



Did You Ever Tell a Lie?---Personal Storytelling for Beginners (Grades 2-4)

Students write short personal narratives based on their own life experiences and imagination.

Activity 1

Did You Ever Tell a Lie? (An Appalachian circle game)

*As I sat under the apple tree
All the apples fell on me
Apple pudding, apple pie
Did you ever tell a lie?*

Use the rhyme to count around the circle. Whoever it ends on tells a short story about himself or herself. It should be either a true story that is hard to believe, or a story that is untrue but sounds believable. The goal is to fool as many people as possible.

After the teller tells the story, he or she asks, "How many people believe the story?" Those who believe it raise their hands. The teller asks "How many people don't believe it?" The others raise their hands. Finally the teller reveals whether the story was true or made up. Continue around the circle, skipping those who already had a turn.

3 Simple Rules

- The teller must tell a story about himself or herself.
- It must have the 5Ws (who, where, when, what, and why) and some details.
- The teller should not tell a story to hurt or embarrass others.

Activity 2

Based on the game "Did you ever tell a lie?" each student writes a short story about their personal experience, real or imagined. The story must include an element of "surprise." We offer 3 prompts, "a trip" "a pet" or "an injury."



Part 1

Start with "Once when I was xxx years old..." and tell us where you were and who else was there. Describe the scene.

Motoko's example

Once when I was 7 years old, I went to sleep over at my grandparents' house over the summer. My grandparents lived in an old farm house in a little village. It took me 3 hours on the train to get there from my parents' house in the big city. There were rice fields all around the farm house, as far as your eyes could see. The air smelled cleaner there, and at night I saw many stars in the sky.

Part 2

Start with "One day (or morning or evening)" and tell what you were doing just before the surprise occurred. Write "Suddenly I saw/heard/smelled/felt..." and explain what happened. How did the other people react? How did you feel?

One evening, my grandma and I were getting ready to go to sleep. We spread our sleeping mattresses on the floor and placed our pillows and blankets on top. Grandma hung the mosquito nets above us to keep bugs out. Suddenly I heard my grandpa's voice, "Motoko, I have a wonderful present for you!" He came in from outside, holding a small paper cup with a lid. Inside were about two dozen small brown bugs, crawling all over each other.

"Yeek!" I shrieked, "I hate bugs!" I tried to push the paper cup away.

"Shh. You must wait and see." Grandpa smiled to Grandma, who turned off the lights. We sat in pitch dark under the mosquito net. After a moment I noticed a tiny flickering pale green light floating out of the cup. Then another came out, then another. They were fireflies! Some landed on the inside of the mosquito net, while others kept drifting around. Soon the room was filled with magical twinkling lights. It was as if we had our own starry sky. I was speechless.



Part 3

What lessons did you learn? How do you feel about the incident now? What did you discover about yourself? (If your story involves an injury or tragedy, make sure to explain how you recovered.)

"See? Not all bugs are icky," my grandma whispered, and I could not agree more. Even to this day, that was the best present I have ever received.

Activity 3

Keep playing the game, writing and sharing. Work with different topics or themes. Here are some useful prompts:

1. Tell us about the first time you did something.
2. Tell us about the happiest moment of your life.
3. Tell us about a time when you were really scared (or worried or jealous.)
4. Tell us about the most embarrassing moment of your life.
5. Tell us about the most challenging thing you ever did.
6. Tell us about a pet you used to have.
7. Tell us about a time when someone tricked you.
8. Tell us about the best birthday you ever had.
9. Tell us about a time when you got into trouble for something you had already been told not to do.
10. Tell us about a time when you almost won, but not quite.

(These prompts are borrowed from Telling Your Own Stories by Donald Davis; August House, 1993)