

Mel Ludington Comes To Our Classrooms

(Excerpt from a grant proposal to fund a second visit- written by the 2nd grade team at H.C. Storm School in Batavia, Illinois.)

Have you ever seen a whole classroom of children quietly enthralled by the telling of an international folktale?

Have you ever heard a whole classroom of children shouting out sounds like “cribbet, cribbit” and “zit, zit” in a controlled atmosphere of fun and enthusiasm?

Have you ever been touched by a whole classroom of children acting out creatively the parts of a folktale in their own unique way?

Then you must have been an observer on Sept. 19th when Mrs. Ludington came in to teach our second grade students . . . using international folktales. What a storyteller extraordinaire! Having been a drama teacher at the middle school level, Mrs. Ludington had lots of expertise to draw upon. She was kind enough to entertain, teach, and excite a love of literature in our students . . .

Melanie Ludington’s abilities included getting the children into groups and having them work together cooperatively, as well as to have them effectively use quick actions and props to portray characters and feelings. It was also impressive to have her teach the history of the folktale, the country from which each one originated, and some geographical and cultural facts about the place that affected the types of stories being carried down from generation to generation. She even included little known scientific facts about animals that were characters in her stories. For instance, Mrs. Ludington told about rabbits who have a 10 degree area right in front of them that is a blind spot, thus their need to bob their heads around to improve their vision. Having the children lay on the floor with their chins on the tile helped them experience what a rabbit would perceive from that proximity to the ground. Certainly a different perspective than they were familiar with!

At 2:30 all the second grade students gathered in the lunch room to perform for each other. Each second grade class had a folktale to learn so that they could dramatize it for all the other second graders. While the audience sat on the stage steps, the performers acted out their folktale on the floor. Thrilled children applauded wildly as their peers entertained them with comical actions and words. Such a happy time of learning and uninhibited fun! No shy shrinking violets on the stage when the director was so full of enthusiasm and gusto. A wonderful learning experience for children and teachers alike!