

Why We Need Stories

By Krista Aldrich

We live in an age where technology rules. People walk around with a device be it a smart phone, iPad, computer, or tablet at all hours of the day. You can go out to eat with very little contact with humans because at many restaurants you can order from your table. Being unreachable is almost inconceivable in today's age. Walking around campus I see people watching shows on computers, checking Facebook on phones, and even choosing technology instead of conversation while eating lunch with someone. Yet, I believe the human race was more connected prior to these devices.

Lately I find myself pondering the act of storytelling. I have noticed a resurgence of storytelling in many different forms and ways. As kids, we grow up on stories and learn how story telling has (1) always been a part of the human experience varying across cultures, and (2) how it has evolved. Stories of the ancient (to us) past used devices such as rhyming or rhythm to aid in remembering the tale. The stories then were usually a personal history passed down from one generation to the next. Now we do not need help remembering the tales because we can write them down. However, the need to hear and tell stories has not gone away. It has simply evolved with our age of technology.

Because ultimately people want to feel connected with other people, I believe that storytelling is reemerging, sometimes changed by new technology and sometimes not. The first instance I noticed of a new type of storytelling came in the form of a website called [PostSecret](#): an anonymous secret sent in on a postcard is initially posted on a webpage and then later turned into a book. The secrets poured in! Though they didn't come in the usual format, they still told a story. It was the modern six-word short story.

Next came the [Humans of New York \(HONY\)](#) website, which displays photos and captions that tell a story. The stories range from telling what someone regrets most to when a person felt happiest. With the caption telling the audience something about the person in the photograph, it becomes real in a way it wasn't before. Both *PostSecret* and *HONY* are immensely popular and I think it is because it allows you to feel connected in a world where many connections are limited to 140 characters, to emails instead of letters, and to a text message instead of a phone call. People are social creatures and we desire human contact even if it is in the form of deep secrets and glimpses of a stranger's life.

This desire for human contact, to connect to other people, has gone a step further locally. There is an event called [The Tell](#) that people can attend and if they so choose, they can put their name in a hat to be randomly drawn to tell a story. Each even has a theme and the story can fit it or not. The tellers may or may not come prepared. They may or may not be picked, but if they are they will tell a story. It can be sad, happy, funny, or anything in between. People go onstage and leave a bit of themselves behind for the audience, and the audience respects the courage it took to mount the steps of the stage. This act connects the teller and the audience and for a tiny bit people are more than an extension of their phone. For a tiny bit, they connect with others. People are drawn to hearing and telling stories because our time is so limited. Because if one thing is true, life goes on. Time will pass, and one day we'll all simply be stories in the end.