

The Importance of Storytelling

The society we live in today could not exist without the influence from past generations. Human beings, as creatures of habit and tradition, hand down lessons and knowledge from one generation to the next. We pride ourselves on leaving a legacy of knowledge for our descendants to utilize. Our ability to learn from our ancestors' past decisions and use that knowledge to give ourselves an insight to our own problems gives us an advantage rarely found in other species, that of a communal knowledge pool. Our tradition of storytelling facilitates this transfer of knowledge. As a result, storytelling remains to this day the single most important tradition humans participate in.

Storytelling has earned its place as the most important tradition humans possess. The most important reason for this being that every story contains a lesson to instruct the audience. Stories teach us to love, to forgive others, to be just and to strive for better than we have. The greatest stories ever told function as a reflection on the world we live in and of both the goodness and evil present in our world. *The Lord of the Rings* by J.R.R. Tolkien provides a perfect example of the lessons to learn through literature. In it we see a world that on the surface vastly differs from our own, a fantastical world of elves and dragons and a quest to overcome evil. When one delves deeper, similarities become evident between Tolkien's world and our own, we see his world reflects our own. When reading, we experience a world riddled with strife and suffering, yet also good souls who do their utmost to fight the encroaching evil. This comparison between what is and what should be, stands as a major theme of epic sagas. Through this theme, stories provide a reflection on our world and show what must be done to set things right. This demonstrates the importance of stories as teachers. These epic tales are meant to be an example of what can be done to better the world and what it means to be human and to make the morally correct choices.

Storytelling also fulfills a crucial need of society by providing exemplary role models through their characters. It shows ordinary people performing extraordinary deeds, not because they are forced to, but because they choose to make the right choice. Their actions show people their everyday actions can

change the world. These role models have inspired numerous individuals to greatness throughout history. Society owes its knowledge of these fantastic role models to the art of storytelling. Storytelling functions as our traditional way of passing on these epic tales of inspiration. Its lack of a strict structure and precise limitations is one of its most vital characteristics. Every time a story is retold, it can be modified and changed by the person telling it. This allows a fantastic degree of variety and an ever changing and evolving story. This fluidity of identity gives storytelling its importance as a tradition and as a tool for teaching. The personalization of the story by the story teller means that every story, told differently with every recounting, has an infinite number of lessons that can be taught. Its ability to teach anything and everything in an infinite number of ways that can be tailored to the audience makes storytelling the most influential and important tradition to society today.

Storytelling has numerous important effects on our daily lives. It has been one of the most effective sources of inspiration known to man. Storytelling acts as a fantastic teaching tool, imparting lessons of life to individuals of all ages. Originating with the dawn of society and enduring into this age of near instantaneous access to all information, storytelling has proven its resilience and necessity beyond any shadow of doubt. Its effect has shaped our world in numerous and varied ways, some boringly obvious to see and understand and some which remain more obscure and elusive in their significance. The value storytelling holds as a source of inspiration and as a teaching tool makes it the most important tradition mankind possesses.