

In the Voice of Our Ancestors

Workshop description:

In this workshop, I walk participants through the layers that go into the creating a living portrayal of an historical figure. The storyteller's entire toolkit is used to craft an authentic experience of a person from our past for our listeners. I ask questions which help the storytellers use their, body, voice, and imagination to create an authentic portrayal. We discuss how to do the kind of research to find the driving issues, dramatic turning points, moments of crisis and decisions; making the storytelling compelling; bringing lessons of the past into the present day.

First person historical narrative is a way of telling stories from a person's life as they might tell them themselves. It is a special style of storytelling. This style of storytelling combines the arts of storytelling, acting, improvisation, characterization, imagination, creative writing, biography, historical research, directing and then stepping into role. The combination of all these things is a challenge to any storyteller.

Creating an historically plausible framework is essential to the effectiveness of the telling. The depth of understanding of that ancestor's life and times allows a sense of authenticity to the presentations. Understanding the era in which the person lived helps the teller to keep the person's voice alive and bring the conflicts and pressures of the past into clear focus in the present.

This style of storytelling does not attempt to do an impersonation. Nor should this style of telling be thought of as a reenactment. Instead, I use the word portrayal. One does not need to look like the person so much as to bring their stories, ideas, and essence to the listeners. As much as possible we use the persons own words to shape the stories.

The direct impact of first person narration is very effective in connecting the past to the present and strengthening the moral fiber of our culture. I found that many of the lessons that teachers were struggling to get across out of a text book leapt to instant clarity and full comprehension with first person historical narrative, in a way that just telling them about the story did not.

Ilene Evans

Voices From the Earth, Inc.

Artistic Director

P.O. Box 444

Thomas, WV 26292

304-463-4561 office

www.vfte.org

www.ilene-evans.com