

Why Share Stories

- explain idea of break-out groups (students will stay in their break-out room, and instructors will rotate each time)
- have students make a “table-tent” that has their name on it, to help facilitate conversation (you can get a pack of paper from the mailroom across from the copier)

Suggested Activities

1. **Free write** “There is no greater agony than bearing an untold story inside you,” by Maya Angelou (I’ve also heard it attributed to Zora Neale Hurston). How does this quotation connect to or remind you of the readings? (try to recall specific examples/phrases) (10 minutes)
2. **Ask students to talk with the person next to you about what stood out to you about the materials assigned for today.** (3-4 minutes)
3. **Ask students to introduce themselves** (about 5 minutes, are you a reader, writer, listener, observer).
4. **Why do we tell/share stories? What needs are met through storytelling? What motivations drive our sharing of stories. Also, what consequences arise from sharing stories?** (try to connect the ideas below to a specific reading) (10 minutes)
 - Empathy/connection/understanding/forgiveness/catharsis
 - Discovery
 - Proof
 - Noticing, paying attention
 - Bearing witness
5. **What advice is implied, what questions are raised by these essays as far as process and content:** (20 minutes)
 - Often there’s an expectation for the audience. *What responsibilities do listeners have?* (connects to Chekhov) There’s a relationship implied in the act of storytelling.
 - Somethings don’t need to be recorded—they’ll stay with us forever; inappropriate to record (Miller reading—brother’s funeral). *Under what circumstances might it be wise or considerate to put down one’s camera or recorder?*
 - Stories are easily lost; many things are left unsaid (connects to Miller) Sharing stories, asking for stories often involves being vulnerable and being courageous).

- The “story/document” holds different meanings over time and among different people (e.g., the “pretty boy” photograph discussed in the Miller essay)
- Writing can be aggressive. *What does Didion mean by this? Do you agree? Can you think of examples?*
- Be patient, let things unfold
- Look hard enough, you can’t miss the shimmer
- Details matter
- Absence is important. (this has to do with framing (in photography or any medium). What’s left out is just as relevant as what put in the frame).
- “A black man with a camera in the 1940’s, was that a threat?” Who can tell stories about whom? (P. 56 Miller—why did his father stop taking pictures, was he perceived as a threat?) *From what you know about documentary and journalism, do any groups seem to have more access to tell/take/document stories?*

6. Story Corps (about 10 minutes), if time

- Started in 2003
- Basic idea: take documentary work and turn it on its head. The interview itself is the purpose of the work (as opposed to traditional focus on creating a work of art, entertainment, education)
- Participants enter a booth, with a facilitator and have a conversation with someone in their life. Participants receive a copy, and another is archived in the LOC.
- More than 100,000 people have recorded a SC interview (from all 50 states)—largest single collection of human voices ever gathered.
- Lessons Dave Isay has learned (e.g., unimaginable capacity for forgiveness)
- DIY Story Corps app—invites everyone to participate in this digital archive
- Share a story (show website, too... e.g., “PARTICIPATE” link)
<https://storycorps.org/listen/albert-sykes-and-aidan-sykes/>
- Reactions to this piece?

Small Group Activity

Shelby Lee Adams Discussion

Documentarian's subjectivity, agenda, point of view (discuss Hog Killing image)

- Pose is only one what a photographer manipulates his/her portrayal
- large format camera, carefully selects who he wants to show
- black and white
- title "The Hog Killing," *Appalachian Portraits*. How does this frame influence our viewing?
- Is there reflexivity? Does author state his/her role?
- Is this work documentary? In a sense doesn't matter how he defines his work, because they're read as documentary images.

What is lost in translation (discuss Lloyd Dean Pool Table)

- What stories and information are missing?
- What would complicate our reading of this picture?
- What other images would you be interested in seeing?
- How can we learn more about this community—as opposed to seeing what we already have seen?
- Stories left to the reader's imagination—build on 100 years of stereotypes
- Implicit assumption that this is depicting Appalachia
- Yet, he does show family bonds—some good qualities

Relationship between documentarian and subjects (discuss screen door image) (10 min)

- Adams suggests he doesn't want to sanitize portraits. Doesn't show the worst. Gets permission from subjects (otherwise wouldn't be able to work in community). Long term relationships. From Kentucky. Shares work with subjects.
- Mixed reactions.
- Visual literacy
- Who is his audience?
- What kind of photographs would his subjects make?