper. Include various props—anything will do here, one or two per group.

Activity

Everybody gets to be a star! Each group will draw the name of a fairy tale that they will then reimagine or re-write to follow the same general story line, or feature similar characters, but unfold in a completely different direction. Examples might include: Adapting Goldilocks and the Three Bears to a modern-day urban environment. Recasting Cinderella to star a river otter or school principal in the lead role. Changing Jack and Beanstalk to Jamie and the Poison Oak...really, there is no limit to the creativity and flexibility. Resist the urge to limit creativity!

Make sure that each group has at least a passing familiarity with the plot and characters of the tale, and randomly distribute the props to each group. Many 'classic' tales are less familiar than you'd think, so check in with them and have more than enough options to switch out if necessary.

Every person needs to play a role, and the props must be used in the plot.

Give each group a ridiculously short amount of time to put their skits together—make this part of the challenge and fun! I usually tell them that they will have five minutes to do it, but then end up giving them about ten, checking in with each group to make sure they are energized.

Then, let the show begin!

Call each group to the 'stage' in turns, and prepare to clap wildly at the end. Make sure the audience follows basic audience rules of appreciation, and caution them that unexpected things will happen and they should remain as quiet as possible during the performances to see and hear all of the funny lines!

Fairy tale and folktale ideas: (Note: this list is largely Euro-centric. We recognize the need to find familiar stories from origins outside of European folktales.)

- Jack and the Beanstalk
- Cinderella
- Rumpelstiltskin
- Goldilocks and the Three Bears
- Beauty and the Beast
- Hansel and Gretel
- Little Red Riding Hood
- Sleeping Beauty
- Rapunzel
- Anansi the Spider
- The Tortoise and the Hare

Pourquoi Adaptation:

To move away from the fairy tale theme, ask students to create or recreate a traditional Pourquoi story, which is a retelling of an origin story. Examples include:

- Why do mosquitoes buzz in people's ears?
- How did the elephant get its trunk?

Consider stories that help tell the story of the place by focusing on geographic features or endemic species.

Here are some excerpts from Great Smoky Mountains Institute at Tremont's lesson plan for Story of the Day, a day-ending student gathering that focuses on having students highlight and reflect upon the major moments of their first day in residence.

GREAT SMOKY MOUNTAINS INSTITUTE AT TREMONT

JUST ONE GROUP

If there is only one group, students can still share with one another what stories stood out to them from the day.

AH-HA & HA-HA SNAPSHOTS

- **AH-HA moment:** a moment during which the group learned something new. This doesn't have to be something academic.
- **HA-HA moment:** a moment during which the group laughed together. This shouldn't be at someone's expense.
- **Snapshot:** a frozen skit. Students imagine that someone took a picture right at the minute that their moments happened and use their bodies to recreate that moment. There should be a narrator to explain.

PERSPECTIVES

This extension can be added onto most versions of story of the day found in additional activities.

After someone shares a story, ask the whole group if anyone else was present when that moment happened. Allow for students to share different perspectives of the same moment.

POWERPOINT SLIDES

You can share snapshots as if they are all pictures in a group powerpoint of the days activities.

STORY OF THE DAY

STORY FRENZY

5 MIN

1. Upon arrival into the meeting place, invite students to sit near students from other groups and share some of the things that they did over the course of Expedition: Tremont.
2. As all groups arrive, make sure that adult chaperones (excluding co-teachers) have stayed to help supervise.
3. After all groups have arrived (or students are beginning to get restless), get everyone's attention and introduce "Story of the Day."



"Everyone just shared some version of a story from their day. Sharing stories is a powerful tool to help remember and reflect on experiences. We're going to continue this by focusing on some of the notable events from our Expedition: Tremont."

SNAPSHOTS

15 - 20 MIN

1. In their animal groups, students will work to think of an "AH-HA" and a "HA-HA" moment from their Expedition: Tremont and create a "snapshot" of that moment to share with the group.



"Each of you will work with your animal group from today to brainstorm some different moments. Each group will think of an 'AH-HA' moment - a moment where the group learned something. And each group will think of a 'HA-HA' moment - a moment where the group laughed at something, not at someone. Once you've thought of your moments, the group will create snapshots of those moments. Imagine that a person took a picture right in the middle of your moment, arrange your team to show us what that picture might have looked like."

2. Give groups ~ 10 minutes to work on their snapshots. Encourage them to practice and determine a narrator.
3. When all groups are done, have everyone sit down near their group. Invite up one group at a time to share both of their snapshots with the rest of the group.

STORY OF THE DAY

REFLECT AND DEBRIEF

5 MIN

1. If time, ask students a series of turn and talk questions. Some options are listed below.



- Why should we tell stories?
- Who benefits from story telling?
- What makes something "story worthy"?

2. Share a quote.



"Stories have to be told or they die, and when they die, we can't remember who we are or why we're here." - Sue Monk Kidd

"We need to look hard at the stories we create, and wrestle with them. Retell and retell them, and work with them like clay. It is in the retelling and returning that they give us their wisdom." - Marni Gillard

3. Encourage students to tell stories of their time at Tremont, whether they are sharing them with others or writing them in their journals.

4. Make sure that school staff or adults are ready for students to begin free time before sending them out. Tell everyone that students are expected to be with adults during free time.

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CLOSING FRENZY

In the additional activities section there is an activity called "Closing Frenzy." This is another option for a closing activity.

EXTRA TIME

Occasionally teacher meetings run long and you may find yourself with extra time at the end of Story of the Day. In that situation, try out some campfire songs or stories!