

Tell Me a Good Story

“Hands-on Show & TellSM Workbook”

Tell Me A Good Story is a nonprofit organization that is dedicated to teaching people how to be able to share stories face-to-face with other people. We are concerned that with all the ‘face-to-screen’ communications that we rely upon today, people are missing out on the benefits that direct, face-to-face, person-to-person interactions provide.

There are many studies that show that the human body and mind operate and react differently when people meet face-to-face. In general, face-to-face interactions stimulate the brain more, they can make us happier and healthier, and they provide levels of mental, physical, social and educational benefits that other forms of communication and interaction do not offer. The things you see on a two-dimensional screen cannot be touched, smelled, or tasted. When you interact face-to-face with another person, all of your senses can be utilized, not just seeing and hearing.

When we teach people how to put together a story to tell, we specifically teach them to tell a story about an item or object. We call it “Hands-on Show & TellSM”. We have found that it is much easier for people to tell a story about an item, and the story is much more powerful when the listener can also get to touch and hold the object of the story in his/her hands. Our brains like to engage all the senses when learning. Getting to hold an object provides the feeling of physical reality that makes it much more powerful to our brains.

If you think about small babies, when they get old enough to be aware of their surroundings, there is a common sequence they go through when they encounter a new object -- (1) see it, (2) feel it, and frequently (3) taste it. During this process, the baby is automatically (4) hearing and (5) smelling, even if they are not doing it consciously. Thus, the learning process for a baby uses all five senses.



When we only ‘see’ things on a two-dimensional screen, and perhaps hear the words or music, we are limited to the senses of sight and sound. And, because of that, not as much of our brain is stimulated or engaged, and we are often less likely to remember what we learn, versus what we remember when more of the senses are engaged. Did you know that the sense of smell is known to trigger some of the strongest of our memories?

One type of item that we frequently use as the basis for telling a story is --- a book. Books are great because they usually have a story in them – and, they often have a story about them.

Older books, especially ones printed in an earlier era, are great to tell stories about. The reason we mention that is because, it is often fascinating to observe what people do when they are handed an old book. First, they see it. Then, they take hold of it, touching it, opening the pages, feeling the cover, especially if it is leather.

Admittedly, most don’t try to taste it (who knows where that book has been ☺); but, many will hold the book up to their nose to smell it! It is a totally natural reaction that many people don’t even know they are doing until it is brought to their attention. All the while, they are listening to what is being said – the story about the book being verbally told by the storyteller.



If you really want to engage someone’s senses while telling a story, you can tell a story about an item that can also be tasted or smelled. Tell someone a story about a great smelling and tasting cup of coffee, or about a hot croissant with butter melting on it; let the person see it, hold it, smell it and taste it while you tell the

story of how Grandma used to make them. Frankly, that is about as good as face-to-face storytelling gets!

In addition, things usually are more interesting and memorable if more of the senses are engaged.

Which is more enjoyable and memorable – watching a concert on TV or attending a concert in person? Eating a hotdog while listening to the baseball game on the radio, or eating a hotdog in person at the ballgame? Learning how to fly-fish by reading a book, or standing in a cold mountain stream with the water noisily gurgling around your feet, casting the fly to a rising trout with the smell of the pines in the air, with the warm sun on your face, and then sharing a peanut butter and jelly sandwich with a friend who is telling you about the big one that got away? Those are the times when some of our best memories are made, and when great, true stories are created to be retold over and over again.

Now, you may think that this concept of telling a story about an item is not really that important or that it doesn't make it easier to be able to remember or to tell the story. Perhaps, but think about this for a moment.

Have you ever gone on vacation for a number of days or a couple of weeks? You did lots of things, went lots of places, met some people, saw some sights, ate some food, and perhaps experienced some new adventures. While you were on that vacation, did you buy a souvenir? Perhaps a mug with the picture of Old Faithful on it? Maybe a ring or a piece of jewelry made from materials from that area?



Maybe it was a painting, a piece of pottery, a book of photographs of the area. Maybe you bought a new hat, a tee-shirt, or a pair of bookends. Or – a piggy bank!

Do you still have any of those souvenirs? If yes, go get one and hold it in your hands.

Do you know where the word 'souvenir' comes from? It is a French word and it translates into: '*to remember.*' Cool, don't you think? We buy an item or an object as a 'souvenir' to help us 'remember' our vacation.

If you hold one of your souvenirs in your hands, it is very likely that you will be able to remember where you bought it, who was with you, what it cost, and, amazingly, if you stop and think for a moment, you can probably even remember what the weather was like that day. For many people, holding that souvenir in their hands brings back all the memories associated with the time they first held that souvenir in their hands, regardless of whether it was a year ago, or thirty years ago.

Why does that souvenir help you remember so much about that moment when you bought it? We think it is because at the time you bought it, all of your senses were engaged.

Now, for the really cool part. If you take that souvenir and hand it to another person, we bet you will easily be able to tell them the story, face-to-face, about the day you bought that souvenir, where you were, who you were with, and a whole bunch of interesting details about that trip and why you bought that item.

It is a true story. It is a story you can tell without having to try very hard to remember it. It will come out of your brain and mouth naturally, with feeling and liveliness, and when the other person holds that item in their hands, they, too, will have learned a new story.

That is why face-to-face storytelling and having an item or object to tell a story about is so enjoyable – it engages more of our senses. So, that is why we teach *“Hands-on Show & TellSM”* -- telling a story about an item or object that can be held and shared in a face-to-face interaction with another person

This workbook is designed to help you learn how to research, document, preserve and share a good story about an item. The methodology we teach is called *“Hands-on Show & TellSM”*. It teaches how to tell a story about a real item or object. So, please note that this workbook is not intended to teach you how to tell a ‘fictional’ story.

While stories that are fictional can definitely be entertaining and enjoyable to hear, we have found that it is much more difficult for most people to create and tell a fictional story which they have to make up. We have found that it is much

easier for people to learn how to develop, document and tell a story about a real-life object they can hold in their hands. And, we find the story is much more interesting and memorable to the listeners when they, too, can hold the item in their hands and pass it around as the story is told.

Believe it or not, every item has a story behind it. The story may not always be long and glamorous or moving, but, it is surprising how even a seemingly insignificant object can have an interesting story that can be told about it.

When you first start to create stories about items, pick items where you already know a little of the story about it. A good item to start with is an item that has been handed down over the generations in your family. Maybe it is an old piece of art; Grandpa's old wooden golf club; Aunt Betty's ceramic mixing bowl.

It might be an old coin, a stamp collection, an old gun or an old record. Whatever it is, see how much you can remember about the 'story' of that item. Pretend you are the item and that you are telling the (true) story of what you have seen.

Who owned it?

Where did they get it?

Where was it made? What country? What state or province? What county or township or village?

What is it made of?

When was it made?

Who made it? Who were they related to? Who were their friends, associates, co-workers?

What is the journey the item made from the place it was made, to now being in your hands?

Who else has held that very item?

Which other people were around at that time?

What was going on in the world at that time? What was going on in the area where it was made at that time?

What events have transpired during the existence of that item?

How many of these items were made? Thousands, hundreds, only a few?

How many are still in existence? Who has them and where are they?

Did the item belong to any interesting, important or famous people during its existence?

Is the item unusual because of its shape, size, weight, color, texture, smell, the sound it makes, what it tastes like (hey, don't laugh -- the 'item' might be a new batch of Grandma's famous chocolate chip cookies from her 200-year-old family recipe. Believe us when we tell you that great old cookie recipes have a definite story to share!)

What was the item used for? Did it have some purpose that is no longer served? (Buggy whips come to mind).

How was it used? Was there a specific technique to using it? (Sometimes it is hard to decide how an old tool was actually used.)

Where was it used? Was it made to be used underwater, in the desert, in the mountains? In the city or on a farm? In a house or an office?

How many people did it take to use it? One? A couple? Many?

How many people knew how to use it? Did its use require special training? (An old doctor's bag can have some fascinating things in it.) Did it take years to become proficient at using it?

Has it been lost and only recently found or rediscovered? What happened to it during its lost years?

Who found it? Where did they find it? Were they looking for it or did they just stumble upon it?

Has it been used a lot or is it nearly new? Why? Was it something to be used or just cherished?

What type of person would have had such an item? Is it more likely to have been used by men and boys, more than women and girls? Would it more likely have been something for a single person, a married person, a parent, or maybe a grandparent? Is it something a young person would have liked, or an older person?

Is it an item that would have gotten used up or worn out, to where it could no longer serve its original purpose? Could it still be used productively today? At what point in its existence did it become 'collectible' instead of 'usable'?

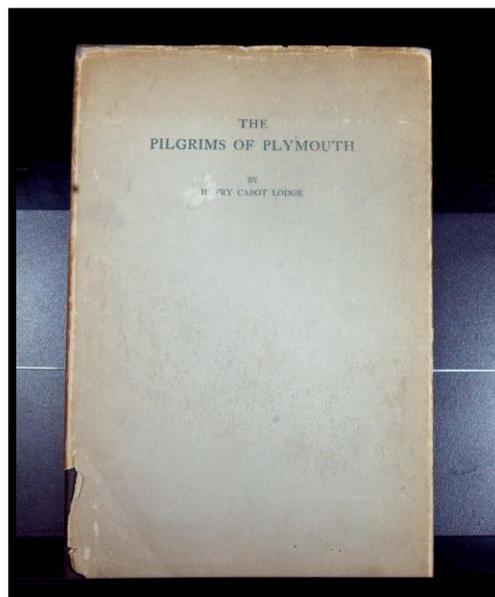
Has it become dirtied, wrinkled, creased, dull, faded, washed-out, wet, moldy, dry, flaky, rubbed smooth, cracked, polished or weathered? If yes, how did it get that way? Where might it have been kept or used that would have caused it to be in the condition it is in now?

Example Story Number 1

Let's look at an example of a real item to start to learn how to answer some of those questions. At a recent estate sale, we found a fairly old book that just looked like it might have a story behind it. We bought it for a few dollars and then went to see what story we could find about it.

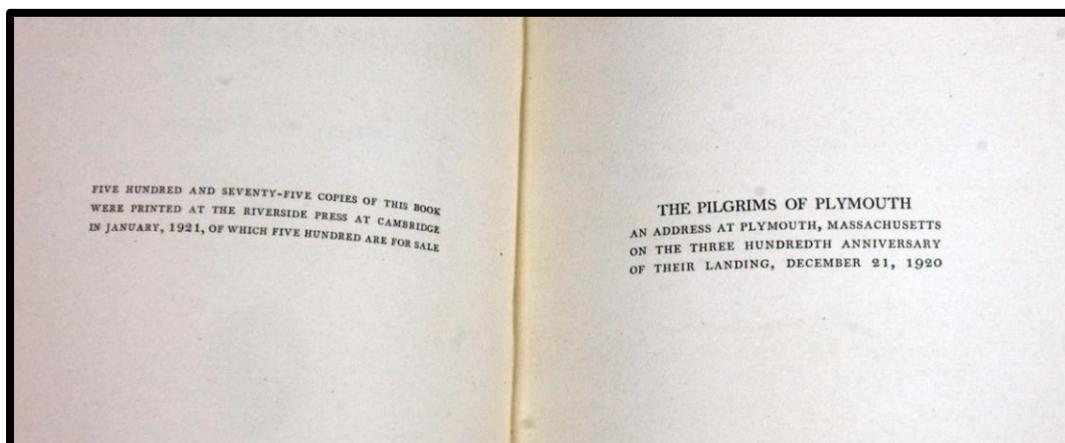
The good thing about most books is that they have a lot of information already in them. Books first started being printed on a printing press back in 1440 A.D. Even back then, the date a book was printed was often given somewhere in the pages.

The name of this particular book was titled: *"The Pilgrims of Plymouth"*. Inside the book, it showed that the book was printed in 1921 by the Houghton Mifflin Company of New York. Also printed on one of the first pages is a statement that said: *"Five Hundred and seventy-five copies of this book were printed at the Riverside Press in Cambridge in January, 1921, of which five hundred are for sale."*



Wow! In just the first couple of pages we have already learned where this book was printed, when it was printed, who printed it, and that there were only 575 copies printed. We already have lots of leads to follow in researching the story behind this book.

We know when and where it was printed so we can research what was going on in that area at the time. We know that very few of these books were printed and made available to the public. That makes this old book pretty unique, maybe even rare. Which raises the questions of: how many are still around; where are they; who owns them; and how did this book end up in the estate of the person who owned it?



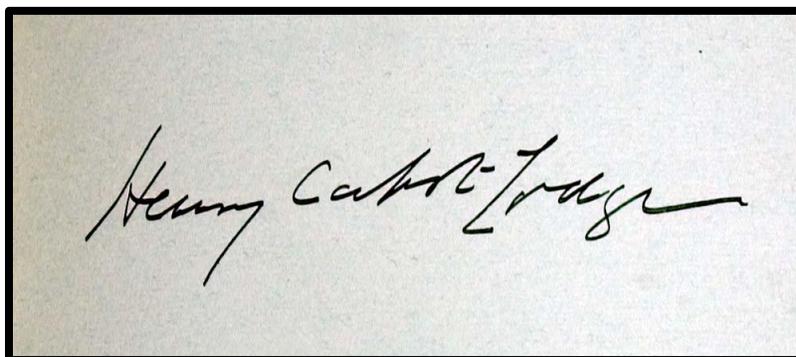
We also know who the author was. The author of this particular book happened to be a man by the name of Henry Cabot Lodge. Inside the book, we found that this was a speech that Mr. Lodge gave in 1920 at the 300th anniversary celebration of the landing of the Pilgrims at Plymouth Rock in 1620.

A little investigating found that Mr. Lodge was a famous politician in that time. He was a Senator in the United States Congress, and was involved in many important events related to the U.S. government in the late 1800's and early 1900's. Cool!

So many leads to follow! Who was Mr. Lodge? Why is he famous? Why did he give this speech at this event in 1920? Who else was around at the time? Why was this event important? Who else attended the event? What is the history about Plymouth Rock and the Pilgrims that lead to Mr. Lodge giving this speech? (Hint: Do you think there is a chance that Mr. Lodge is a direct descendant of one of the original group that landed at Plymouth Rock? Good guess!)

All of these questions can be researched starting with a simple Google search online. There is enough information related to these questions alone to create and share a number of stories about this old book.

But, what about this specific book? What else do we know about its specific history? Well, the next important finding is that, on one of the pages at the front of the book is a handwritten signature. It is the signature of the author – Henry Cabot Lodge!



Well, now, that is important to know. Mr. Lodge wasn't just the author of this book; he signed his name to it! It is pretty exciting to think about holding a book in your hands that was signed almost a hundred years ago by a very famous person, a person who played a major role in the history of this country.

There is a lot more to the story of this particular old book, but that story will have to be told at another time. Right now, we want you to learn how to research and document the story of your own item.

To be honest, not every book or item was owned or written by somebody famous. But, that doesn't make the story of an item uninteresting. Remember, every item has a story of its own, a story that you can tell. It may be a short story or a long one. That is for you to decide based on what information you can find.

Example Story Number 2

Even a seemingly insignificant item can have an interesting story if you look for it. At an estate sale I found some old fishing gear. Most of it was pretty old and beat up. But, as I was going through the tackle box, I found an old fishing plug. It was about four inches long. It was in two, connected parts with a connection between the front and the back pieces so that the plug could 'wiggle' as it was pulled through the water. (See accompanying photo).

This old plug was painted red at the head and white over the rest of the body. It had three treble hooks, mounted under the front, middle and back of the plug. To most people, it would just look like an old fishing plug. To me, it just looked like an old fishing plug --- that might have a story to tell.

Upon close-up examination, I found a name printed on the plug – “Holi-Comet”. An online search found that this old plug was made by the Makinen Tackle Company of Kaleva, Michigan in either 1946 or early 1947. The original plugs were made of wood and then the company switched to plastic in 1947. This particular old plug is made of wood, thus, the date of its manufacture could be accurately estimated.

The plug was made in two sizes – a 4-inch size and a big 5¾” ‘Muskie’ model. This particular plug is the smaller version.

Well, that’s almost enough information right there to make a real ‘fish’ story about this old plug.

But, there is one other piece of the story about this particular plug.

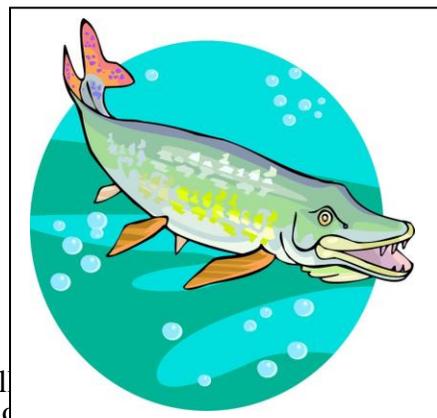


On the second, back, white piece of the plug, the paint has been scratched in long, parallel lines, the full length of the piece, about 2 inches long. How did those scratches get there?

The answer was given in the research about the company that made the plug. This plug was made to go after --- MUSKIE! Picture a freshwater fish that has an average size of 28-48 inches long and weighs about 25-35 pounds, but have also been known to grow to six feet long and weigh 70 pounds!

Oh, and did I mention that muskies have very big, sharp teeth?

Obviously, this old plug bears the actual evidence of the ‘big one that got away’. A fish must have clamped down on the plug, somehow avoided the treble hooks underneath, and its top teeth scraped



the paint off the top of the plug as it was pulled out of its mouth!

Just an old fishing plug? To some, maybe. But, there is a great story to tell about this old plug and the one that got away.

Researching and telling your own story.

Once you learn to start ‘looking for the story’, you will find that there are stories in lots of items. If you can, start with an item you already know something about. Perhaps a souvenir from a vacation or something inherited or passed down in your family. Go to a book store that sells old books and find an old book about a subject that interests you. Or go to an antique store and talk with the owner or manager. Ask them if they have any items about which they know some of the story. Then, buy one you can afford and start researching its story.

Don’t be afraid that you might fail to find a story about an item. Half of the fun is in the research. And, when you find that first little piece of information, and that leads you into a whole new set of leads, you will find out how enjoyable this process can be.

Put together the story about the item. Write it down so you can refer to it while you tell the story. If you want to, you can just read the story aloud to your listener. There is no law that says you have to memorize the story. It is okay to read the story to someone. Just remember to pause occasionally and look them in the eye.

And, don’t worry about being a great writer. As Sergeant Friday used to say on the old TV show Dragnet: *“All we want are the facts.”*

Just tell the story from the information you have collected. You can give the facts in chronological order, start at the end and work backwards, show the item and then tell the story, or tell the story first and then produce the item to share with the person. It can be a lot of fun when you surprise the person by saying: *“Would you like to hold that old book/vase/mug/doll/tool in your hands?”*

Share the Story Face-to-Face with Someone

Okay, you have found an item, done your research, documented the story and you are feeling pretty good about what you have done. Now comes the most important part.

Go share the story face-to-face with someone and let them hold the item.

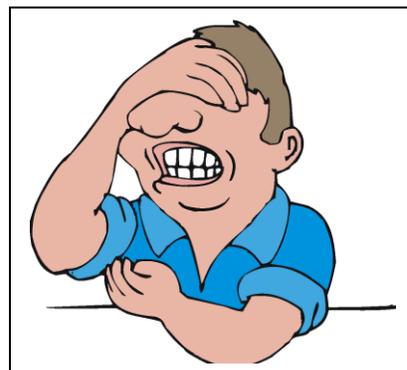
That is what “*Hands-on Show & TellSM*” is really all about – sharing good stories face-to-face with another person. There are proven benefits to your health, your mind, and your spirit when you interact in a meaningful way with another person. Telling stories about interesting items is a great way to share. Whether you are six years old or sixty-years young, share a story with someone you know, love, or care about. You will both be glad you did.

Mistaken Ideas About Good Storytelling

As we talk and encourage people to tell stories, we hear quite a few concerns why people feel they won’t be able to tell a good story. Unfortunately, most of those concerns are unfounded. Here are a few excuses that are given, and why you should not let them keep you from creating and sharing good stories.

1. I have to memorize the story.

Not!!! It is okay to read your story to another person. But, be sure to pause occasionally and look them in the eye. And, make sure you let them hold the item. Getting to hold the item makes a huge difference in their ability and desire to connect with the story, and with you.



2. You have to be an actor and act out the story.

Wrong again! It is okay to act out the story if you wish. But, remember that you are the narrator of the story – not the star of the story. The focus of the story is about telling the story the item itself would tell if it could speak. Tell its story and many people will enjoy hearing it.

3. The story needs to be about you.

It is okay to include yourself in these types of stories, but we recommend that you be a narrator of the story, not the star of the story. By focusing on the story of the item, you will be less likely to make the story about you. We think you will find that telling stories about yourself is harder, and people often get bored if you go on and on about yourself. By focusing on the story of an item, you are less likely to tell the 'story of your life'.

4. It needs to be a long story.

Yes and No. There is no 'right' length for a story. A story could be a couple of minutes long, or last for 20-30 minutes. It all depends on how much interesting information you have found about an item.



When you first start telling stories, you might aim for stories that last maybe five to ten minutes. Then, see how your listener is responding. If the person is obviously interested and enjoying the story, you can always stretch the story out by telling some of the other information you found about

the item. If, on the other hand, the other person seems bored, cut to the chase. Not everyone will be interested in every story. Since the purpose of sharing stories is good, quality, face-to-face interaction, be sensitive to the other person's feelings, time and reactions. All you have to do is watch their eyes. Their eyes will tell you whether they are with you or not.

5. It needs to be a short story.

Yes and No. See #4 above.

6. It needs to be a humorous story.

Yes and No. People enjoy humor in a story, but it is not a required part that you have to add to make a good story. Some stories and items will be funny all by themselves. Other stories are more informative, more educational, more heart-

to-heart sharing. So, if you are naturally funny, go for it. If not, don't worry about it. There wasn't anything really funny about the story of the old fishing plug (other than thinking about the fact the big one got away!☺). But, it still told a good, interesting, engaging story about that old fishing plug.

7. People only like fictional stories.

Obviously, there are great fictional stories to be told about fairies and heroes and ghosts and romances. If you are naturally good at telling a fictional story, go for it. But, to be honest, most of us aren't that talented. However, most of us can learn to tell a good story about a real item.

In general, we recommend that you try to find and tell the true story about an item. Unless you know for sure that it was 'a sword used by General Custer', stick to the information you do know. The truth can be more interesting and, as they say, truth is often stranger than fiction.

Part of the benefits of telling a story about a real item is that it is not a fictional story. The item does exist. It is right there for the person to hold. That fact brings a quality and physical connection that fictional stories don't provide. It is also fun and engaging. So, we suggest you offer your listeners the opportunity to employ all of their senses. Let them hold the item as you tell the story and they will never forget it. The most popular exhibits at museums are those where you can touch!

8. People don't tell stories any more, and aren't interested in listening.

We live in a world where technology is a big force. 'Face-to-screen' communication is here to stay whether you love it or hate it. It is our experience at Tell Me A Good Story that people do still like to listen to a good story. It is just that we seem to have forgotten how to take the time to share a good story face-to-face. And, we may have forgotten, or never were taught, how to tell a good story.

It is our hope that you will take a little time to do some research and find the story behind an item, and then find the time to share that story face-to-face with someone.

The first time you hand a person an item and tell them the story behind it, and you see the person's eyes light up like a little kid at Christmas time, we think you will understand why we are trying to help people be able to tell good stories again. When that happens, we hope you will pass the word and support our efforts in any way you can. When we use the "*Hands-on Show & TellSM*" method, your listener will learn better, remember better, and connect with you better. We think those are all good reasons to share stories face-to-face.

Sources of research information.

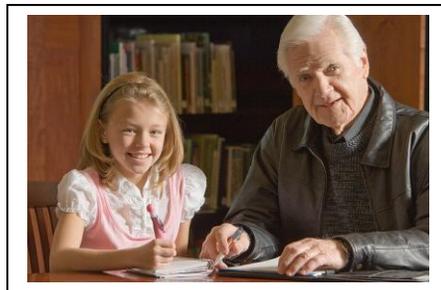
Where can you look and go to find information about the story of an item? There are lots of sources of information that can help you build your story. And, many of them are close at hand --- and FREE! Following are some ideas for sources of information you can research.

1. You!

The first resource to tap into is --- YOU! That's right. You actually know a lot about a lot of things. If the item you are researching has some history related to it in your family or group, start by trying to remember and record what you already have heard, read and know about the item. And, while you are doing this --- hold the item in your hands. Holding it will trigger more of the memories you associated with the item the first time you held it. Holding it will also help you remember the details when you tell the story. Write down every little fragment you remember, even if it doesn't seem relevant at the moment. You will often find something in your future research which will 'connect-the-dots' to that fragment of information.

2. The People Around You

The second resource to tap into is the people around you who might have some knowledge or history about the item. Talk to Grandma and Grandpa, mom and dad, your siblings, your Great Aunt Betty. And, let them hold the item in their hands. If they have any memories



about the item, getting to hold it will also help trigger their memories. If someone in your family has recorded some of your family's genealogy, look at the information, photos, old Bibles, etc., that talk about your family tree. You may find interesting information as to what was going on at the time the item came into your family's possession.

3. Who Owned It Before You?

If you are researching a new item that you just found or bought, try to get information about it from the person you are buying it from. Estate sales are great places to find items with a story. But, whose estate is it? And who was that person? If you can find out who owned the item, it can give you lots of leads about the history of the item.

(Here is a little secret that you can use related to estate sales. Assuming the sale is being held at the location of a person's home, you know the address of the home – where the estate sale is being held -- even though you may not know the person's name. You can go online and do two things. First, go to the county property records for the county in which the home is located. These records are in the public domain. Enter in the address and you will get a lot of information about the property, including the current owner's name. Often, a home is not sold until after the estate sale is held. Thus, the current owner's name is often the person whose estate is being sold.

The second thing you can do is go to an online search engine like Google and enter in the word 'obituary' and the address of the home. It is common for the obituary for a recently deceased person posted in a newspaper to include the person's last address. Thus, you can find the name of the person who owned the home whose estate is being sold. The obituary will also often tell you about the person's history, when and where they were born, surviving relatives, and what jobs the person had during his/her life. Knowing this information can help you piece together how and why an item was owned by this specific person.

If you are buying an item from an antique dealer, or a book or jewelry store that sells old books or heirloom jewelry, make sure you ask the owner/clerk if they know anything about the history or previous owners of the item. Make notes about what they tell you so you can use them in your search. How did they get

the item? Who did they get it from? How long have they had it? Do they know any information about the item that makes it unique, rare, unusual and interesting? People who are in the business of dealing with antiques can be a great source of information, and most of them love to share what they know.

4. Experts, Professors and Historians

See if there are any ‘experts’ in your area who have knowledge of such an item. Older people who have lived in the area for a long time might know something. Go to the local university or college and see if there are any professors who specialize in history, art, culture, geography, literature, and other subjects who might be able to tell you something about the item. Go to the local historical society and talk to people there if the item might be related to the history of the area. Talk to the local coin or stamp dealer.



Two great things happen when you go talk to people: (1) You may learn some great information about the item; and (2) you get to meet face-to-face with someone! Remember, that is what this is all about – sharing great stories face-to-face.

5. Google and other Internet search functions.

Whichever ‘search engine’ you choose to use (and we recommend that you try several when doing your research), it is a good place to start to find clues and leads about an item. But, don’t limit yourself to looking at just the top five or ten suggested links on the first page of the search results. Sometimes, you have to dig down a few pages to get past the ads and stores.

Also, let your intuition guide you occasionally to click on links that might seem unrelated. Sometimes Google is better at ‘connecting the dots’ between pieces of seemingly unrelated information than we are. And, as you read information about the item, make note of other pieces of information that could lead you down other paths. Keep in the back of your mind the types of questions we listed -- the

who, what, when, where, why and how about an item. For example, the simple fact that your item is black when all the other known ones are white can be an important part of the story.



Be particularly watchful for links to non-commercial websites that deal with a particular item. If an item exists, there is probably someone who collects it and who knows some history about it, or ones like it. Many individuals who have a passion about a certain item have their own private websites where they share information, history, photos, and conversations about the thing they love. And, most of them are not only willing, but happy and eager to share the stories they know about their items. It is too bad that many of these stories only get shared through online communication. So, just remember, if you have the opportunity to get face-to-face with a person, do it. You'll both be likely to enjoy the interaction more.

6. Local libraries.

Yes, there are still good old-fashioned, brick and mortar libraries in existence. And, what is wonderful about libraries is, most librarians love to help someone find information they are looking for. And, you get to be face-to-face with another person, share the story search, and get some expert direction to help you find some information.

We think you will also find that when you find information in a real book that you can hold in your hands, you will remember the information better and longer. It is still a good idea to write the information down, note the source (giving proper credit to the information is the right thing to do), and maybe even get a photocopy of the particular page that holds the information (the librarian can help you know how much you can legally photocopy to reference as a source document without infringing on copyright rules.)

Even if you think you aren't very good at remembering details, you may be surprised at how much information you will remember about your item as you do the research. And, to help your memory, remember to hold the item in your

hands occasionally. It helps to lock in the information and will help you access that information when you tell the story to someone.

7. Museums and Historical Societies

Museums, historical places and buildings, and historical societies and associations are good places to look for information about an item. Obviously, go to museums that are likely to be relevant to the item you are researching. You aren't as likely to find out information about an old Caruso classical record if you go to the Country Music Hall of Fame. If you want to save some time, call ahead to see what the museum holds. You might just get to talk to a person who can point you in the right direction to another person or organization that will have more information.

8. TV Shows, Movies and Documentaries

Even though these sources of information are 'face-to-screen' (just like researching on the Internet), that doesn't mean you can't gain some information that will help you in your research to document the story behind your item. Shows like American Roadshow, American Pickers, Storage Wars and Pawn Stars often give interesting information about the items being bought and sold. And, these shows often call on experts to tell them something about the item and what it's worth. If you are having trouble finding information about that funny looking old tool, you might just learn the name of an expert who deals in that very item. If you do, the person's name and company will often be listed in the credits at the end of the show. Give the person a call. What have you got to lose? And who knows what information that person might provide that could add to the great story you will then be able to share with someone.

Continued on next page.

The Etiquette of Storytelling and Listening

Since we have somewhat lost the ability to know and tell good stories, we may have also lost the understanding that there is an etiquette to both telling and listening to stories. While there are no formal 'Rules of Order' that have been laid down by an assembly of great storytellers, we have found that the act of sharing and listening to good stories can be greatly enhanced if some simple courtesies are followed by both the storyteller and the listeners. If everyone understands and abides by these suggested 'rules', it provides a more balanced opportunity for everyone to participate and benefit from the sharing.

1. One Storyteller at a time.

Back around the tribal campfires, the chief or sage of the tribe was the primary keeper of the stories. Since the stories were mostly conveyed verbally (although dance was also used as a form of storytelling), the basic rules were -- the storyteller would talk, and everyone else would listen.

This is an excellent courtesy to follow in your own storytelling interactions. Whether the story is being told to only one person, or to a group, the courtesy as a listener is to be quiet and attentive while the story is told. This particular type of storytelling is not a 'conversation', where one person talks and then the other(s) responds. We find that this storytelling works best if the storyteller is allowed to tell the whole story all the way through before inviting questions, comments or responses. And, it is generally better if only one person tells the story – meaning, even if more than one person knows the story, allow just one person to tell the whole story. To paraphrase an old saying: *"Too many storytellers spoils the story."*

2. Tell one story and then let the other person(s) tell theirs.

While it is best to have only one storyteller at a time, it is also good to let everyone have a turn at telling a story. Unless you have someone who is the 'designated storyteller' for the evening and everyone else is happy with just listening, the interaction and benefits of everyone getting to participate are more impactful and enjoyable. Using the *"Hands-on Show & TellSM"* method that we teach at TMGS, everyone can learn to tell an interesting story. Participating as both a teller and a listener enhances everyone's enjoyment.

3. Learn to be a good listener.

Many people think that listening is a passive activity. All you have to do is sit and listen. At Tell Me A Good Story, we encourage people to become ‘active listeners’. Active listening means that we focus our complete attention on what the storyteller is saying and doing. We watch his/her eyes, make eye contact, and respond with simple body language like a nod of the head to let the storyteller know we are right there with him/her. Even a simple, short, verbal response of “*interesting*” or “*fascinating*” or “*that’s cool*” is acceptable, and lets the storyteller know we are enjoying the story.

When the story is completed, then is the time for comments, to ask questions, and to seek further details. And, of course, getting to hold the item about which the story is being told will engage the brain even more, and increase the enjoyment and memorability of the story.

4. Storytellers listen with their eyes.

As the storyteller, you also have to learn to be a good listener. What? How can you listen while you tell a story? The answer is – you learn to listen with your eyes. Even if you read your story from a book or paper, learn to pause, look up, and look people in the eye.

Scientific studies indicate that of all the information we exchange during a person-to-person interaction, the majority of the information is conveyed non-verbally. Eye contact, body language, body position, hand gestures, and facial expressions are all non-verbal forms of communication that convey a lot of information to anyone who is paying attention.

As a storyteller, it is embarrassing to get so engrossed in telling your story that you fail to notice that half of the listeners have gone to sleep (unless, of course, it is a child in bed to whom you are telling a bedtime story 😊). So, when you tell your story, let your eyes tell you whether the person is still being an active listener or not.

5. Tell stories in a setting where distractions are reduced.

Telling a good story in a noisy restaurant or in the middle of a large gathering of people who are all talking at once can be a real challenge. In the kind of face-to-face storytelling we encourage, try to find a place where you don't have to yell to be heard. Find a place that doesn't have TV screens blaring all over, barking dogs, crying babies, or places with a lot of visual and auditory distractions. The primary purpose of sharing stories face-to-face is to connect comfortably with another person. Sometimes just moving to another room can create an environment for more quality sharing.

6. Have a couple of good stories prepared beforehand.

Most people hate to speak in public. And, most people are not good extemporaneous speakers. The best speakers in the world spend weeks perfecting a great speech. Now, you are not trying to be a great speaker, just a good storyteller. But, it is hard for anyone to just come up with a good story on the spur of the moment.

Use the information in this workbook to learn how to create a good story about an item. The research will be fun, and, as you do the research and write down the information, you will be logging all that information into your 'storytelling brain'.

Do your research about a couple of different items about which you might like to share a story. And, keep one or two of those items handy (assuming they can be stored and carried conveniently and don't require heavy lifting 😊). Then, when you have an opportunity to share a meaningful story with another person, you'll be ready. When you get to see the sparkle in the eyes of people when they get to hear the story of a cool item they get to hold in their own hands, we believe you will get hooked on telling good stories.

7. Storytelling is not a competition

Quality, meaningful, face-to-face storytelling is not about competing to see who is the best storyteller. It is about sharing a story with another person. It is about sharing some information, ideas, or history about an interesting item for the primary purpose of connecting at a different level with another person.

There are lots of children of kindergarten age who can tell a good story if allowed to tell a story about their doll, a special toy, or their favorite bedtime book. The concept of “*Show & Tell*” is a great one --- for kids of all ages, be they six or sixty. So, let everyone have a chance to tell their story and remember that every story is a good one when told with the intention of connecting with another person.

Storytelling Time Is Quality Time.

*“Parents, grandparents, children, friends, lovers:
Lend me your ears – and your HANDS!”*

Many people feel that they don’t spend enough quality time with the important people in their lives. It’s a busy world we live in. Too busy. Busy being busy. Not enough time.

When we stop long enough to think about it, we recognize that the term is ‘Quality Time’ not ‘quantity time.’ Ten minutes of ‘quality time’ is worth a lot more than hours of ‘sorta, kinda, pay-attention-to-but-still-be-distracted time.’

Taking ten minutes to share a good story, face-to-face with a child, a parent, a spouse, a significant other, or a friend, provides mental, physical, social and educational benefits that have wonderful, longterm impacts. Those moments can create stories and memories that will be remembered for a lifetime. Don’t let those times pass you by. Commit yourself to sharing at least one good story a day with another person. You’ll both be glad you did.

On the following pages we have listed the kinds of questions you can ask and research when creating the story of an item. You can either print these pages (in either Word or PDF form) and hand-write the answers, or, if you use Microsoft Word on your computer, you can download the Word.doc file from our website. Then, you can type the answers directly into the Word document.

Tell Me A Good Story
Hands-on Show & TellSM Worksheets

Following is a list of questions, broken into sections, that might help you to research and document a story about an item. You can print these pages and write on them, or, you can download this Word file and type in the information as you go.

There are a lot of questions that might be answered. But, realize and accept right now that:

You will not be able to answer all of them!!!

And that's okay. Don't be discouraged and give up just because you can't answer some of the questions. The chances are very good that you will find answers to enough of the questions to be able to make a good story.

(In the rare case where there is very little information to be found about an item, that is a story in itself! In your hands you have an item that exists, but which the world doesn't seem to know about. Why? How did that happen? Who might know? Who might have made it? When might it have been made? Why is its story so hard to find? The mystery behind an unknown item's story can be just as interesting and compelling as knowing everything about it.)

So, simply use these questions to help guide your research. And, once you feel you have enough information for a story, go for it. You can always add more information to the story if you find out something new later. Stories are not static. They are constantly evolving. The fact that you are now researching this item will become part of its story in the future. Who knows? Many years from now, some person may come upon this item you once owned and learn that you were a great storyteller in your time!

Who

1. Who owned the item? Did different people own it at different times? Who was the first person to own it? Who was the last person? Were these people related? Who else did they know? Who else was around during that time period? Who else might have come into contact with this item during its existence?
2. Who made or manufactured the item? Who did they work for/with? What was the name of the company? Who owned/managed the company? Who were the employees? Who else made this kind of item?
3. What type of person would have owned such an item? (Rich, poor, single, married, young, old, man, woman, child, farmer, office worker, housekeeper, teacher, apprentice, craftsman, politician, historian?)
4. Can you trace a clear, documented and continuous provenance/history of the items existence? Who owned it? When? How did the next person get it? Where has it been? How do we know that?
5. Were there famous or interesting people alive during the time this item was made or used? Who might have had an influence on the creation or use of this item? Who might have come into contact with it or the person who owned it?
6. Who owns or collects these items now? (Rich, poor, single, married, young, old, man, woman, child, farmer, office worker, housekeeper, teacher, apprentice, craftsman, politician, historian?) Why?
7. Who owns or found this specific item now? How long have they had it? Who did they get it from? Can its origin, history and ownership be traced/documented back to its origin? Was the person looking for it when

he/she found it or did he just come across it accidentally? Did the person inherit it, buy it, find it, or was it given to her? If so, by whom or from whom?

What

1. What is the item made of? Is it a rare material? Is the material only available in the area where it was made? Is it a material that is still available? Did some other kind of material or process come along to replace it?
2. What kind is it? Is it a certain model, type, color, size? Does it have a serial number, maker's mark, logo, brand or style that would indicate when/where/by whom it was made?
3. What is the condition of item? Has been used a lot? Is it worn out or used up? Is it like new or on its last legs? Is it still functional or just a collectible?
4. What does its condition tell you about its life? Has it lived a hard life, or a life of comfort? Was it well used or lovingly pampered? Was it used outdoors, indoors, in all seasons, in various climates? Is it dirty, wrinkled, creased, dull, faded, washed-out, wet, moldy, dry, flaky, cracked, rubbed smooth, polished or weathered? Is it new, clean, soft, in mint condition, unused, still in the original wrapper or box?
5. What was this item used for? Was it a tool, a toy, a souvenir, a gift, a weapon, a machine? Was it used to communicate or record information? Was it used to measure, calculate, or navigate. Was it used to diagnose, treat or cure? Was it used to entertain, explain, or complain? Was it used to advertise, encourage, enlighten or inform?
6. What style is it? Does its style, look, material, color, shape, or size indicate where or when it was made, or by whom?

7. What events have transpired during its existence? Weddings, births, funerals, wars, elections, disasters, miracles, adventures, journeys, celebrations, voyages, discoveries, inventions?

When

1. When was the item made? How old is it? When was it first used? When was this type of item first made? When did it stop being made/used? What was going on in that area or in the world during that time period?
2. Does it have any marks or information that might help determine when it was made? Which printed edition? A specific size, color or material (wood versus plastic)? Does it have a sequential serial number? Is it a style that evolved such that the style would indicate when it was made.
3. What other items of importance were made during that same period of time? Other inventions, tools, books, toys, machines, etc.

Where

1. Where was it made? In what city, area, country, continent? How long were they made there? Are they still being made there? Were there other places where it was also being made –earlier, during, after?
2. Is there information in it or on it that would help determine where it was made? A type of material? A date? An inscription? A country designation (Made in Japan)? An address? Was it an item that is unique to an area or a time period?
3. Where has this item been during its existence? Where was it made? Where was it kept? Where was it found? Has it been lost and found again? Was it intentionally hidden or just lost through the years?

How

1. How was the item made? Was it manufactured on machines or made by hand? Was it difficult to make or easy?
2. How long did it take to make such an item? Minutes, days, weeks, months, years?
3. How was it used? Is there a specific technique to using it? (It is sometimes hard to guess how an old tool or item was used.) Was it hard to use?
4. How many people could use it? Did it require special training to learn how to use it? How did a person get trained to use it?
5. How can you tell if it is an original? Is it signed or marked by the manufacturer or producer? Is it valuable to the point that forgers try to copy it, or that fakes and replicas are made to look like it?

How Many

1. How many of these items were made? Were they all made at the same time? In the same year? Were they made for many years? Were only a few made making it a rare item? One-of-a-kind?
2. How many are still in existence? Are there a lot of them available? Are they only in museums and private collections? Are they available for purchase on Ebay, online, in stores, museums, in auctions? What condition are the other ones in?
3. Are these items still being made? Are they no longer being produced? Are the new ones like the old ones? Are there 'reproductions' or 'fakes' being made to imitate it?
4. How many people knew/know about this item, or ones like it? How many people used this item? How many would use this item? How many people knew/know how to use this item?

5. How many years has it been around? How long was it lost? How long might it last?
6. How many times has it been used or owned? Once? Many? Never?

WHY

1. Why was this item first created? What was its purpose? Did it make life easier or harder to live? Why did people have them?
2. Why is this particular item still around? If it is rare, why did it survive the years when few others did? Why did so many people go to the trouble to save and protect it?
3. Why has it just been found or rediscovered? Why didn't it surface sooner? Why now? Who might have found it but didn't and why not? Why isn't its history better known and recorded?
4. Will this item still be important, interesting, needed, studied, educational, influential and collected in the future? By whom? Why? Who will care about its story?
5. Why did this item change hands? Why didn't it change hands? Why will it change hands again in the future and to whom?

There are lots more questions that can be asked, but hopefully, these will give you a good start on your research. And remember, you are unlikely to find answers to all your questions. But that is okay. Create a story from what you do know, share it with another person face-to-face, and keep looking for more answers. The story is a journey, not a destination.

And, remember, we learn better, we remember better, and we connect better when we share "*Hands-on Show & TellSM*" stories face-to-face with others.