Selection of Stories from Children's Playhouse Tell Me A Story project

Stories were dictated by children in Watauga County, North Carolina in 2003-4 as part of the Tell Me A Story project inspired by the work of Vivian Gussin Paley. The project was designed by Kathy Parham and funded by the National Endowment for the Arts. Ten visual and performing artists were brought in over the course of a semester to area preschools and to classes offered at The Children’s Playhouse. At every meeting, children were given the opportunity to dictate stories which were acted out that day.

Courtney and Savannah and me are gonna get a new Tahoe. Let’s go get our new Tahoes. Right here they are. --Devon, three year old in a rural Head Start class.

9/8 I saw Freddy Kruger and Jason. They had knives.
9/15 The Robocop. There are bad guys in it. They shoot them.
   [2nd story] I was calling the cops. I told them “come get the bad guys.” I had a lot of money.
9/22 Robocop. The bad guy was shooting at him cause he shoot at him first.
--J.G., 3 year old boy, Head Start class.

9/29 Once there was a snake. The snake lived in the woods. A boy came along and found the snake. The little boy ran away because he was scared. The snake went after the boy. The snake caught up with the boy. The boy said to the snake, “Go back in the woods.” The snake said, “I am staying with you.” The boy said “no way.” --Isaiah, 3 year old boy, Head Start class.

9/15 Me and Josh went hunting in the woods. We hunted for bears but we didn’t see no bears.
11/17 I help my Daddy work in the Christmas trees. We went to the Christmas tree field and drove up a hill to cut a big tree and two men took the Christmas tree home with them. Then we went in the trees and cut more trees. --Brandon, 4 year old boy in school-based “More at Four” classroom
--Brandon, Head Start Class

Once there was a Barbie. Then she goed to her homework. Then she goed to the castle. Then she liked her castle because it was so beautiful. Then she went to the library. She liked the library ‘cause it’s full of Rapunzels. Everything was a Rapunzel book, but they were different. She readed the story and there was no evils in it. Then she wroeted about a unicorn. Then she turned it back to the library. She thought everything was different now. She went to her old school.
--Annika, 4 year old girl in school-based “More at Four” classroom

Once upon a time me and my mommy were shopping. And we bought five Luncheables. And we bought two packs of string cheese. And then we bought candy and then we went to the pet store and bought a bunny. And we bought a baby kitten and we bought a baby bunny. Then we bought a baby puppy. We went home and did scrapbooking and made cards for my cousin and then we went to California. It took a very long time. Then we said “Happy Birthday” to my cousin and we decided to stay for 5 days and then for 10 days. --Jenna, 4 year old girl in school-based “More at Four” classroom

Batman, Spiderman, and Power Rangers are fighting bad guys. Then they went home to drink hot chocolate. Then they went to bed. The End.
A long time ago there was Batman, Superman, and Flash. They saw tracks in the mud and followed the tracks. The tracks led to muddy feet prints which were at the bad guys hideout. They attacked the bad guys and beat them. Then they went home, had hot chocolate, and went to sleep.

--Eli, 4 year old boy in rural, school-based “More at Four” classroom

Superman was goin’ to find some bad guys but he couldn’t find them because he was looking for them but he couldn’t find them because they were hiding in some really hard places. And then they saw it and Superman poked their eyeballs out. And then they died. He was gonna play with his friends and then he got a bad boo-boo, and he got a bleeding boo-boo on his middle finger.

--Zeke, 4 year old boy in rural, school-based “More at Four” classroom

This huge, huge bear and a lion are friends. And a mean, mean Troll is friends with them too. And they go out so they can see the trail when they go hunting. And they all pop out together and the dad shoots them all but the troll. The troll and the little boy and the mommy and the daddy walk away. And then they try to walk over the troll’s bridge. Then the troll says, “Who is that walking over my bridge?” Then the troll pops up and says, “I’m going to gobble you up!” but the dad shoots it and throws it in the creek. They they go across the bridge because it was blocking the house. The End. --Nevada, 4 year old in rural, school-based “More at Four” classroom

Once upon a time in a forest there was a small cottage. The cottage was only the size of 6 pigs stacked on top of each other. Well it could be 7 counting the bells on top. There they had a nice happy healthy family. Everyone was very happy in the family. Here’s their names. Their names are Ed, Mark, April and Edy. Those were the children. One day Mark asked mother, “When shall we see the world?” “I’ll ask father,” said mother “he’ll probably have a vote.” And his mother was right. They each wrote down their secret ballots and when they drewed it, the only vote not to go was April’s. So they climbed into the wagon. April was so scared, but her brothers and sisters encouraged her. Moral: For those of you who are shy think about the story and you may win the battle against shyness. The End. --Nate, age 6, Playhouse children’s museum class.

Cora is a little girl. Cora found a little flower that she loved, and she went home and ran through the house. She found a little, tiny circle. She ate it. It made her have good dreams. Then she was much bigger. And it made her better. She went to the woods and found a beautiful Rose. It was lucky. It had a big leaf. And she made a wish. She wished for a beautiful wand. --Levi, age 5, Playhouse children’s museum class.

The Three Kids Who Were Scared
Once upon a time there was Beckham, Nate, and Shea. They were walking around and they were spies. They found a huge cage with 100 bats and they flew out and pooped on them. They ran out because they were afraid of the bats. They put on their jet packs and flew in the air. Then they bonked their heads on the Playhouse roof. The End. --Beckham, age 5, Playhouse children’s museum class.