

## STORYTELLING

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### **Storytelling Book Citation**

Litwin, Eric, and James Dean. 2012. *Pete the Cat and His Four Groovy Buttons*. New York: HarperCollins.

### **Video Link**

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=X8V-yM6XMgs&feature=youtu.be>

### **Essay**

#### **Introduction**

“Storytelling is a task shared by storyteller and story listeners; it is the interaction of the two that makes a story come to life” (McWilliams 1998). From the preparation for storytelling to the delivery of the story, the task is shared by the teller and the listeners. The audience must constantly be considered. Their interaction during the telling brings the story to life. Their engagement and learning afterwards keeps the story, and the art of storytelling, thriving. Through my storytelling experience, I developed as a professional, and the engagement with the listeners was a pivotal part of that growth.

#### **Audience**

The audience for this storytelling was a pre-kindergarten class in a school. The class consisted of fourteen four and five-year-old children with most of the students being young four-year-old children. Seven of the children were girls, and seven were boys. The children sat at the rug to listen to the storytelling as that is where they often listen to their teacher read.

#### **Book Choice Rationale**

Several points must be considered when choosing a book for a storytelling. I considered my listeners’ interests, ages, and attention spans. Short et al. (2018) notes the importance of understanding children’s interests when selecting books. In preparation for the

storytelling, the listeners' teacher acknowledged the children's adoration for Pete the Cat. This helped guide me to choose a book featuring him as the character. Secondly, most of the children are at the developmental level that typically enjoys concept books, simple plots, and repetitive aspects (Short et al. 2018). *Pete the Cat and His Four Groovy Buttons* features beginning concepts of numbers and counting, a simple plot of loss but not worrying, and repetitive phrases and songs throughout. Lastly, it is important to consider the children's attention spans and the given time frame (Kimble 2013). The character, the questions directed to the audience, and the song engaged many of the children's attention. The length of the story also allowed for an introduction and closure to the storytelling without losing the children's interest. The story's ability to catch children's interests will hopefully lead to them reading, or listening to others read, for pleasure.

### **Extension of Children's Thinking and Enjoyment**

As noted above, *Pete the Cat and His Four Groovy Buttons* mixes the academic concepts of counting, number recognition, and rhyming. If desired, the story could also assist with color recognition and rhythm. Kimble (2013) noted the importance of linking characters to the listeners' social-emotional experiences. I related the story to children's loss of things and worry. Furthermore, quality children's books are those that offer enjoyment and memorable characters (Short et al. 2018). The main purpose of this book selection was for enjoyment. I hoped to engage and entertain the children with the story as that enjoyment led to further storytelling from the children.

### **Props Used**

Along with verbally retelling the story, I thought it was important to use a visual. In the early part of the presentation, I used a stuffed Pete the Cat to engage the children's

interests. In addition, I used a felt board with felt representations of the illustrations. In considering the age of the audience, visuals were important to garner their attention. The felt pieces included numbers. The use of these helped to promote the concept of number identification. I also experienced an unexpected teachable moment when I first brought the felt board into the room. The children initially thought it was a television. Once I explained what the board was, they were mesmerized and wanted to touch it. This intrigued them from the beginning which helped to acquire their attention.

### **Lessons Learned From the Performance**

This was my first storytelling experience as the storyteller outside of family experiences. I gained confidence in my ability to tell the story without the book. I now know I am capable and that, if quality literature is chosen, children can be engaged without the book. This was also my first experience leading a pre-kindergarten class. I learned about their interests and attention spans. I learned the importance of the initial assessment of the audience, and I will utilize this in future storytelling sessions. Overall, the most important aspect I learned is to have confidence.

### **Conclusion**

Through this experience, I was able to witness the importance of oral storytelling. I witnessed engaged children who were, afterwards, inspired to tell stories themselves. It is essential to think of how the story will further listeners' thinking, inspire their storytelling, and promote their love for stories. This experience has helped me to gain confidence while witnessing the importance of storytelling.

## REFERENCES

- Kimble, Valerie. 2013. "Storytelling, Story Time, Story Programs..." Interview by Kyungwon Koh. September 26, 2013. Video, 54:54.  
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=3PFx8HIz12A>.
- Litwin, Eric, and James Dean. 2012. *Pete the Cat and His Four Groovy Buttons*. New York: HarperCollins.
- McWilliams, Barry. "Effective Storytelling: A Manual for Beginners." Accessed October 21, 2018. <http://www.eldrbarry.net/roos/eest.htm>.
- Short, Kathy G., Carol Lynch-Brown, and Carl M. Tomlinson. 2018. *Essentials of Children's Literature*. New York: Pearson.