

"Notes on Poster, Gesture, Movement and Dance  
in Storytelling, and in Storytelling Therapy"  
by Eric Miller, 2017

Storytelling involves bringing characters to life, so tellers and listeners can experience the emotions and thoughts of these characters. Using movement, gesture, posture, and dance are excellent ways to bring characters and stories to life. Movement -- like voice -- can be an external manifestation of one's own, or of a character's, inner state. Things, beings, and processes can be embodied, enacted, and expressed through movement.

Body movements can bring up memories. One has a memory of the positions one's body has been in, and of what one was thinking and of how one was feeling when one was in those positions.

One might seek to be aware of, and at times to consciously create, "signature" body language (posture and gestures), stylised ways of moving, and types of quality of movement (slow or fast, smooth or jerky, curved or straight, meandering or intentional, etc) -- for oneself, for a narrator of a story, and/or for a story character.

Gesture can be used to illustrate (mime), to express feelings, to emphasise, etc.

Breathe in -- the body expands (straightens). Breathe out -- the body contracts (bends).

Movements can be pulsing, rhythmical, repetitive, and evolving. This can become dance. One can dance as, for, or about a character (including a character that is a personification of an emotion or idea).

Freeze -- strike a pose. Individual and group body-sculptures can represent characters at particular moments in stories. Regarding group sculptures: session participants can walk around and enter a story scene -- this gives the scene a certain sense of reality.

Stretch, extend, and reach -- to express yearning for something one, or a story character, wants.

Mime a story while it is being told, or after it has been told, by oneself or by someone else.

Two Warm-up activities:

1) Walk. Imagine going on a journey. Walk faster and slower. Make one's body smaller and larger. Walk alone, in pairs, and in groups. Walk through various terrains and weather conditions.

2) Standing in a circle, one participant could mime emotions and attitudes, and other participants could imitate or respond. (Listeners often imitate or respond to movements made by the narrator of, or by characters in, a story.)