

# Storying Environmental Education

Sean Blenkinsop & Gillian Judson, Simon Fraser University, Canada

## **Abstract**

*This paper sets out to explore the role of story in education. Through the employment of story itself as medium, the discussion examines how story is currently used in educational settings. The next step is to posit story as a learning tool and curricular heavy-lifter through an introduction to the theory of Imaginative Education as proposed by Kieran Egan. A few examples are then offered before the curtain falls.*

*Le présent article vise à examiner le rôle du conte dans l'éducation. Par l'emploi du conte à titre de moyen d'éducation, nous analysons les façons actuelles de se servir du conte dans des contextes éducatifs. Nous posons ensuite comme postulat la valeur incommensurable du conte en tant qu'outil d'apprentissage par une introduction à la théorie de l'éducation par l'imagination proposée par Kieran Egan. Nous présentons enfin quelques exemples avant la chute du rideau.*

**Keywords:** story, imagination, environmental education

It is a late summer evening on a northern lake. On a rocky point at the edge of the forest is a campsite. Three paddlers, who have arrived here separately, gather round a dancing fire.

Sophie has been on the trail for two weeks. The natural world has always been a necessary part of her life; it is where things just seem more real and life falls into familiar, comfortable rhythms. She believes the more-than-human<sup>1</sup> world is a teacher, and it is the need to share this with others that has led her to dedicate herself to environmental education. This trip, then, is not just about pleasure; Sophie has returned to the wilderness to rediscover, ground herself, and find some answers. She is not achieving what she would like in her work, and she questions whether she is making a difference. How does an environmental educator, caught in an environmentally incompatible education system, hope to make any impression on a world where consumption, individualism, and alienation prevail?

Next to Sophie is Terry. He is trying to dry his clothes. This being only the fourth day of his first canoeing trip, Terry is still discovering the challenges of the wilderness, not to mention the torment of sore muscles. Yet he still feels a deep sense of personal satisfaction. Like many Canadians,<sup>2</sup> Terry is unhappy about the state of the planet and the lives he and his urban friends are leading. To his credit he is doing something about it; he has taken to heart his own theoretical

work on the association of imagination to education, including ecological education, and decided to go on this trip to see what he can learn from a wilderness experience.

David has been here almost a week. He makes an annual pilgrimage to this spot, a place he first came to as a child. A week in the bush has always been special, filled with activity and reflection, a holiday, but also a time for memories, and a last taste of summer before returning to the classroom. He had always wanted to be a teacher and, until this year, felt pretty good about it. Recently, however, a sense of unease has been growing that he can no longer ignore. He was spending more and more time on crowd control, trying to force curriculum into kids who seemed less and less interested. Had education abandoned the goal of being interesting and empowering? And to make matters worse, when he had tried something innovative, he had encountered resistance at all levels. All he'd wanted to do was to get the kids outside for an hour every day. So, here he was at his favourite place, thinking about his future as a teacher, and sharing with two strangers the hearth he and his father had built years ago.

Our three educators have come together by chance. One wonders what they will find to talk about. Come! Get a little closer to the fire, and let us listen as they tell their stories, and as story itself takes on a new educational meaning.

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Terry begins. "Thanks for letting me share your space. I guess it's obvious that I'm new to the bush."

"Naw," Dave replies, "if it's your first time, you'll be back. I started coming up here as a kid and this place... well, it's just a part of me now." Dave glances at Sophie through the smoke of the fire. "You look really familiar to me. Are you a teacher?"

Sophie nods. "Yes, I am. I work at an outdoor school in Kenora. But you know, I think you and I met right here on this point maybe five years ago now."

Dave nods. "Right – that's it. Small world! We talked about teaching. You inspired me to get my kids outside more, to see if I could incorporate more environmental education into my teaching."

Sophie throws on another piece of wood, and their faces are momentarily bright in the orange glow. "And how did it go?"

Dave sighs and shrugs. "I dunno. I'm feeling more and more disillusioned. My students are just plain bored. All I'm doing is putting out fires and, to be honest, I'm bored too. I'm starting to wonder if all the structures and regulations are squeezing the passion right out of me." He pauses. The sound of the

crackling fire fills the air. “I’m sure my students can sense it. And as for getting the kids outside...I did it, but boy was it difficult sometimes. I got resistance from parents, teachers, admin—even the kids themselves. Why are you wasting time getting kids outside when you have a curriculum to cover? What are they learning out there? ‘Mr. B, I don’t want to get dirty’. ‘Mr. B, I don’t like sitting on the grass.’ The kids were probably the worst: I wasn’t expecting that. And then, once out there, I wasn’t really sure what to do with them.”

Sophie smiles. “Don’t be too hard on yourself. I’m an environmental educator, and well, I’m not sure if what I’m doing is making much of a difference either. It sure would be hard to argue that the environment is any better off because of me. I feel like something is missing and, I guess that’s why I’m here. Coming out here really gives me a chance to think about what I’m doing and to imagine what I might do differently.”

Terry straightens his sore back. “Watch out world!” he jokes. “Three teachers have invaded the bush.” Dave and Sophie laugh. “I’m also a teacher. I worked for a few years in a public school before I decided to go back to grad school. I wanted to figure out how to improve education and so went on to study learning theory. I can totally relate to what both of you are talking about. My research focuses on how to make teaching and learning more imaginatively and emotionally engaging for students. There’s a guy I work with who’s developed a theory he thinks might help.<sup>3</sup> And my own environmental inclinations have led me to consider how his work might improve the kind of environmental education we see in schools. I’m getting a little tired of kids being dragged outside to pick up garbage, and streambed reclamation projects are starting to sound, dare I say, cliché.”

As Terry pauses, Dave looks up and asks. “So what’s your story? Why are you out here in the bush?”

Terry laughs. “Earlier today I was beginning to ask myself the same thing. But now, well, I’m out here with my wet socks and my sore back, and I feel great. I feel like I need to be here. I figure, if I’m going to talk this environmental stuff, I should at least walk, or paddle, the walk. I’ve read about our alienation<sup>4</sup> from the more-than-human world and our need to change our ways if we’re going to have a sustainable future, or any future at all.<sup>5</sup> Then I find myself sitting indoors, staring at my computer, and planning trips to Paris. I guess the hypocrisy eventually caught up with me.”

A quiet descends, an uneasy truth has been spoken.

Without looking up, Terry decides to delve a little deeper. “Let me add some fuel to the proverbial fire. What would happen if we were to argue that the campfire

should be part of every child's education? I'm not just talking about roasting marshmallows. I'm talking about telling stories. There is something important epistemologically, ontologically, even metaphysically in having consistent, even ritualized, outdoor gatherings where we tell stories.<sup>6</sup> Some campfires might be like this one, an opportunity for sharing personal experiences, for making deeper connections between people, while others might act as debriefing sites, or as a means to extend our knowledge, feelings, even our sense of self and other. I think..." Terry glances up, looking at Dave and Sophie. "Ok, to really get myself in trouble? I think the key 'pedagogical tool,' for lack of a better term, is the story. Every child's education needs to centrally include stories."

It is Sophie who responds. "I'm not sure I know what 'ontologically' means, but I like your passion, and I think you're onto something. Now let me get this straight. Are you suggesting that we need to use stories more frequently in teaching because they can respond to the challenges David was talking about? And if so, what do you mean by 'more'? I use story all the time and I know a lot of my colleagues in environmental education do too."

"Right," Terry's replies, "More stories. But I'm interested in how, where, when, and why we might use story in education, and what the implications of doing so are for environmental education and, possibly, the larger worldview. I agree with you that stories are used, but the theoretical bases for doing so are missing from educational discussions. We don't really understand their potential for learning."

After a moment's thought Sophie smiles. "Well, I've done quite a bit of reading on the subject and have always believed that story has an important place in outdoor, environmental, experiential, whatever you want to call it, education. But perhaps our own experiences with story and thoughts on it might answer your question more fully."

Nodding first at David and then Terry, Sophie suggests, "Maybe David can add the public school angle and Terry can tell us about the heavy-hitting, theoretical side of things. Sound good?" The others nod. "Ok, I'll start" she says. "This comes from my anthropology background and builds on your idea of the campfire as an educational requirement. We know that for thousands of years people have been telling stories and one reason for this is because it's a fantastic way to make sense of the world around us. How to feel, think, understand, and engage with the world can be conveyed by the story."

Nodding in agreement David adds: "This includes the cultural creation myths,<sup>7</sup> or the songlines that Bruce Chatwin<sup>8</sup> talks about."

"I loved Chatwin's book," Sophie agrees.

“And also includes the way Waldorf education uses the Grimm’s fairy tales,”<sup>9</sup> adds David. “The story carries with it profound insights into how people should be, interact, and think about themselves and their relationship with the world.”<sup>10</sup>

“Right,” Terry jumps in. “My sense is that stories can range from the fairly mundane, like those in sitcoms, all the way through to the truly profound. I’m thinking about things like cultural creation myths<sup>11</sup> or the kind of examples Basso uses in ‘Wisdom Sits in Places’<sup>12</sup> where the place name not only describes the spot, but also reminds everyone within the culture of particular stories of moral importance.”

“So, let me get this straight. You’re saying that story is a way in which culture and meanings made by that culture are transferred between members and across generations. Isn’t that Vygotsky?”<sup>13</sup> asks David.

“Yes, he thinks stories, both in style and content, are a tool we can draw from our culture to help us understand our world. Not only do we find a tool to use, but in the process of choosing it we are in fact shaped by it. We are, to paraphrase Gadamer, both playing with, and being played by this thing called story.”<sup>14</sup> Terry responds, while stamping out a burning ember threatening his sock.

“But, how do I know what story to tell at any given moment, especially if I have a huge range of cultures in my classroom?”

“I’m not sure.” Terry looks honestly at David. “Part of it has to do with the art of teaching, and another part is related to building some kind of a shared culture within the classroom. It’s fairly safe to assume that all children have the experience of hearing stories. Story is deeply embedded in our oral traditions.”<sup>15</sup>

David gazes out towards the darkness of the lake, “How am I supposed to get my grade 10s to buy this story thing? Correct me if I’m wrong, but story would include personal narratives of both students and teacher, and range from the ubiquitous: ‘what did I do last summer?’ to much more profound moments of sharing, right?”

Sophie looks at Terry as she responds. “Yes, I think so. My sense is that these kinds of stories have a range of uses including: finding out about one another, building confidence in oneself and one’s ideas, forging good personal relations and, at times, they may even be therapeutic.<sup>16</sup> We might think about story as a way of aligning the students not only with the course content but also with themselves and each other.”

Sophie stretches out a cramped leg. “You know David, in my classes building relationships is an explicit goal—even bordering at times on the therapeutic—

but I don't think this usually happens in the public school classroom."  
"Does this mean you have a constructivist bent?"

"To an extent yes," Sophie responds, "but some of the work we do is also about building relationships and helping students to transcend<sup>17</sup> themselves."

"Story *does* support a kind of shared experience." Terry's face glows in the firelight. "Stories are being told, or written, by groups of people all the time—by students, communities, even cultures. I am thinking of stories that range from debriefing at the end of an activity, to fireside talks about the day, to picture albums, and on to group journals. These are the ways that stories can be used to allow a group to see itself and make collective decisions. They are also a fantastic way to build a sense of belonging."

David is now really involved. "I like the idea of a group journal. I've never thought of that, but you could also use it to build a really nice celebration at the end of each school year. Have you ever done a photo/video journal?"

"No, I never have," Sophie responds, "but I think it's a great idea. You could add friends and family, have a celebration, and make it a real memory."

Leaning forward to check a steaming sock Terry summarizes. "So we have three uses of story, right? The transmission of cultural knowledge, the expression of personal experiences, and the relating of shared experience. Are there any others?"

"Yes, I have another." David nods. "The hook!" Sophie nods in agreement and David continues. "Stories are a hook. Teachers use hooks all the time to add some levity, build suspense, just to increase interest to draw the students in. Take, for instance, an activity where you want them to work together. I find that if I use a little story to establish a context or evoke some image, my students are more likely to pay attention when I get to the instructions. I also find if you add mystery, a problem to be solved, or a mystery character, the kids will get sucked in."<sup>18</sup>

"That makes four." Sophie pokes the fire.

Quiet settles around the little fire. The starry vault of the heavens is filled with the voices of two loons calling to each other, telling stories, perhaps, of their day's adventures.

"Thank you, loons." David remarks. "You've reminded me of another use of the story." Looking at Terry he asks, "What happens in every staff room, every single day, when two or more teachers meet?"



“They tell war stories,” whoops Terry.

“That’s right,” says Sophie, “but they are much more than gripe sessions about the worst kid, or the wild parent, or the crazy weather. They are also about good things: the great lesson, the ‘aha’ moment, the new resource, or the exemplary program.”

“I agree,” continues David. “They can communicate values, build empathy, and do other things but, you know, I think their real strength is that they are, fundamentally, ways of learning from each other. I can gather the experience of five or ten other people just by listening to what they have to say. It can expand my bag of tricks, give me insights into the practice, and even aid in developing my judgment as a teacher. Stories can be used with students in a very similar way, surely?”

“Through stories we can share learning. Is that what you mean?” Terry looks to David.

“Yah, I think so.”

“You know,” David continues, “I bet that from time to time, all teachers have used stories in the ways we have been talking about more or less deliberately.”

“I think so too, because the story is so central to the use of language.” Terry looks into the flames. “If nobody minds, I’d like to add another kind of story use—I think we are up to six now—that has fascinated me for the last few years, and that I think might be important to this conversation and to the learning of every kid out there.”

“This should be good!” David grins.

“It really is good. Bear with me. I think the story is arguably *the* main work-horse of learning. It is our heavy lifter. No, I mean it! I think it carries the curriculum.” David and Sophie both splutter incredulously, and Terry raises his hands. “Let me explain. If story is a tool of great cultural significance, what would happen if we were to use it more deliberately as a learning tool?<sup>19</sup> The story can be a heavy lifter for learning, because it shapes information in a way that is emotionally and imaginatively engaging. When we learn something in story form, our emotions and imaginations are evoked and we come to feel something about what is being learned.<sup>20</sup> The educational value of story, then, is that it provides an emotional context and can be applied in any part of the curriculum. The story has huge significance in oral cultures for this very reason, doesn’t it? It makes knowledge meaningful and, when done well, memorable for the listener.<sup>21</sup> This must be educationally significant.”

Realizing he may have slipped into lecture mode, Terry looks at Sophie and David, expecting one or both to be asleep. Instead, David's eyes have an intense gleam as he nods in agreement.

"That makes a lot of sense. My students never seem to forget the story I tell them about the battle between the French and English on the Plains of Abraham. Unlike other aspects of the Social Studies curriculum, I teach this as a story. We develop profiles of the main characters, investigate surprising incidents, check out the wacky characters, take on different roles, and even try to reenact parts of the battle. Through story the emotional force of this particular historical event is brought into focus. It is hugely enjoyable for them and for me."

Terry can't help smiling. "I'm not surprised you enjoy it, or that your students find that unit memorable. You are shaping the content in story form, providing students with a vital sense of history. So you are using the story, a cognitive tool<sup>22</sup> already familiar to them, to make sense of the content."

Glancing at Sophie, who is beginning to look concerned, David shrugs. "Huh. Not sure what you mean by 'cognitive tool', but am I good or what?"

"Sorry," Terry jumps in, "the idea is that students belong to a culture. They have access to cultural tools, the story being one, that assist them in making sense of their world. We reach into our cultural toolkit, grasp a tool, employ it and somehow make the tool our own, so that as we make sense of our world, we simultaneously become attached to our culture. The story is one of many different features of language we have, one of many different sense-making tools, so why not use them consciously in teaching? Things like mental imagery, drama, extreme features of the topic, and tapping into students' sense of wonder are all potential tools that engage students in their learning.<sup>23</sup> They are all potential heavy lifters for education."

"Hang on a sec," Sophie leans towards Terry as she gives form to her concern. "I have to say that some of this talk about emotions is making me nervous. One of the common questions, even accusations, directed towards environmental educators is that we are propagandizing the students we work with. I even hesitate to use 'the hook' too much because it seems a little manipulative. I understand, at a certain level, that all education, even the seemingly 'objective' version, has an agenda. Still, we are beginning to walk a really fine line here. How close does this focus on the emotions come to actually being manipulative, and how can we avoid falling into the potential allure of that trap?"

"Good questions, Sophie," David nods as he turns to face Terry as well. "There was no talk of emotion or imagination in my teacher education. Maybe that was a good thing..."



“I wrestle with this challenge as well,” Terry confirms with a nod. “We only need to look at history, or advertising for that matter, to see how people can, and do, have their emotions played with for all kinds of reasons. But I don’t think the logical solution is to stay away from them at all costs. My sense is that all education involves decisions about what to include, what to emphasize, what to ignore, and so on, which means at the very least it is hard to see where there is no manipulation happening. As Martin Buber has pointed out, we are bringing *our* world to our students.<sup>24</sup> Unfortunately, and I think this is part of the environmental educators conundrum, if you are making decisions that align themselves with the status quo, then those decisions are not seen as propaganda. If, on the other hand, your decisions align themselves with a margin, as is often the case in environmental education, then they often *are* considered propaganda. Remember, too, that emotions and stories can be used in positive ways. They have been used to bring people together, to create shared ideas and memories, and to sustain fundamental goods. At the very least, I think the fact that you are thinking about this potential to propagandize is better than assuming you aren’t doing it. And lastly, before I bore us to tears, the trouble with trying to be emotionless and objective in the world of education is that it also tends to be totally boring and hard to remember. We remember those things we actually feel something about and those feelings don’t always have to be fantastic, warm, and fuzzy—they just have to be alive and human.”

The smell of burning socks jolts Terry out of his theorizing. As he moves them away from the fire, David adds a few more pieces of wood. “Ok, I mostly agree with that, but does your theory provide any guidelines for teachers? I wasn’t trained to think about teaching as story-telling but, if I’m following you, this is what we should think about doing. Was story part of your teacher training for environmental education, Sophie?”

“No,” she replies, “and certainly not story as a learning tool. As to whether or not I’ve got a lot of experience using story, I’m really not sure. After listening to what you have to say, Terry, I feel like I haven’t been very thoughtful about story as an educational tool. I definitely haven’t been employing the story in a consistent way.” She pauses. “I’d also be interested in learning more about these other tools you mentioned that tap into our students’ imaginations and, getting back to what David just said, how teachers can use them.”

“It really is not that difficult once you get the hang of it. The group I work with at Simon Fraser University—we call ourselves the Imaginative Education Research Group—provides a lot of support on our website in the form of teaching templates, detailed examples, etc.<sup>25</sup> Want me to run through an example quickly?” David and Sophie nod.

“I’ve just developed a unit for teaching about soil.<sup>26</sup> You start by thinking about what it is about the soil that draws your interest, what engages your emo-

tions in the topic, ‘cause if you’re engaged it’s sure easier for the students to get engaged. Anyway, I’m struck by the mysteriousness of soil and the array of life forms it contains. If only it could talk! As we dig in a garden we engage with the history of the Earth itself. The soil is full of ghosts—the remains of everything that once lived eventually ends up in the soil, becoming the basis for new life. In addition to these “ghosts,” soil is teeming with life; there is more life below the soil surface than there is above it. This will be my story—the emotionally engaging dimension I will use to shape my unit and to frame all of the hands-on types of activities students do. This approach is different already isn’t it?” Terry glances from Sophie to David. He continues. “It begins with what is emotionally engaging about what we are teaching and maintains this throughout a lesson or unit by means of story. Anyway, it might be fun for a bunch of, say, grade two students to learn about soil from the perspective of an earthworm as it journeys through the soil, churning up the soil, awakening ghosts...our aim will be to evoke as vividly as possible for the students mental images of the mysterious and bountiful life found there.”

David nods in recognition. “You know, I was recently looking at the lessons provided on the Center for Ecological Literacy website and noticed they do a whole unit on worms.<sup>27</sup> They have worm bins, and a school garden in which to observe worms in action.”

“I had a look at that too.” Terry replies. “It confirmed for me how an approach to teaching that integrates story in a meaningful way could really have an impact on ecological education, in particular it could kindle students’ ecological understanding and concern for the natural world. While ecological education programs include activities that seem engaging, there is no evidence that emotion and imagination play a central role in them in the theoretically grounded way we are discussing now.<sup>28</sup> How many ecological educators have heard of a cognitive tool?”

Sophie shakes her head. “Terry, could you give me another example? I can see how using story to shape the topic of soil would be engaging for students and I can also see how the overall story could frame all kinds of outdoor, hands-on types of activities. But the topic of worms seems too easy. Could you give me an example, say from mathematics, of how a seemingly unimaginative topic might be shaped in story form?”

“Fair enough. I can give you an example Kieran Egan has developed for geometry. He’s the man who’s developed this theory of Imaginative Education. Anyway, his example is Pythagoras’ theorem, that one about the square of the hypotenuse being equal to the sum of the squares on the other two sides.”<sup>29</sup>

“Nicely done, Terry.” Sophie laughs.

“Thanks. Anyway, what he proposes is teaching about the theorem in a story form that situates the content, the theorem, and its discovery—especially the initial discovery of the 3x4x5 triangle—in the context of human lives. So our teaching on this topic will be embedded in the story of Pythagoras and his ideas. One thing I remember vividly from Kieran’s example is the school Pythagoras set up at Crotona in Italy. He led a sect whose purpose was to pursue knowledge, but it also committed itself to vegetarianism, a fixation on beans if I remember correctly, secrecy, elaborate rituals and the cult of Apollo. He developed the idea of philosophy that we understand today; the use of observation and reason to make sense of the world and of experience.”

David jumps in with a question. “I get how using story in mathematics is clearly different from what we tend to do, and I can see how students would be engaged, but you haven’t taught the theorem yet have you? How is that done in story form?”

“Ok. Sorry about being so long-winded. Having situated our teaching in the story of Pythagoras, we might then focus on his notion of the cosmos. What has mathematics got to do with it, and how does this theorem get taught? Well, Pythagoras and his followers were passionate about numbers and set out to prove that the key to understanding the universe was through numbers. So, we can get students involved in the questions Pythagoras raised and the experiments he performed. We could begin by thinking of numbers as having substance; as such, a line three units long can be symbolized by three equi-distant dots. Apparently the Pythagoreans used sticks to make dots in the groomed sands of their southern Italian beaches.”

“I have to try this out.” Sophie stands up and moves away from the fire. The others follow her. With the help of a stick she makes three marks.

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“Nice, so what does three-squared look like?” reprises Terry.

For a few minutes everyone messes with dots in the earth.

“How about this?” Sophie offers.

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“Ok, does this make sense, David?” Terry asks.

“Absolutely, having a square with nine dots helps give a more embodied sense of three-squared.” David responds.

“Right, now what I would do” continues Terry, “is have students mess with all kinds of shapes, lines, and angles through making dots. They’ll begin to observe relationships between them and you can eventually get around to a right angle of three by four with both sides squared, like this.”

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“And what happens now?” Terry asks, a knowing smile beginning to emerge.

“Well I am guessing that someone fills in the other side with five dots, since the Pythagoreans already knew that there was a triangle that worked like this,” Sophie suggests, “and that step would lead quite rapidly to creating a 5x5 square and eventually, maybe with a well-placed question, the dots are counted and the connection is made.”

“Hah! It does work!” David exclaims as he fills in the missing side.

“You bet it does,” Terry replies, “and not only have we discovered the relationships between the hypotenuse and the other sides of the triangle, but we’ve made the first step, at least for the Pythagoreans, to showing that numbers governed geometry and eventually the universe.”

“The next step, I guess,” proposes David, “could be to have students continue to mess around with this discovery and then lead them into some of the key geometry underneath it—all the while referring back to that initial excitement.”

For a few moments no one speaks. They are drawn back to the crackling fire, while the sound of a distant loon provides a tranquil interlude. Terry looks inquisitively at Sophie and then glances back at David. “We may have a casualty here. I think we’ve lost Sophie.”

“No, not at all. In fact, I think I’m realizing I may understand things better now. When I think back to my own experiences learning geometry, we were pretty much given some numbers and that was that. Very stale, very sanitary. No connections were made to anything that mattered to us personally. I can see how this idea that numbers might be the key to the universe could really arouse the

students' interest and sense of wonder.”

Terry nods. “Exactly the idea underlying Imaginative Education. By using stories and other cognitive tools we trigger emotion while also carrying the content. In this way learning becomes more meaningful for our students.”

“Ok, so if I’m following you, Terry, we have a sixth way story can be involved in education, and this last way allows story to carry more curricular weight. Story is a tool that our students are already using to make sense of the world. It captures their emotions and imaginations in learning, and allows them easier access to the content because it is a form they already understand. Am I right?”

“You go!” Terry exclaims, retrieving his now dry footwear.

“I wonder, though,” David murmurs, poking at the dying embers, “if ‘tool’ is the best term to use.”

“Fair comment,” Terry admits. “But the role Vygotsky plays in this theory is a discussion for another night. I think I’m going to hit the sack. Also, like I mentioned earlier, story isn’t the only tool available: mental imagery, recognition of the heroic, or the act of collecting things, are all tools that culture has available to help us to make sense of the world. The goal is not to just story everything, but to be more thoughtful about engaging learners through the multiple ways they are already using to make sense of the world.”

“Well,” Sophie yawns, “I’m exhausted. But I’m glad the gods, or the numbers, saw fit to bring us together today, and I’d be excited to learn more about these tools. The more I can dial into my students and have them engage emotionally and cognitively with the content, the more I feel I’m doing my job. Story could be a great tool for my kit, and this trip was, after all, for retooling.” Sophie stretches. “Want me to put out the fire or is anyone staying up?”

“Not me,” says Terry carefully rising. “I need to lie down before I fall over. Thanks for a great evening. I couldn’t have wished for better company.”

“I’ll put it out,” offers David. “My mind is buzzing and I want to think a bit before I call it a night.”

On a rocky point by a silver, moonlit lake three tents nestle around the glow of a dying fire. Crouched quietly next to the fire pit in a place laced with memories, David begins to smile, a mind percolating with new possibilities.

## Notes

- 1 Abram (1996).
- 2 Beltrame (2009). [http://ca.news.yahoo.com/s/capress/090823/national/environment\\_poll](http://ca.news.yahoo.com/s/capress/090823/national/environment_poll)
- 3 Egan (1997).
- 4 Roszak (1978).
- 5 Evernden (1985).
- 6 Sale (1985).
- 7 Bringhurst (2002).
- 8 Chatwin (1987).
- 9 See: [http://www.waldorfinthehome.org/2006/07/selecting\\_fairy\\_tales.html](http://www.waldorfinthehome.org/2006/07/selecting_fairy_tales.html)
- 10 Egan (1986).
- 11 Bringhurst (2002).
- 12 Basso (1996).
- 13 Vygotsky (1978).
- 14 Gadamer (2004).
- 15 Profeit-LeBlanc (2002).
- 16 Joy (1997).
- 17 Greene (1973).
- 18 For an example of a mysterious character see “EM” from the Earthkeepers program. The website <http://www.eartheducation.org/resource.asp?sku=bek> provides a description of EM and the Earthkeepers program based on the work of Van Matre and Johnson (1988).
- 19 Egan (1997).
- 20 Egan (1986).
- 21 Egan (1986).
- 22 Egan (1997).
- 23 Egan (1997).
- 24 Buber (1968).
- 25 Imaginative Education Research Group website: [www.ierg.net](http://www.ierg.net)
- 26 Judson (in press).
- 27 This particular lesson is no longer available directly from the Centre for Eco-literacy as it has been integrated into their larger LiFE (Linking Food and the Environment) program but the website <http://www.ecoliteracy.org/> has a myriad of resources and there are other lessons available at <http://www.edibleschoolyard.org/lessons-recipes>.
- 28 Judson (in press)
- 29 Egan (2005).



## Notes on Contributors

**Sean Blenkinsop** is a member of the Faculty of Education at Simon Fraser University. His research work falls under the auspices of philosophy of education with a particular focus on the environment. He is currently deeply involved in the development of a “community-based-environmental-learning-centre,” also known as a publicly-funded K-7 school conceptualized using an ecological lens. **Contact:** sblenkin@sfu.ca

**Gillian Judson** is a co-director of the Imaginative Education Research Group based at Simon Fraser University. Her new book on imaginative ecological education is due out shortly. **Contact:** gcj@sfu.ca

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