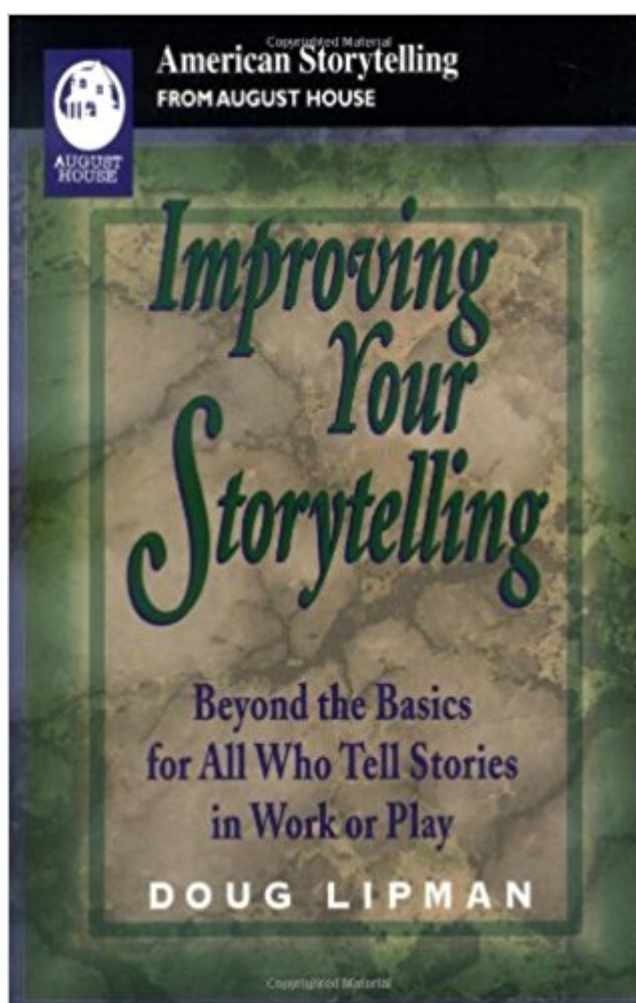


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# Improving Your Storytelling: Beyond The Basics For All Who Tell Stories In Work And Play (American Storytelling)



## Synopsis

The first steps in storytelling are often easy, because we tell stories informally every day. Once you take storytelling into the more formal contexts of performance or occupational uses, however, you may be faced with challenges you hadn't anticipated. You need information that goes beyond the basics. And you need it in a form that does not just tell you what to do but helps you make your own informed decisions. This book is meant for the reader who has already begun to tell stories and is ready to learn more about the art. Instead of rules to follow, it gives you a series of frameworks that encourage you to think on your feet. Doug Lipman has written and taught extensively on the art of storytelling. With the same generosity and warmth that characterize his workshops, he considers the teller's relationship to the story, the teller's relationship to the audience, and the transfer of imagery in a medium that is simultaneously visual, auditory, and kinesthetic.

## Book Information

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## Customer Reviews

Aspiring storytellers will be pleased to know that Lipman's down-to-earth approach allows for flexibility rather than an emphasis on memorization. A professional storyteller who has appeared at such prominent venues as the National Storytelling Festival, he presents a thoughtful framework that can apply to anyone whose livelihood depends on keeping an audience rapt, including lawyers, teachers and salespeople, although his remarks are more specifically tailored to performing artists. Advising the would-be speaker to "think in the present" when performing, Lipman articulates basic concepts in the use of oral language (tone of voice always prevails over meaning, he says) and of

imagery and gestures. He believes that retelling a story informally many times helps the speaker determine what is most meaningful about it--a connection he terms the Most Important Thing (MIT), since he firmly believes that a story's meanings flow from the speaker's MIT. In addition to a sensitive discussion of how to build a relationship with an audience, he also focuses on the importance of warm-up techniques, including the use of a "healing yawn" to reduce tension and get an oxygen boost, and numerous anti-anxiety techniques. The best result? In storytelling as in life, one must "combine the knowledge of how to work toward transformation with the patience to let it happen out of your control." (June) Copyright 1999 Cahners Business Information, Inc.

Lipman uses theory, practical suggestions, and personal examples in this in-depth study of the relationships among story, teller, and audience. He delves into the definition of "story," structure and meaning, and models for learning a story. The author discusses the appeal of a tale to the teller; the conflicts, fears, and other psychological issues it may raise; and the emotional work that must be done before the telling. He explores the transfer of the tale's imagery by means of oral language, facial expression and body language, and voice. The book is easy to read and has an engaging and personal style. Lipman's guide is based on his own experience and that of other professional tellers. It is a must for those who strive to gain a higher level of skill, and who wish to make the story a transforming gift to the listener.-Judy Sokoll, formerly at Fairfax County Public Library, VA Copyright 2000 Cahners Business Information, Inc.

One of the great books of storytelling improvement. The chapters don't say more than what they need to, but they don't say less either. The points are very clear and very concise, with Lipman offering various strategies to improve a person's dialogue, you would think that individuals would become lost in the text. Lipman, however, writes in a way that caters to the individual. If a thesis or main point could be made about the book, it would be that Lipman helps the individual create his or her stories based around the Most Important Thing (MIT). Learning the most important thing a storyteller wants to get across to his/her audience is the foundational step to building an excellent storytelling event. This insight is crucial because it creates a sense of focus about the story and gives it a direction. Is the MIT of the story to teach a moral lesson, or is it purely for entertainment purposes, is it to grip the hearts of others so that they will contribute to a cause? These are the things a person can expect to learn throughout this book with a step by step process. Lipman offers these insights through experience, being one of the foremost storytellers in the United States (perhaps farther), Lipman demonstrates excellent knowledge with easy to follow steps toward

enhancing one's ability to tell stories. I would have given this book five stars but there was one thing that stuck out, that was missing, that I wish Lipman had added to the book. Lipman mentions three building blocks that make up storytelling, one of which he chose not to include in the book. "To understand the storytelling event, look at its major components. One is the transfer of imagery that occurs, and its building blocks: oral language and images. A second, not dealt with in this book, is the context of the event, the physical and social setting in which a story is told. Finally, there are three obvious ingredients: the storyteller, the audience, and the story. These three form the corners of a triangle-the storytelling triangle" (Kindle, Loc. 143). Including this may have made the book become too great in length, but I would opt for its inclusion to increase length and then let the reader choose whether or not to absorb this material. Because storytelling is an art form, it is difficult to debate Lipman's methods for creating a story from the MIT to the execution and close. However, it can be said that I have read other books regarding self-development, dialogue, and interpersonal communication and Lipman's suggestions seem to expand upon those concepts. For example, the "attention getter" that we are taught in speech class, Lipman expands it further, making it individualized. For Lipman, personally, he uses music for the attention getter, or, invitation, as he states it. He further cites other storytellers and their individual methods based on their personalities. This book truly caters to developing one's own sense of storytelling style.

This book by Doug Lipman starts off in the introduction by reminding us that there is no right way of telling a story, for me, a people pleaser, this is a great way to start off this particular book. He put me at ease telling his readers that we can be who we are while telling our stories and there is no right or wrong way to do it. He then talked about how to be present, be in the here and now while telling your story to make it real to you and the people who are listening, which in my opinion helps set the stage of mindset before even telling your story. The first chapter is about oral language and how to use your strengths and weaknesses while telling your story. He goes on to teach about facial expressions, gestures and posture. In this chapter he writes about eye behavior, I thought that it was a little much to tell his readers that this did not matter as just a few pages ago he told us there was no right or wrong way. I know for me I care a lot about eye behavior and that is how I get most of my laughs while telling a story, maybe for him personally this has never mattered. Also in this chapter he wrote about the ever important pausing, which I believe is a very important thing to learn about in our storytelling journey. Something in this first chapter that has really improved my storytelling was the idea of making your stage uncrowded. This is a very wise thing that he has taught his readers as it is very hard to tell a multi-person story, it is simpler to tell your story with as

few characters as possible. Chapters two and three are about imagery and the power of images in your story. If you as the audience will take the journey with him in hearing, seeing and smelling the things he asks you to, you will not be disappointed, thank you for the journey, Lipman! While some may feel as these two chapters went too deep, I loved getting pulled that deep into the story and all the possibilities that a story could have with more than just words. While chapter four is probably an important chapter for many, it was not as thrilling and touching as the last two for me. I did enjoy learning especially about the difference in how men and women hold themselves, but I thought it was too much body positioning talk to me as that for me is not as important to the story as the senses, expressions and tone. Chapter five starts to put together the real meat of your story; I found chapters five through nine to be incredibly helpful to learn to tell a story. When we have a story to tell, it is important to think about the most important thing in your story. It is very interesting and fun for me to think about this before telling a story, not just for the mental exercise it brings but to dig deep into every nook and cranny of my story to flush out the most important thing in it. I think that these chapters really express the subtitle of this book, going beyond the basics of storytelling. He invites you to find creativity in your story and to personalize your story in a way that I have never had the opportunity to do. While I appreciate the rest of the book; chapters ten through nineteen; I had a very hard time understanding how those of us who only tell stories for fun would benefit as much from them. I can absolutely see how these chapters are extremely important for those whose paychecks are on the line for their stories, but for those of us who do it only for play I felt like this second half of the book would have been a wonderful second book for the person looking to go into extreme depths of storytelling. Overall I thought his writing style was easy to read and very helpful for anyone wanting to improve their storytelling.

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