



Teaching Technique Story Telling – SAMPLE STORY

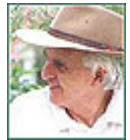
Half-hearted Harry

Human Value for the week: Right Conduct

Thought-for-the-Week: We should aim at excellence in the performance of our duties.

Ron's story: What follows is a story told by Dr. Ron Farmer to the students at the Toogoolawa School, Ormeau on the 2nd March 2003.

The Human Value for this week is Right Conduct, and the Thought-for-the-Week is "We should aim at excellence in the performance of our duties." Let us look at the meaning of this saying first. Who can tell me what the word 'excellence' means? Yes? (students: "The best", "Try hard"; etc) Yes, the word 'excellence' means that we should try to do our very best, to do better than we did last time. Never mind how well others are doing. This is about aiming to be the best that we can be, in whatever we are doing



Now, 'in the performance of our duties', carrying out our duties, what are our duties?' (students: "Washing up"; "Doing what the teacher says") Yes, we all have duties, and these have to be carried out as best we can.



Before going on to the story, let's look at some examples of excellence in the performance of our duties. The best examples of this are seen in Nature all around us. The sun has a duty to bring life-giving warmth to the planet, following a very strict timetable. What would happen if the sun said, "Oh, I can't be bothered with creating so much heat today; I'll just stop burning up for a day or so?" What would happen?

(student: "We'd all freeze") Yes, all life on the planet would die. So the sun does its job in an excellent way, and, because of that, life goes on, everything continues to grow. It is the same with all other aspects of Nature: the oceans, worms in the ground, clouds and wind and rain, the bushes and trees. Everything does its duty at a very high level.

How else can we look at this saying? What about your teachers. Now, one of their duties is to set a good example for you to follow. So they try hard every day to do their best in behaving with love towards you - even if one of you treats them very badly, they do their best to keep their heart open to each one of you, speaking kindly, never using sarcasm or favouring one student over another. By their own behaviour they show us how to be peaceful, no matter what happens. They do their duty in an excellent way, living the five Human Values. You can see that, can't you (some students nod in agreement).

So each one of us has our duties, and it is important for our own sake to do them in the best way we can. By trying to do our best, great things begin to happen in our lives. You will see this in the story I'm going to tell you now. It is about a boy who used to be known as Half-hearted Harry, and how he learned to do his very best always.

Harry lived in Poland around about the time 1480 - 1500. That was a fair while ago. In those days there was no television, no electricity, no telephone, if you can imagine that. No cars.

In fact, at that time everyone thought the world was flat. It was believed that the world was flat and had four corners. If you sailed too far you'd sail over the edge and into hell. This is what everyone believed. They also believed that the stars in the sky moved randomly and that they were moved around by angels. The angels, according to their whims, would move the stars around the earth. It was thought that the same angels looked after each human being. It was also thought that the earth remained still and the sun moved around the earth. That's what everyone believed.

Now this is the time that Harry lived in Poland. I'll tell you a little bit about Harry first of all. Harry earned the name of Half-hearted Harry. You might wonder how he earned the name of Half-hearted Harry. Well, if his mother asked him to feed the pigs he would say "Ah that bucket is full enough" and take about half a bucket to give to the pigs. About a week later his mother would say, "Harry you haven't been feeding the pigs properly. They are too skinny. You've gotta do the job properly." Harry would say "Ah whatever."



Then Harry's mother said, "I want you to go down to the next-door neighbour and tell him he must come here next Tuesday and help us build this fence". So Harry goes down there and can't quite remember what day it was and said "Mr. Smith, Mum says can you come on Wednesday". So the next-door neighbour turns up on Wednesday and nobody is there; wastes his time and the fence doesn't get built.

This was Harry's life - doing everything in a half-hearted way. "Ah, that'll do"; "That'll do." This is how he earned the name Half-hearted Harry.

Pretty soon no one would ask him to do anything. In fact as he grew older no one would give him a job. Most of the time he went hungry. His mum and dad said, "If you can't pull your weight, we can't feed you. You've got to earn your money." Well, Harry just couldn't work it out. He just thought the world was unfair. "Why are they doing this to me? Why are they picking on me? Why is everyone giving me a hard time? Why are they calling me Half-hearted Harry?" He couldn't figure it out.



In the same town in Poland there was the memory of this great man called Copernicus. Now Copernicus was born before Harry and he had shown himself to be a brilliant mathematician. People noticed him and invited him to go to Rome where all the scientific work was done, with the Pope in the Catholic Church. So he went down there and he began to learn that everybody believed - wrongly, he realised - that the world was flat. Being a mathematician he thought we should be able to prove that the world was flat. We should be able to prove that the angels move the stars. Being a mathematician, it didn't make sense to him. So over the next few years - this was around the time Harry was born and starting to grow - Copernicus realised that the earth did not remain still, but in fact moved around the sun. He also realised that every star followed the same track in the sky every day and night. He realised that the earth was round. These were three things he realised, but he couldn't prove it.

So he started teaching "I think the world is round. I think the stars move and follow the orbits in the sky." Well, you can imagine: the Pope got upset; the Cardinals got upset. The whole Catholic Church said, "You talk like that and we're going to hang you. It's against God's word and you are saying God is wrong. God has instructed the church that this is how it is, and you can't say otherwise. So you better get off back to Poland." So they banished Copernicus back to his little village in Poland, where Harry lived.

Being banished, he was given the job of looking after this little church, with the instructions: "Forget your research and no more teaching of this blasphemy, these wrong thoughts." Well, Copernicus thought, "I have to carry on my work and prove that what I'm saying is true." So he looked around to see if anybody would help him. Something made him choose Harry, even though everyone said, "We call him Half-hearted Harry. He never finishes a job."

On the first day that Harry turned up for work with Copernicus, the lake was iced over. Copernicus said, "Harry, your first job is to work out what length of rope I would need if we were walking across the lake and you fell in." Harry thought, "Ah. Ok". So he wandered around the lake and thought a couple of feet ought to do. He came back and said to Copernicus, "Two feet of rope." So Copernicus cut two feet of rope and then said. "Ok, let's go for a walk on the lake." Now Copernicus knew that there was a crack in the ice. When they came near it Copernicus gave Harry a shove and he fell in. "Ahhhh! I can't swim!". Copernicus said, "Don't worry. I've got the bit of rope that you worked out should be long enough." Of course it wouldn't reach. Harry's freaking out: "I'm gonna die. I'm gonna die of cold." Copernicus said, "You said this was long enough". Harry's screaming, "I should have measured it properly."

Well, fortunately Copernicus was a kind man, and inside his shirt he had a longer piece of rope. He pulled that out and threw it to Harry. He said to Harry, "Well, young man. Have you learned your lesson?" Harry said, "Yes. Always do a job properly. I could have drowned."

Well that brought about a radical change in Harry. From then on he did every job properly and thoroughly. Harry and Copernicus worked together for the next fifty years. What did they do? Copernicus drilled holes in the roof of his old barn so he could see the stars at night. He could see that this star moved from this hole to this hole. Over the next fifty years he made all these detailed calculations until eventually he could prove without a doubt that the earth was round, and the earth moved around the sun, and the stars moved in their orbits. He wrote a book called 'The Revolution' and sent it off to the Pope in Italy. He wrote, "Your Holiness, I dedicate this to you. People will criticise me for saying this, but you should read this and believe it."

By this time Copernicus was about 75 years of age. He was on his death bed. Harry was looking after him, giving him sips of water saying, "Don't worry I'm sure they'll say the book's fine."

Eventually a messenger came from the Pope in Italy, carrying with him a special copy of the book to be given to Copernicus. It was an actual printed copy of the book signed by the Pope saying, "You have changed the course of history." Copernicus read what the Pope had written and turned to Harry and said, "We did it Harry," and he lay back and died.

So that's the story of Harry who changed from being Half-hearted Harry to being the most valuable assistant that Copernicus could have so that he could change the history of the world. We now know what everybody knows: The world is round, revolves around the sun, and the stars stay in their orbits. This was such a big change; and how did it happen? One young man changes his way of living, decides to do things perfectly, and becomes the vital assistant to the great Copernicus.

Each one of you has it within your power to change the course of history. By resolving to do everything as best you can, striving for excellence in all that you do, you too can make a difference. Please believe me - each one of us is vitally important for the well-being of the whole planet.

Thank you for listening.

Discussion:

The teachers then led the students into a discussion about what the story meant to them, how it illustrated the Human Value and Thought-for-the-Week, and in what ways they could apply this in their own lives. After leaving Shanti (The Room of Peace, where the morning and afternoon meditation periods take place) the students prepared their 'mind-maps' about the saying and the story, as a first step in preparation for the weekly talk on Human Values they are required to present to the whole class later in the week. Examples of these talks and other talks, writing and projects of the Toogoolawa Schools can be found in each school's individual on-line blogs... see links in separate school sections (Ormeau, Hastings & Wickham) on www.toogoolawa.com.au