

Bhediye Ko Dusth Kyon Kehte Hain?

Objective behind selecting the story:

- to develop a sense of curiosity & anticipation
- to summarize the story & identify its crux
- to relate the story to one's real life experiences

Presentation:

We did a pre-activity "Chinese Whispers" before storytelling session. In the storytelling session, I read the title "Bhediye Ko Dusth Kyon Kehte Hain?" of the story and posed it as a question for children. After gathering their responses, the story was told in parts wherein children were asked to imagine how one animal would have narrated the original event to another. After listening to the children's version, the actual narrative was told. At the end, children were asked to comment on the story in terms of what they liked/disliked and what was the core issue in the story.

Response:

The pre-activity was not as fruitful as we had expected it to be because the act of whispering was too funny for children. There was a general lack of seriousness in playing a fun game among them. However, most of them got the intention behind the game and at the end of each round the initial paragraph was reduced to a sentence. I neither discussed much on why it happened nor on how it could be avoided - I simply began to tell the story.

Many children thought wolf as evil because he was a child-stealer. There were few unusual reasons such as wolf is greedy (Manisha), wolf is a destructive being (Lokesh), and wolf gives curse (Domeswar). Some children did not know how a wolf or a swan looked like and so we showed them the picture in the book. The responses at the end of each part of storytelling were mostly repetitive with the glistening teeth of the wolf being the most remembered aspect. Many children could not manage to give a consistent account (in terms of number of lamb/wolves) and a gradually exaggerating version after listening to the successive parts of the story. However, Ritik Tiwari got some hold of the gradually exaggerating story-line. His responses are as follows:

1. Sheep said, "That wolf had glistening teeth and he was dying to eat me."
2. Swan said, "A poor little lamb was separated from its herd. The wolf smiled and showed his glistening teeth, and hence the sheep came to us out of fear."
3. Donkey said, "Some wolves intimidated an entire family of lamb by their glistening teeth."
4. Mouse said, "One wolf intimidated few lamb with his glistening teeth."

In his version, too, there are some inconsistency in number of lamb/wolves and amount of exaggeration expected given the refrain of the story - "they obviously tell the story with some exaggeration". The

context of sheep's separation from his herd and Pig's response in the original has influenced Ritik's second response although he introduces an extra adjective to describe the sheep.

Similarly, Swan's response in the original has influenced Ritik's third response but here he increases the number of wolves. However, this leads to inconsistency in his fourth response compared to the third.

Then we asked children to comment on the story wherein it seemed that children had got a vague sense of irony in the story. However, some like Manisha & Riya could not catch the irony at all. Neelu and Pinky found the scene of wolf listening to the birds, and Ritik found the final run of the wolf humorous. Harshu gave a specific response i.e. jhuta naam (false accusation) while others' response specifically revolved around statement inferred from the story such as one should not believe without thinking (Komal), one should not spread rumors (Lokesh), one shouldn't attack the weak (Domeswar), and one shouldn't exaggerate and lie (Laxman).

Reflection:

The storytelling session was interesting for various reasons. Some children could get a vague sense of irony in the story but the structure of their comments was interesting. Most of them, smiled at critical junctures of the story (two-birds talking and the final run of the wolf) but only few could get the crux of it. Their comments were interesting as most of them responded in the form of a moral statement or moral lesson such as one should or should not do this or that. I believe that before a child reaches at ethical implications of a text, he/she should spend some time re-leashing the irony/beauty in the story. This is essential for it instills a sense of being with things in a non-utilitarian manner and also provide a space to re-visit the story and play along its twists and turns.

Whenever ethical implications are seen as an immediate objective, the child tends to get in a serious or righteous mood. In such context, I found Harshu specific response significant as he seemed to be lost in the story. This is an important initial step to develop a sense of self-reflection. I think the ethical implication should come from children themselves when they have gradually relished the story or any piece of literature.