

# Restor(y)ing our relationship to the Earth



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That's what storytellers do.  
We restore order with  
imagination.  
We instil hope again and again.

- Walt Disney



....But how does storytelling do this?

# Why we need to pay attention to stories...

'Poison gas and Big Berthas might be the deadly fruits of verifiable science, but the impulse to use them grew out of those stories we tell ourselves. So should we not try to understand their power better, to see how stories and historical accounts are put together and what there is about them that leads people either to live together or to maim and kill each other.'

Jerome S. Bruner, 1996. *The Culture of Education*. Harvard University Press. Page 90

Psychology

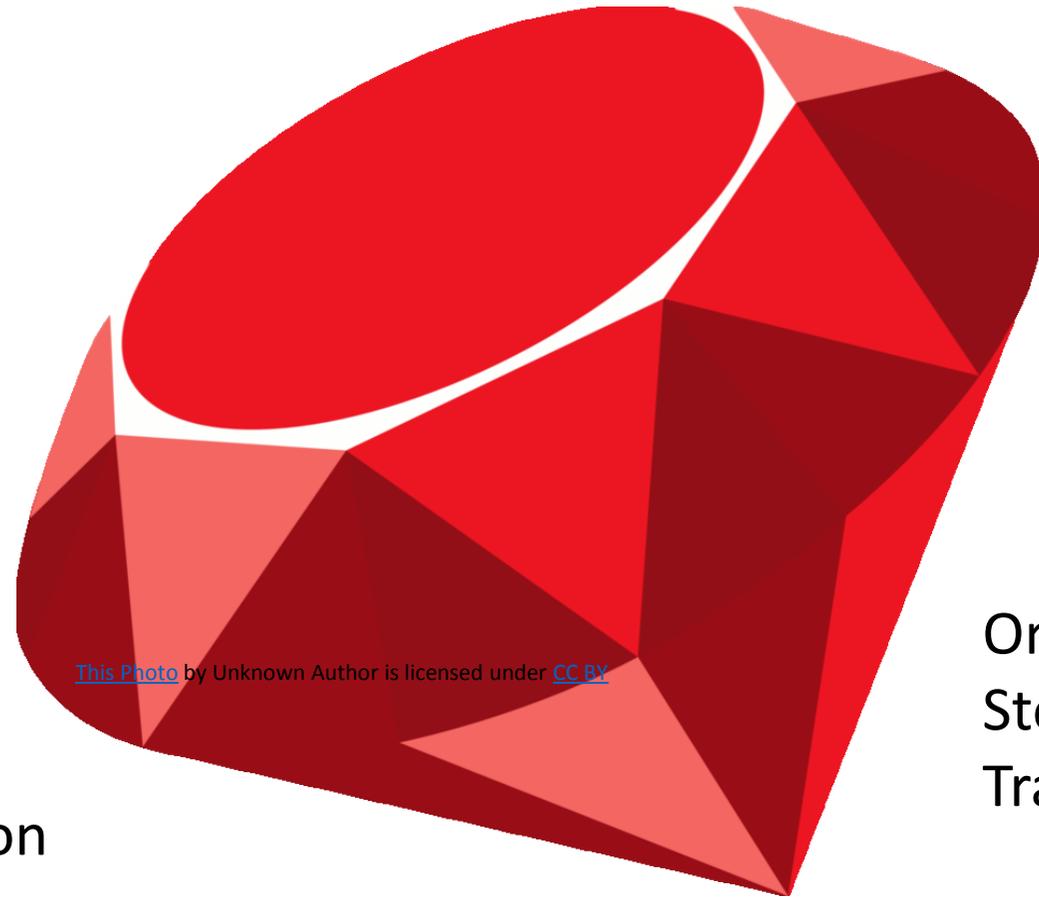
Ethics

Science  
Communication

Education

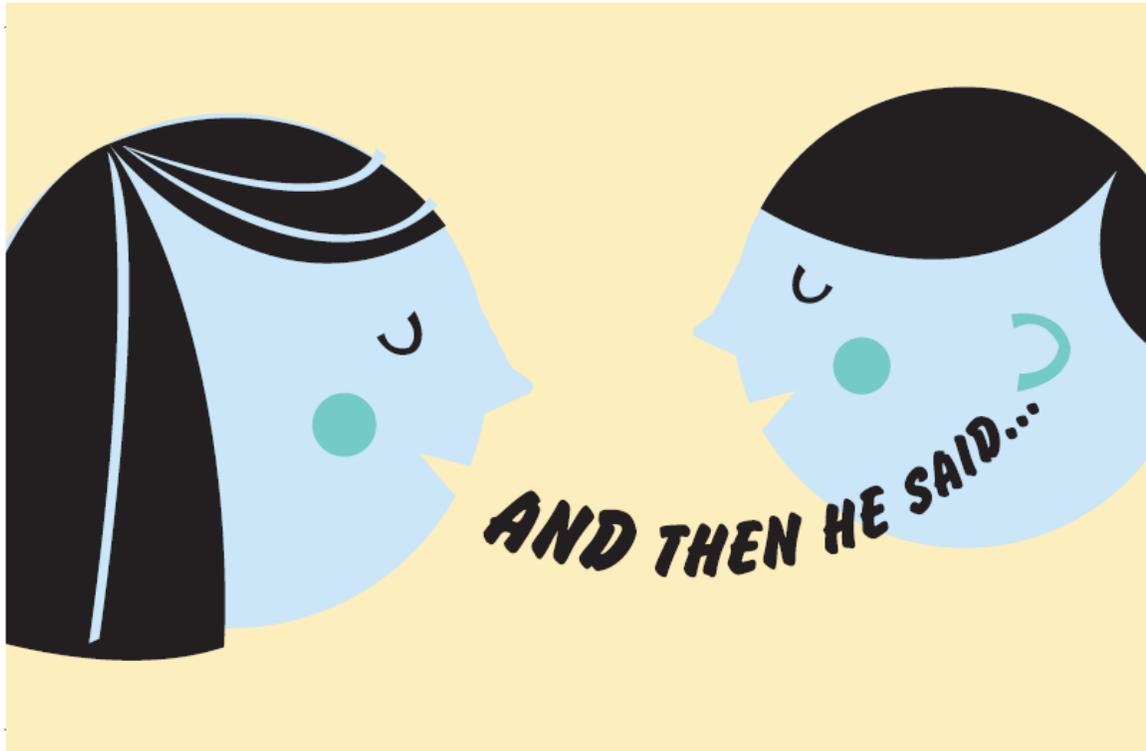
Creative  
Writing

Oral  
Storytelling  
Traditions



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# What is a Story?



- **Literary**

- Beginning, middle and end
- Plot, characters setting

- **Day-to-day**

- Told in the present
- Drawing on the past
- With some preferred future in mind
- **'Learning from the past to inform the present and inspire the future'**

- Theory of Causality

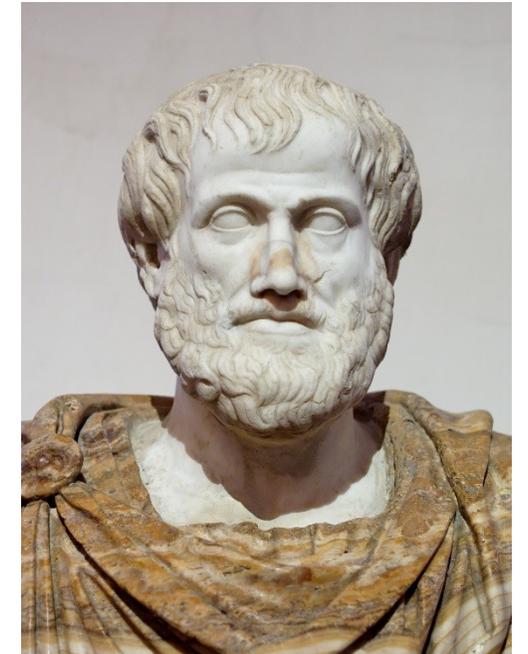
# Types of Knowledge

## Techne

- Craftmanship
- Step-by-step instructions
- Logical-scientific reasoning
- Gives English 'technology', 'technique', 'technical'

## Phronesis

- Citizenship
- Ethics: Who should I be and what should I do?
- Narrative reasoning
- Gives English...



Aristotle

# Story as pedagogy

- **Traditional stories**
  - Information within a cultural/moral context
  - Give sense and substance to the intangible and abstract
    - Make meaningful
  - Identity in relationship to knowledge

...for 10,000s of years...



# Ethics and Story

- Engages narrative parts of brain
- People use story to work through ethics puzzles
  - scenarios
- Principles are after thoughts

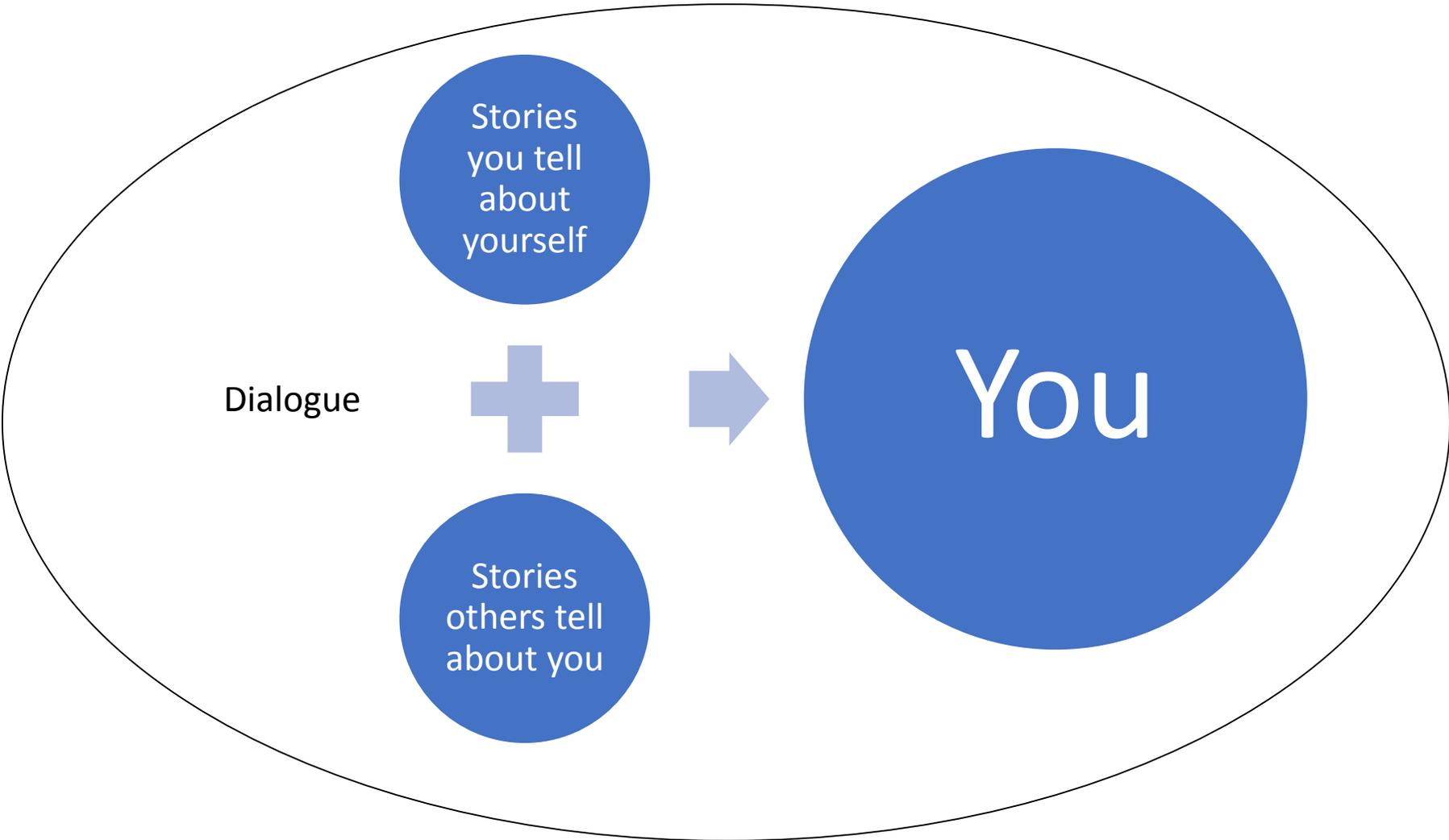
What shall we do and how shall we live?

- Tolstoy



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# Story and Identity



# What stories is it possible to tell?

## Intelligibility

The stories it is possible to tell

The stories it is possible to hear

Excavate and amplify  
(uncover and share)  
alternative stories



# Care and story

- Evokes emotions
- Develop empathy in reading fiction
  - Theory of Mind
- Care Ethics linked to story
  - Carol Gilligan
- Take cues what to care about from others
  - narrators
  - Perception
- Studies linking reading to environmental activism and/or behaviours
  - In context of families who talk about issues



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# Story Truth

- A good story connects people to emotional and ethical 'truths'
  - Helps to connect to people and bring them to care
  - Helps them to remember
  - Helps them to make decisions

Narrative 'truth' is judged by its verisimilitude rather than its verifiability. There seems indeed to be some sense in which narrative, rather than referring to 'reality,' may in fact create or constitute it, as when 'fiction' creates a 'world' of its own.

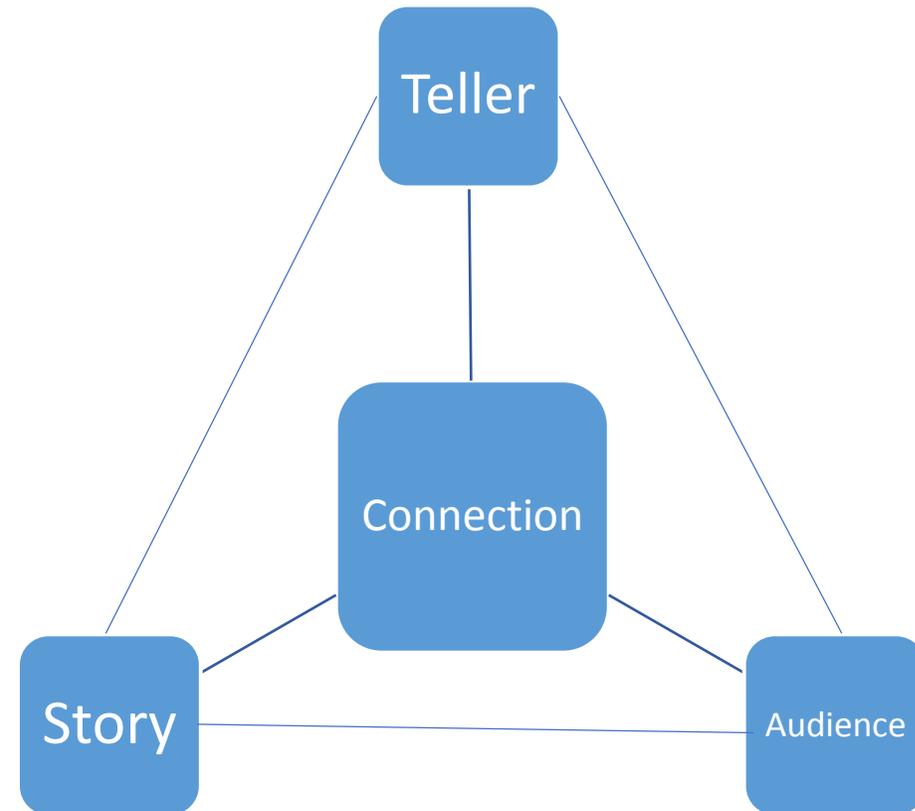
— Jerome Bruner, 1991

# Storytelling techniques

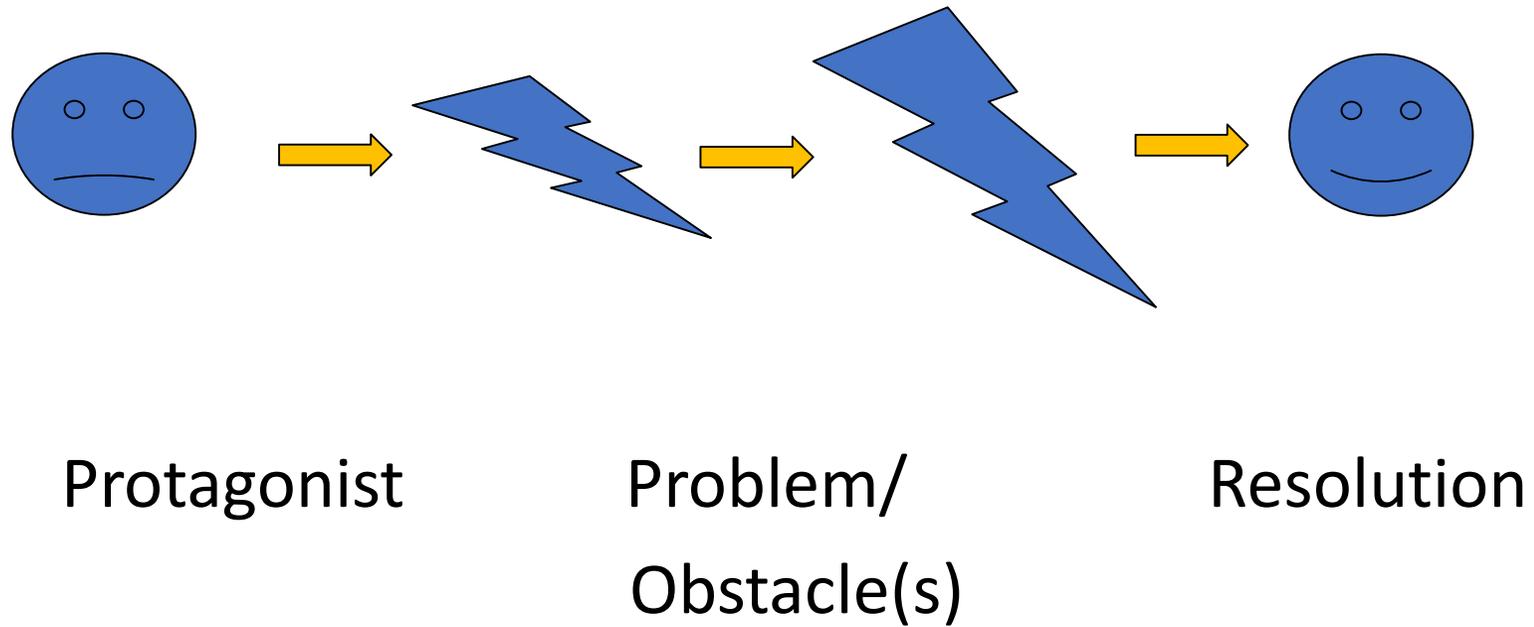
Or how to be more mindful in your storytelling

# The Triangle of Connection

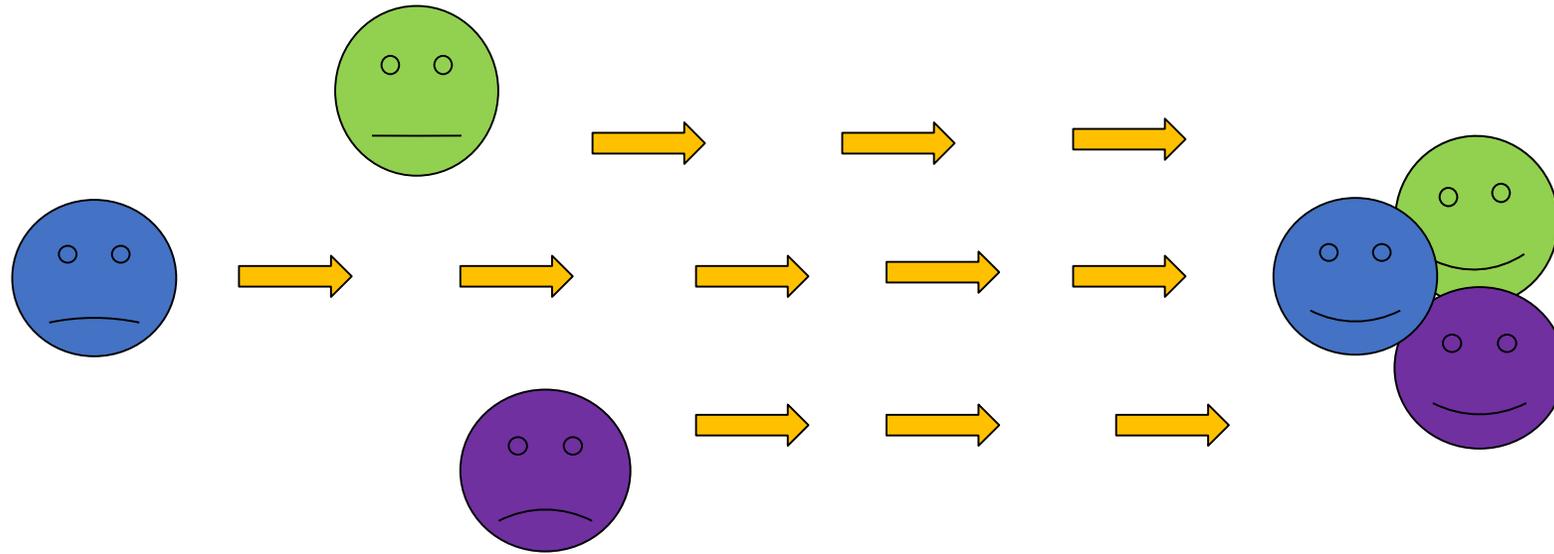
- Oral storytelling as connection
- Listening
  - Meeting people where they are
  - Dialogical
- Story connection can be transferred to the topic
  - We learn what to care about
- Narrator in written stories
  - Stands in for storyteller



# Plot themes: Achievement



# Plot themes: Connection



• Alone

Connected

# Ways to work with stories that support people in shifting their values, attitudes and identities

1. Narrative literacy
  - People need to understand stories they are living by are just stories
  - Techniques for separating people from stories
2. Be critical
  - are your stories reinforcing problematic narratives?
3. Find alternatives stories to the dominant ones
  - Promote these alternative stories as broadly as possible
4. Invite people to explore their own experiences through these new stories
  - New experiences
  - Reflective practices
5. Support people in developing and sharing a new story to live by
  - Community involvement
  - Witnessing supportively (dialogue)

# Example Projects Using Story in Learning for Sustainability

# John Muir, Earth – Planet, Universe

by Julie Bertagna and William Goldsmith, 2014.

Scottish Book Trust



Small but significant shifts in

- New Environmental Paradigm for Children scale
- Inclusion of Nature in Self scale

<http://www.scottishbooktrust.com/learning/teachers-librarians/teaching-resources-cpd/john-muir>

# Green Book Club

- Ecological Memoirs
- Participants Dialogued
  - With narrators
  - With other participants
- Narrative resources for giving meaning to experiences
- Changed perceptions
- Reinforced each others changes storylines



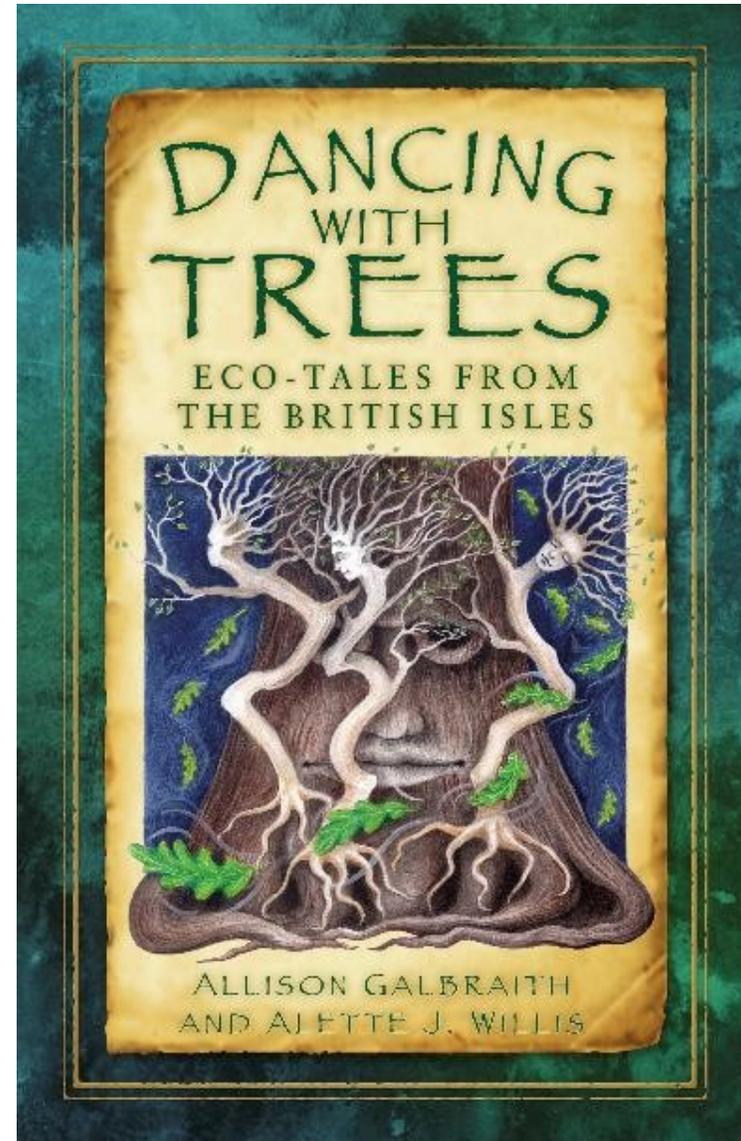
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Traditional tales from Scotland,  
England, Wales and Ireland

Includes:

- Introduction to traditional tales from an eco-perspective
- 27 tales, retold
- Tips for telling
- Flora and fauna index
- Telling with the Seasons

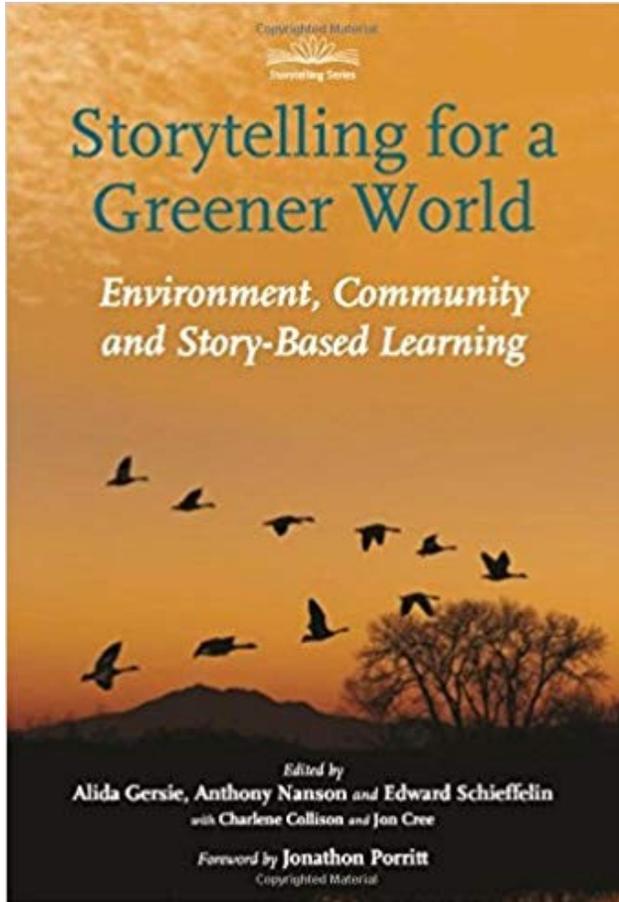
History Press, 2017





- Avalon Project, Spain
- Scottish Storytelling Project
- Earth Charter Initiative, Costa Rica
- Collect stories from all cultures
  - Link to the principles of the Earth Charter
  - Share these stories widely
    - Creative Commons,
    - Translations
- Global network of storyteller-educators

# Storytelling for a Greener World



- Alida Gersie et al. editors, Hawthorn Press, 2014.
- Collection of essays about using oral storytelling in environmental education

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Thank You!

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