

Christopher Agostino's StoryFaces Movie

— TEACHER'S GUIDE —

My intention is to move viewers with an experience of the traditional power and value of storytelling. Through creative and surprising tellings, I will expand their understanding of how a tale can be told while engaging their imaginations so as to inspire them to create their own stories.

Story Content and Discussion Topics

The Amazing Face Story uses my visual storytelling technique to tell the tale of how I learned to do this art. This “living cartoon” shows kids right from the start that there is more than one way to tell a story — and that it will be fun.

> **DISCUSS** the multiple methods used here to tell the tale: talking and painting, sound effects, pop culture references, acting/gestures, and animation of the facepaint.

> **ASK:** Do you know other examples of a story told in more than one way?

Activity Demonstration: how to create your own Amazing Face Story starting with a drawing, to loosen imaginations and offer an alternative to writing as a way to develop an idea.

> **See** the [webpage](#) and **separate teacher's guide** for this d.i.y. in-class/at-home activity.

Aesop's Fable The Lion And The Mouse is as an example of how traditional stories survive through generations, passed down from adult to child, because of lessons they contain. My playful, theatrical style serves as a model and encouragement for young storytellers to use voices, characters and acting to bring a tale to life.

> **ASK** about fables/folktales kids may know, how they learned them? Books, movies, bed time stories? Are there stories most everybody knows, like The Tortoise and the Hare?

> **TELL** a familiar tale collectively in class or over Zoom as a circle story.

> **DO:** Have students act out story characters, like the lion or mouse, or characters from stories they know or create. Ask them what their characters might sound like, or to show you what kind of faces they would make?

Li Chi Slays The Dragon is a hero tale from ancient China. Hero tales are some of our oldest stories, and still rule the box office in Marvel and DC movies.

> **ASK:** What makes someone a hero? **Discussion starter:** a hero is someone who will risk themselves in order to help others — which would include Li Chi as well as the mouse and tiger in these tales, along with most modern movie heroes and many people in our everyday lives.

> **ASK:** Who are your heroes from a story/ from your life?

> **DISCUSS:** Why do hero tales survive? Fables exist to preserve lessons learned; hero tales function more to inspire individuals to take action and change the world.

> **ASK:** What are you inspired to do by your heroes?

The Tiger That Went To The House Of The Sun is my original story, exploring themes of sacrifice and transformation, as a tiger goes on a quest to save the forest.

> **DISCUSS:** Transformation through trial: the tiger in my tale is changed by the journey. A common trope in folktales (and video games) is of the hero character being transformed in appearance or gaining special qualities after combat or facing danger.

> **DISCUSS:** Are superhero and horror movies today's myths and folklore? Today, special effects in movies take us into worlds where superheroes battle monsters, much as makeup and masked dancers once brought to life the gods and myths in the rituals of our ancestors.

Activities

Some kids may be more comfortable with words than others, some may love to draw and some may start to shine when they are in front performing. I want to give all students the option to find their inspiration where they can, and then to bring that confidence into other areas to complete the full process of creating and presenting a visual story. Here are some suggestions offering multiple avenues into creating a story.

See the separate page for [The Amazing Face Story Activity](#) that I demonstrate in the video — with instructions, drawing form and examples.

Write a story with a creative reason for why an unusual animal looks or acts the way it does, as my tiger tale explains their colors and stripes — a “Just So” type story.

> **ADVANCED STEP:** Students could research the real scientific reasons for the animal’s habits and appearance and weave them into the tale.

Draw a Movie Poster for your story. Take a story (one of your own, one of mine, folktales, etc.) and create a poster for it — synthesizing a narrative into a visual image.

> **SUGGESTIONS:** A *single image* poster that sums up the whole story (like the Jaws poster with the shark rising from the bottom) or a *show everything* poster (like the Star Wars posters with all the characters and little scenes).

Create a “found image” story. Using photographs you’ve taken, or images from other resources, create an original visual story or illustrations for a story you’ve written. *To find images for the Li Chi and Tiger stories I searched through 40 years of my painted faces.*

Re-Create a familiar tale. Take a story you know and change the characters into animals, or change their temperament, motives, genders, time periods, etc., and see what else changes.

> **RE-USE and RE-PURPOSE:** As a professional artist I am constantly re-using ideas, images characters and resources in new ways and different stories to find deeper meaning in them.

Telling — It’s important to give kids the chance to share their stories however possible, in school or at home, and especially in repeated tellings if you can. Explore possibilities for sharing presentations online, to have students record themselves, to create videos with images and narration, to create galleries of story pictures and text.

A story grows in the telling and changes as your audience responds. You never really understand the full meaning of a story until you tell it, and young story creators need the experience of presenting and interacting with audience response.

I believe that an important part of my role as a visiting artist is to show kids there are other options: “*If I can do this (or more practically: if I can make a living doing this), then you can do anything*”. So I am endlessly encouraging of kids to fully engage their imaginations in discussion or as they create their own stories. My general answer to any questions about what a student wants to draw or write is “go ahead” or “try it and see what happens”. I want them to think of themselves as artists, to engage in new ideas and to dream big.

The StoryFaces Movie is a 45 minute video available for streaming.
Suitable for grades K - 6 and family audiences.

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