WHAT CAN INVESTMENT IN NARRATIVE CONTRIBUTE TO MUSEUM EDUCATION?

A report on the role of narrative (and stories) in museums

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Maureen James

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Abstract

The aim of this report is to look at what investment in narrative can contribute to museum education. The report will be divided into three strands looking firstly at 'The Narrative and the Story' in which there will be an outline of the importance of narrative to humans; an examination of the roots of storytelling and the importance of stories to early civilizations; a look at the tradition of storytelling in Britain and at traditional storytelling in contemporary society. The second strand, 'The Narrative, the Museum and the Folk' will examine changing opinions to folklore, tales and collections and their lack of position within the establishment of museums. The importance of narrative in making sense of objects will then be analysed as will the link between stories, history and literacy and cultural diversity. The final strand will contain an overview of how museums can be more social inclusive through the introduction of the narrative and at how postmodernism has paved the way for the changes. This will be followed by the conclusion, which will provide an outline of the ways that investment in narrative can contribute to museum education today.

Within this report the general term 'narrative' will be use to represent all of the distinct categories of memory, mythos and history as defined by Ruffin (1992:511). The term 'story' it may refer to either memory or mythos but the term 'traditional storytelling' refers to the oral telling of traditional (ie old, existing, cultural) stories and though they may have been printed at some time, they will be told rather than read.

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Chapter one

The Narrative and the Story

Introduction

This opening chapter will begin with an analysis of the importance of narrative to humans. It will also look at the earliest storytelling and how people in the past constructed stories to explain natural and supernatural phenomena or human behaviour. The tradition of storytelling within the British Isles will then be explored, particularly in relation to England where it almost died out. The reason for the decline of storytelling in England will be examined and in the final part of this chapter the place of traditional storytelling in society today will be outlined.

1.1   The importance of Narrative in Contemporary Society

> *'Everything we do, from making breakfast to making the bed to making love (and notice how those – in any order – make a multi-episode narrative) can be seen, cast and recounted as a narrative – a narrative with a beginning, middle and end, characters, setting, drama (difficulties or conflicts resolved), suspense, enigma, 'human interest' and a moral. (Toolan 1988:xiii)*

We account for our actions and for the events that occur around us principally in the form of narrative (Bruner 1986:69). We seek to tell others about things that happen to us on the way to the office, at school, on holiday, or wherever we have been. We tell each other about the experiences of friends, neighbours and even our enemies and we ask questions to find out more about the experiences of others. We gather together the narratives of our own lives and that of those around us. Simon Heywood recognised '…wealth of semi-formal, informal, and conversational storytelling which thrives… in family, occupational, recreational and other contexts, … as after-dinner speaking, conversational reminiscence, personal experience, joke, anecdote and rumour' (Heywood 1999:13).

At the time of my writing this report many people, myself included, have been drawn into the story of the murder of two young girls and perhaps reluctantly into the story of the school caretaker, their alleged murderer. We want to know the full story. We listen avidly to radio accounts, sit glued to the television and devour newsprint to achieve our aim. As D.A Leeming pointed out:

> 'We can speak of storytelling…as a human instinct, a survival impulse like the drives for nourishment, shelter and procreation. We would not be who we are as a species without the storytelling aspect. As we can say that plants provide oxygen and horses neigh, we can say that human beings make up plots…' (Leeming 1997:3).

We also fill our lives with fictional stories and numerous other types of narrative – 'novels, short stories, films, television shows, myths, anecdotes, songs, music videos, comics, paintings, advertisements, essays, biographies, and news accounts. All tell a story.' (Cohan & Shires1992:1).

A whole field of study has opened up around the construction of narrative, looking at when, how and why we construct stories (Hutcheon 1989:232). The importance of myth and fairy tale and the inherent symbolism in them has also been analysed by the psychiatrists such as Freud, Jung and Sir James Frazer (Leeming 1997:7).

People of all ages indulge in telling stories – the elderly may spend much time reminiscing over times past; young children construct life scenarios such as 'mummies and daddies' whilst at play; the middle aged and young parents, perhaps too busy with life for in-depth narratives, recount the days experiences before collapsing to watch the latest television 'soap'. We share our stories, write them in diaries, journals and letters and record our experiences in photographs and pass them on to successive generations. Even teenagers, it has been discovered, tell stories. Michael Wilson through investigating the oral storytelling of teenagers between age 11 and 18, found a wealth of stories including ' a large number of personal and family narratives, riddles, local legends, superstition based stories and jocular tales…' (Wilson 1997:184)

People, places and things inspire narratives. Many of us habitually construct fictional narratives connected with strangers we see in restaurants, on trains or in the park. We are more likely to be interested in buildings that have ghost stories or have had famous inhabitants than in those which are old but have no story (Bruner 1986:45). Story is so much a part of us that 'each act of recognition, whether it be of objects in the external world perceived through our senses or of a conceptual relationship seen through an act of mind, involves an act of inner storying. This is how we make sense of it'. (Wells 1986:195).

1.2   The Ancient Roots of Storytelling and its place in Early Civilizations.

> *'Non-literate cultures, whether of the Stone Age or the rain forests of the Philippines today, devise potent stories to explain why the sun appears in the morning and disappears at night, why the wind blows, why it thunders, why some men are wise and some foolish, why some have the gift of poetry, why each animal has different characteristics, and so on." (Crossley-Holland 1993:xxxix)*

We do not have proof of when humans first stated to tell stories. Perhaps it was during the Palaeolithic at the time of the amazing cave paintings such as found at Lascaux, and other sites in France, which according to archaeologists, must have been created for more then 'purely aesthetic reasons' (Clark & Piggott 1970:82). What is certain is that as time passed and civilisations evolved, stories attained an important place in the structures. Analyses of the wondrous and marvellous elements of oral folk tales indicate that they may have existed for thousands of years. Motifs from what must be ancient tales have 'made their way into the Bible and the Greek classics such as the Iliad and the Odyssey…(Zipes 1991:xii). 'Myth very often relates to some aspect of creation… a dramatic narrative through which humans try to explain to themselves their origins on this planet and the wonders they see around them." (Crossley-Holland 1993:xxxix)

'The Ancient Egyptians imagined the whole world as a living entity. Every creature shared in a community of being that stretched from the highest deity.' (Cotterell 1997:8). Similarly, the Babylonians believed the purpose of the human race to be the

service of the gods - the respect and fears of the peoples were incorporated into the story of goddess Innana (George 1999:xxxvii).

Epic stories can be dated back over 4,000 years to Gilgamesh and beyond. There are stories or story fragments in texts from ancient Egyptian, Chinese, Sumerian and Sanskrit. Ancient Sanskrit scriptures give a number of indicators of storytelling being practiced for religious and secular reasons. 'The great religious teachers of China, especially Taoists and Buddhists, used storytelling as one of the main ways of spreading the beliefs of their faiths' (Palmer 1990:7). The Bible, the most widely distributed book in the world (Guinness 1996:150), contains many stories, which in the past have been committed to memory.

In Ancient Greece, where myths were used throughout the education system to illustrate concepts (and with particular skill by Plato), education was believed to have begun 'with myths and fables the child learns at his mother's knee' (Curtis & Boultwood 1956:11). Socrates, though he recommended 'strict superintendence over the stories which young children are told to prevent them from gaining false impressions about the things which matter in life', acknowledged that some worthwhile narratives such as myths may not be true. Records from ancient Rome also indicate that stories, including fairytales were told for entertainment and education to both adults and children. Robert Graves noted that myths have been 'recorded pictorially on temple walls, vases, seals, bowls, mirrors, chests, shields, tapestries, and the like" (Graves 1960:12).

1.3   The tradition of Storytelling in Britain.

> *'It is said that [the Druids] have to memorize a great number of verse - so many, that some of them spend twenty years at their studies. The Druids believe that their religion forbids them to commit their teachings to writing...I imagine that this rule was originally established...because they did not want their doctrine to become public property, and in order to prevent their pupils from relying on the written word and neglecting to train their memories; for it is usually found that when people have the help of texts, they are less diligent in learning by heart, and let their memories rust' (Handford 1951:32)*

Julius Caesar recorded the above in this '*Conquest of Gaul'*. It is one of the few references we have to what might loosely be termed the storytelling of the Ancient Celts and it also outlines how much they valued the memory, and in doing so, impressed the literate Romans.

Research has found that of the later Celtic peoples the storyteller's repertoire included many 'elaborate saga-cycles' in prose and verse. The Irish *seanchai,* was required, as professional qualification, to know three hundred and fifty tales which 'were delivered orally, and centuries passed before some few of them were committed to writing.' (Jones & Jones 1978:xi)

In Scandinavia the storyteller, or *skald,* enjoyed a privileged position in the household of the king. He would ride into battle with him so that he could sing of his bravery; he would be given gifts and also be free in the knowledge that if he were captured in war a

ransom would be paid for his safe return (Colwell 1989:11). The situation was likely to have been the same when the Angles, Saxons and Danish settled in Britain. In Beowulf, the early English poem, which appears to be linked to the Wuffing kings of East Anglia and consequently Sutton Hoo, mentions the telling of a tale at a wedding feast (Newton 1992:65)

By the twelfth century the gleemen (as the skalds were often known) had been replaced by professional minstrels –

> 'They were freemen of every Christian land who reported whatever was marvellous or amusing…it was an age greedy for entertainment that fed a rich sense of comedy on the jostling life around it; and to serve its ideals called up the great men of the past – Orpheus opening up the way to fairyland, the heroes of the Trojan war, Alexander; Arthur and the Knights of the Round Table and Merlin the enchanter; Charlemagne with his peers – or won back from the shadows not Eurydice alone, but Helen and Criseyde, Guinevere and Ysolde, Rymenhild and Blauncheflour'(Sisam 1925:xi).

At this time Chrétien de Troyes collected together the Arthurian Romances (Owen 1997:xi), and even the church started to include such tales in the sermons, until later religious reformers condemned them for keeping pagan beliefs alive.

Chrétien lived in and age when most books (with the exception of some literary manuscripts such as Geoffrey of Monmouth's History of the Kings of Britain' which was for learned contemplation) were hand written to be read aloud, or used as an'aide memoire' for priests in composing sermons or for travelling entertainers (Sisam 1925:xxxiii, Zipes 1991:xvi). Medieval vernacular literature often included calls for silence. (Thorpe 1966:25). At this time only a small percentage of the population were literate.

Geoffrey Chaucer in his Canterbury Tales, of 1387, demonstrated the ease of which people told each other tales. His choice of stories included 'tales of low life in oral circulation, like the '*Miller's tale'*…[and] what he had read in Boccaccio or other classic masters or in the lives of the saints. (Coghill 1958:18). Giovanni's Boccaccio's *'The Decameron'*, written in 1349/50, 'contained a hundred stories within an overlaying narrative (McWilliam 1995:1).

Richard Barber (1979) noted that 'In the later middle ages there are tales which were clearly very popular which have only survived as names'. These include Ermanaric, Wayland Smith, Wade and Unwin, Geat and Mechthild, and 'Ranulf of Chester, whom William Langland mentions in the same breath as Robin Hood'.

Did many of the old tales die out because they went 'out of fashion?' This could be the case, for, as Stewart pointed out … there is never any conscious 'last time' for a ritual or 'last singer of a certain song. Such material quietly fades away…' (Stewart 1977:10). The tales that did survive are often ones that were committed to printed form from the late fifteenth century. A sequence of Robin Hood ballads was published by Wynken de Worde (Lloyd 1967:26) was published at this time as was Sir Thomas Malory's Arthurian romances and the tale of St Georgeby William Caxton.

By the early seventeenth century the unlettered majority (30%) of the English population were 'everywhere faced…with the products of a literate culture…'romances, fables and old tales' like 'George on horseback or Bevis of Southampton'…(Wrightson 1993:195).

It has been alleged that stories about some of the 'great figures from history' have come down to us in oral and printed form, because they 'often developed into a kind of legend, particularly where their deeds or death were dramatic in the extreme'   such as Hereward the Wake, King Harold at Hastings, Richard the Lionheart, William Wallace to name but a few' (Barber 1999:xiv).

By the seventeenth or eighteenth century historians have noted a change in attitude in England, such that 'the literate [came] to regard traditional popular pastimes as belonging to a different world to their own, and to record, transform, or suppress them according to personal tastes and circumstances' (Hutton 1994:246). There will be more discussion on the effects of this in section 2.1.

This change did not effect the telling of stories in the rural areas of Scotland and Ireland. Duncan Williamson, a Scottish storyteller who continued the oral hearthside tradition with tales told to him in childhood by his then octogenarian grandmother, became a professional teller and now (whilst also in his eighties) has a repertoire of over 700 tales (McDermitt 2000).

Raymond Williams also found areas of 'deliberately rooted popular history and action' including 'regional' oral history… (Williams 1989:133). Such areas included the Cambridgeshire and Lincolnshire fens where contemporary storytellers such as Hugh Lupton and Polly Howat have collected stories to include in their repertoires and in written and taped form (Howat 1990:127). Similarly, in Suffolk, the Bumpstead Boys have kept storytelling alive through following a purist oral tradition, which discourages the use of written source material and encourages the use of the memory (though even they have opted to record some of their stories onto tape).

1.4   Traditional Storytelling in Contemporary Society

> *"But now – the mysteries have gone. We know… what lies on the other side of the hill. The scientists have long ago puffed out, scornfully, the golden lamp of the night…leaving us in the utmost darkness. The giants and the monsters have either skulked away or have been tamed, and are engaged in writing their memoirs for the popular press…" (Nichols 1934:XV)*

In the '*Storyteller – Reflections on the works of Nikolai Leskov'* Walter Benjamin lamented what he saw as the decline of storytelling.

> 'Less and less frequently do we encounter people with the ability to tell a tale properly. More and more often there is embarrassment all around when the wish to hear a story is expressed. It is as if something that seemed inalienable to us, the securest among our possessions, were taken from us: the ability to exchange experiences' (Benjamin 1974:83).

Benjamin, heavily influence by years living in pre-war Nazi Germany, blamed novels for the start of this decline and the spread of information as its accelerator.

Professor Jack Zipes in 1994 reflected on the thoughts of Benjamin and noted that storytelling is everywhere in many different forms 'crimes and accidents are edited, cut, shaped, and disseminated by newscasters and telecasters as stories for a market of viewers. Every commercial that is projected on the television screen has a story to it… stories have become instrumentalized and commercialised in western culture.' (Zipes 1996:10).

But what of the face-to-face 'oral storytelling' of the type that survives elsewhere in the world? 'Among the nomadic desert peoples, in the tropical islands of the South Seas, in the colourful markets of Africa and the bazaars of India, storytellers pass on their native folk tales to the next generation by word of mouth' (Colwell 1991:89. In the Middle East the people hear stories of Nasraden Hodja and the Arabian Nights; In East Asia there is a tradition of folk tales and in Japan the people are drawn into the Zen 'Koan' educative stories. Ben Haggarty outlined a typical evening of storytelling that is still found in communities as far apart as West Africa and Ireland-

> 'The evening starts… gathered together, often around a fire, swapping anecdotes about the day just past. These lead some to recall events from the recent past. Jokes are told, and the children, who are now getting sleepy, are entertained and educated through stories told specifically for them. As the night gathers… the firelight grows dimmer, other stories emerge: family stories, brought out and polished for the hundredth time; myths and legends; stories of events and deeds performed long ago, much changed by generations of telling; and finally stories that have their source in the great questions of human existence – those narratives which explain 'life, the universe, and everything'. (Haggarty in Howe & Johnson 1992:vii).

Simon Heywood noted that in the 'industrialised world…over the last two decades…there has been a remarkable upsurge of interest in oral storytelling, and the emergence of new (or the re-emergence of old) types of storytelling performance' (Heywood 1998:5) Heywood in his research in England and Wales, noted a number of loosely coherent movements, 'in the arts, education, and culture at all levels…wherein the ever present but resurgent appetite for the many forms of spoken story can be focused, fed and stimulated' (Heywood 1998:6).

This revival may have been 'influenced by the more multicultural nature of society, the songs, riddles, myths, legends, tales and history of all its people are becoming woven into the contemporary tapestry of storytelling in Britain.' (Grainger 1997:18). Whatever the reason, the figures of the Society for Storytelling speak for the success of the revival. Approximately 500 people are members of the Society for Storytelling and the events diary includes over forty storytelling clubs in the UK and Eire.

Chapter two

The Narrative, the Museum and the folk

The first part of this chapter will examine how opinions have changed over the centuries in regards to folklore and folktales. It will then focus on the changing attitudes to the collection of objects connected with the folk tradition, or' folk art' as it became known. This will be followed by an exploration of the reasons why museums focused on the object and ignored the narrative and the affect on people of the new museums as places of improvement. The importance of narrative and stories in making sense of objects will then be analysed alongside examples of successful projects. The final two sections will look at the link between stories, history and literacy including reference to the National Curriculum recommendations and at stories and cultural diversity.

2.1. Changing opinions on Folklore, Folk tales and Folk Collections.

"Folklore" was conceptualised towards the end of the eighteenth century, coined as a word in 1846 and institutionalised from the end of the nineteenth century on.
(O'Giolláin 2000:32)

As mentioned earlier, the Sixteenth and Seventeenth century witnessed great changes in society. 'In 1580 illiteracy was a characteristic of the vast majority of the common people of England. By 1680 it was a special characteristic of the poor'…by the mid and late seventeenth century popular beliefs and practices began to 'arouse the curiosity of antiquarian gentlemen…the poor had become not simply poor but to a significant degree culturally different'. (Wrightson 1993:221). At this time the education of wealthy children was also excluding stories.

In the late 18th century, Richard Lovell Edgeworth, heavily influenced by Rousseau, educated his children in a predominantly practical and child-centred way. His method completely discouraged the aesthetic and the imagination and showed contempt for 'fairy stories and nursery classics'. Maria, his daughter 'recalled that her father's antagonism was always aroused at the mention of Puss-in-Boots or Jack and the Beanstalk (Curtis & Boultwood 1956:398).

A few years later, Frederick Froebel ignored Edgeworth and some of the earlier educationalists emphasis on 'sense impression' (see section 2.2) in favour of 'creative expression 'which included storytelling (Curtis & Boultwood 1956:378). His use of 'fairy-tale, fable and fantasy for the stimulation of the child's imagination' was not, however picked up by his followers, Maria Montessori or John Dewey (Curtis & Boultwood 1956:498).

By the nineteenth century a number of fanatical collectors were dashing around the countryside collecting the old folk material and stories 'the last testimonies of pre-industrial societies (Rosen 1985:9)' before they disappeared-

> 'Volumes of song texts and tales, fragments of epic poetry, verses and riddles began to fill the shelves of bourgeois households—volumes that also represented the beginnings of the academic study of verbal arts and expressive culture more generally' (Bendix 2000:1).

Analysis of the 55 British Folk tales included in an anthology by Kevin Crossley-Holland indicates that most of them were recorded in the nineteenth century. At the same time, John Francis Campbell was collecting stories from the Highland Gaelic Oral tradition. He amassed 791 stories in his four volumed 'Popular Tales of the West Highlands'.

Most of the body of work of the British Folklore Society was collected before the outbreak of the Great War (Dorson 1968:440). It is perhaps ironic that the singers of the songs and tellers of the folk tales were to continue to remain anonymous yet the collectors, who committed their finds to written form, achieved lasting fame (Martin 1993: ix). The collectors wanted their stories, not them. As Jeremy Silver noted 'The exclusion of the oral by the written has [reflected] the cultural and historical exclusion from documentation of those people least likely to contribute to printed publications.' (Silver 1988:177). Similarly Dermot O'Giolláin noted that 'Folklore archives… contain large amounts of material recorded by and from non-elite groups in society.' (O'Giolláin 2000:183)

It is likely that initially, the literate classes would have enjoyed the collections of tales. But as time went by there developed a movement of 'improving' literature, which had no place for 'stories'. John Carey in his book, *The Intellectuals and the Masses,* observed that: 'The early twentieth century saw a determined effort, on the part of the European intelligentsia, to exclude the masses from culture. In England this movement has become known as modernism.' (Carey 1992:16). As a result of this, even today we have what Harold Rosen described as

> 'Canonized stories which will guarantee genuflexions even from those who have not read them… *War and Peace, Madame Bovary, Moby Dick, Ulysses*... they are stories for those who have put away childish things. That is a persistent message of our society…stories are for children, the gullible, the naïve' (Rosen 1985:6).

Thankfully the folktales did not get taken away from children, and like William Wordsworth (1770- 1850) who recalled tales of 'Jack the Giant-killer, Robin Hood, and … St George' from his youth (Curtis & Boultwood 1956:307). Children today can enjoy books of stories that have ensured that 'spider man of the West Indies; the trolls and giants of Scandinavia; the djinns of Arabia; the fairy folk of Britain; the Baba Yagas of Russia' are still familiar (Colwell 1991:89).

But children grow up and as Gordon Wells noted, 'once the skills of literacy have been acquired, the emphasis should shift to facts – to real-world knowledge and the subjects disciplines' (Wells 1986:201). In Harold Rosen's opinion…'we have other kinds of discourse for the serious business of society. We may start by telling stories but we must end by telling the truth…' (Rosen 1985:6).

While the folklore collectors recorded the songs, stories and traditions which have come down to us in fairy tales, nursery rhymes and playground games, they also discovered everywhere 'that the inhabitants of rural England had not abandoned their faith in healing wells, divination, cunning folk, witchcraft, omens or ghosts' (Thomas 1991:798), unfortunately the folklorists did not collect artefacts that reflected the traditions. There was very little interest in this aspect at the time.

Describing museum collecting practices at the end of the nineteenth century, Gaynor Kavanagh reported that there is much evidence that many museums ignored the drive of ethnography and the folklore movement and when local material was gathered it was 'more often than not simply added to registers with just the name of the object, rarely with the study of context or even field notes to add to our knowledge or understanding' (Kavanagh 1989:133). Tony Bennett found that

> 'In the nineteenth-century museum the cultures of subordinate classes were … a simple absence, excluded not only as a matter of definition (the working classes were not regarded as having a culture worthy of preservation) but also as a matter of deliberate policy… (Bennett 1988:73).

Though the Ethnological gallery opened at British Museum in 1845, the museum did not begin its British and Medieval collections until 1851 (Reeve 1988:77). The Great Exhibition of 1851 did not include an ethnographic dimension, but, in 1867 the Paris exhibition did include a display the sort of objects displayed which 'were being referred to as 'folk art' by the turn of the century.' (O'Giolláin 2000:55). In Northern Europe at the end of the nineteenth century the folk museum movement was beginning to flourish.

The first 'folk museum' was opened in Stockholm in 1873 to display objects from 'rural and urban life along with representations of typical scenes' from the Scandinavian countries (O'Giolláin 2000:55). This was soon followed by other similar projects. However, the United Kingdom waited until just after the Second World War to establish a number of new museums – folk museums, open air museums, living history farms 'orientated towards the collection, preservation, and display of artefacts relating to the daily lives, customs, rituals and traditions of non-elite social strata' (O'Giolláin 2000:57).Beamish, opened in the 1970s, was the first open-air museum in England. St Fagan's in Wales had opened in 1946 (Bennett 1988:63).

In the United States we find a similar scenario. There is a wealth of written material in the African-American collections - slave narratives produced in the eighteenth century, sermons, records of the abolitionist movements and history books. What is lacking is the material culture of the enslaved and rural Black people. 'Virtually no eighteenth century examples of quilts, gourd banjos and fiddles and other instruments, distinctive dress, jewellery, ceramics, basketry, and carvings exist.' (Ruffins 1992:520). The few examples that are extant are likely to be found in Black museums established in the last thirty years.

As in Britain, there had evolved a culture of collecting of songs, music and folk-tales of the African Americans by both Negro and white scholars and folklorists. In the 1930s the Works Progress Administration (WPA) and the National Relief Administration ran a number of programs that focused on the 'recording of oral testimonies and other

aspects of American vernacular culture' (Ruffins 1992:550). But at this time most major American museums followed a policy of exclusion of African American materials. Colonial Williamsburg was set up in 1926 with no hint of the fact that in the 1770's fifty percent of the cities population were African-American. It was not until Williamsburg was extensively remodelled in the 1980s that any hint of slavery was shown.

2.2   The Museum and the Object

> *'The first role of the object was to symbolize the people who created it...the object provided the major means of representing the exotic places and people visited...peoples whose presence was neither required nor desired'. (Miller 1983:13)*

Greek philosophy supported an emphasis on the rational object by defining Logos as the direct rational thought and expression and Mythos as narrative, poetry and rhetoric, of the imagination (Cupitt 1991:40). Eilean Hooper-Greenhill noted in a paper on Museum Education that in the early Middle Ages, Thomas Aquinas reasoned that human cognition is strongest when using data collected through the senses and that Roger Bacon advocated the 'observation of things themselves rather than the exposition of doctrine'(Hooper-Greenhill 1994:230).

In the early 17th century John Locke advised that children need to learn from 'the things themselves, or their pictures' (Curtis & Boultwood 1956:245). Similarly
Comenius developed the precept that 'children acquire a knowledge of words by objects…while learning words they should also be taught things' (Curtis & Boultwood 1956:175). It soon became common for philosophers and educationalists to advocate 'the rejection of all knowledge that could not be demonstrated through the study of objects' (Hooper-Greenhill 1994:231).

By the late eighteenth and early nineteenth century the object lesson had become a core part of educational theory, using sense impressions following the progressive theories of Rousseau and Pestalozzi (Lawson & Silver 1973:229). But schooling was becoming more widespread and classes larger. By the time that Charles Dickens was to characterise Thomas Gradgrind in Hard Times, factory schooling had become a part of life for many children, classes had become regimented, and the object lesson had evolved into an abstract, and children were being taught facts. *The Teacher's Manual of lessons on Domestic Economy* of 1893 still encouraged teachers to get children to learn facts and to aid them in this they should draw 'sketches on the blackboard of the objects used to illustrate the lessons' as 'Even crude [sketches] will assist the lively imagination of a child in forming clear mental images of things' (Major 1893:v).

Eilean Hooper-Greenhill acknowledged that in history 'enough evidence can be identified to suggest that museum education and object teaching…have gone hand in hand' (Hooper-Greenhill 1994:230). But the objects on display in the museums of the nineteenth century were 'removed, deracinated, and displayed out of context, thus altering the function and meaning of the work', with the argument that the work of art is autonomous and can be appreciated without recourse to its original function (Meecham & Sheldon 2000:208). Museums exhibition techniques imposed 'academic classifications' (Ames 1991:99) a 'kind of historical narrative … supported by

periodisation… the history-as-chronology approach, consisting of dates, movements, styles and geographic origins' (Meecham & Sheldon 2000:204).

Paul Greenhalgh noted that by the start of the twentieth century, in Britain, education and entertainment became separated and it was clear 'that the higher arts were perceived by the middle-classes as a kind of cultural duty – a form of work which was necessary to maintain status – and that art of any kind was barely perceived at all by the working-classes.' (Greenhall 1989:86)

Carol Duncan's research found that visitors to the newly created art museums in the eighteenth century described their experience as akin to 'religious ecstasy' (Duncan 1995:15). The temple-like galleries, with their emphasis on 'truth and beauty' were compared to shrines and their role as 'improving public taste' rather than the dissemination of public knowledge (Reeve 1988:67). Some, such as Goethe eventually realised that this was perhaps not ideal as 'the very capacity of the museum to frame objects as art and claim them for a new kind of ritual attention could entail the negation or obscuring of other, older meanings'. (Duncan 1995:16)

2.3   The importance of narrative in making sense of objects.

> *'working with artefacts and associating them with their history and ethnohistory can make stars of objects overnight, and this is the proper role of museums...' (Kaeppler 1989:85)*

Judy Shagan found when looking for 'new ways of interpreting museum objects' in the Jewish Historical Museum in Amsterdam that each of the objects had many stories connected with them. She recommended that a 'basic story' should be presented next to each object with information on why the object was made, where it has been, why the museum acquired it and why it is on display. In addition to this she felt that the 'other stories' connected with the object should be available on an audio-guide. (Shagan 2002:11)

Adrienne Kaeppler also recognised the use of objects 'to tell the stories… important to the national image or history of the country in which they eventually find themselves'. She also felt that 'objects can be used as important elements in the study of ethnohistory – the discipline that combines knowledge gained from research in ethnography and history' (Kaeppler 1989:85)

Susan Morris and Sue Wilkinson also noted how objects can complement documents in the teaching of history (Morris & Wilkinson 1992:28). Ludmilla Jordanova took a broader approach in saying that 'objects are triggers of chains of ideas and images that go far beyond their initial starting-point. Feelings about the antiquity, the authenticity, the beauty, the craftsmanship, the poignancy of objects are the stepping-stones towards fantasies, which can have… a thousand other attributes.' (Jordanova 1989:23)

In 1998 Nottingham City Museums and Galleries Education Service set up an exhibition and education session entitled 'Every Object Tells a Story' which was designed to 'unfold the mysteries behind objects from the everyday to the beautiful and precious'. In the gallery objects were displayed alongside their 'hidden past'. A similar project was organised by the keeper of Social History at Bishop's House, Sheffield,

within part of an exhibition called 'The Poor People's Corner and Parlour'. Many items linked with 'the rituals of birth, marriage and death, religion, war, superstitions and traditions, work and production, hunting and social division' were grouped together alongside text which mentioned the relevant belief systems of the community (Rattue 1996:225).

The Old Grammar School Museum, Hull was the venue for a very popular exhibition in 1990. 'The story of Hull and its people' related Hull's history through the various stages of life common to the people, and focused in its introduction on two people whose families have lived in the Hull for at least five generations. Their personal stories were 'illustrated by photos, documents, objects and recollections' in an attempt to 'put people first in trying to understand the past' (Frostick 1991:150).

In the United States, 'Down through the years: stories from the Anacostia Museum collections' at the Anacostia Museum Center for African American History and Culture offered visitors the opportunity to see objects that are rarely on public display, and to engage in a series of dialogues about why and how these objects became part of the collections'. This was the first exhibition of this kind at the museum (Newsome 1997:4).

Rick West, Director of the National Museum of the American Indian, had even bigger aims for the "Stories of the People" exhibition –

> 'we hope that for once and forever, we are able to fuse the magnificent objects which are in our one million object collection, one of the greatest collections of native material in the world, with the people and the culture that produced those objects, in a way, that perhaps, has not been done before. And for that reason we feel that enlisting the native voice in that process is absolutely key' (West 1997)

The Pitt Rivers Museum in Oxford, England has been working with the First Nations community of the Kainai people in Alberta, Canada 'using a collection of historic photographs in a collaborative project' (Peters 2002:25). The team have found that the 'community members view the photographs as an extremely valuable educational tool to be drawn on to explain to younger people some of the recent history of the reserve and their ancestor's role within it' (Peters 2002:27).

When the Portland (Oregon) Museum of Art brought Tlingit elders to look at Northwest Coast pieces that the museum was about to display they seemed to have their own agenda for the meeting. They were using the objects

> 'as kind of aides-memoire for the telling of rather elaborate stories and the singing of many songs…and in some sense the physical objects…were left at the margin. What really took centre stage were stories and songs. And these stories suggested by the objects are very powerful stories. (Perin 1992:189).

The Ak-Chin Indian Community ecomuseum also made its participants more aware of the value of the stories inspired by the collections of their ancestors. One of the

contributors felt that the museum development process had made her more aware of her culture and language and that 'getting the elders involved to tell the stories or to sing is important'. She added that the project had taught her 'that we're the ones who are responsible for passing on the traditions' (Fuller 1992:345)

In the 1970s and 1980s it became fashionable in the Britain to use objects for reminiscence, to gather personal stories (oral histories) from people by using objects as triggers for memories (Hull 1994:26).

> 'Stories are waiting to be liberated by tellers: in the photo album, the video or 16mm film, in boxes in lofts, hidden corners of wallets; in objects redolent of memory – birth certificates, old letters, postcards, bits of jewellery, a collection of shells…' (Howe & Johnson 1992:3)'.

Objects have also been used by museums to assist people suffering from dementia (Mulhearn 2002). Jocelyn Goddard reported on the use of 'oral history' in the Museums Journal in May 2001. 'museums, galleries, archives and libraries are collecting, storing and using oral histories as a normal part of their work – often in the context of social history, community projects and exhibition development' (Goddard 2001:34)

Sandra Marwick, described a project in Edinburgh in which, through museum collections, people were encouraged to 'move beyond reminiscence into reassessment and revaluation of their own lives; to advance from reflecting about the past to examining the present and to questioning the future. Within the project people learned about people (including themselves) primarily through objects that people have made, used or found meaningful. (Marwick 1995:150). The Maison des Cultures Frontières, a documentation centre on the French-German border, which fits into the concept of the 'eco-museum', also gives value to oral traditions and community relationships in its collections and work (Fuller 1992:332).

But what of Ancient Civilisations - Can connecting the narrative, the stories of the people with the objects enhance the collections? John Reeve from the British Museum felt that 'it is essential to engage the emotions of students reading Virgil or Homer…or looking at a Greek vase painting that depicts Priam being killed on his own altar, beaten about the head with the body of his grandson' (Reeve 1988:76). How can we satisfactorily make sense of the motifs of the 'eye of Horus' or the 'Scarab beetle'on Ancient Egyptian artefacts if we do not tell the stories that underpinned the beliefs (and lives) of the people at the time?

A friend who lives in the United States recently informed me of two projects where a storyteller who had taught Classical Mythology told stories at the St. Louis Art Museum when they had a special Egyptian exhibit and one of Greek statuary. At the British Museum during the Festival of India, a children's trail encouraged the telling of the stories of Ganesa, Siva, Vishnu and the great Goddess Durga, around the sculptures (Reeve 1988:82).

2.4 The link between stories, history and literacy

"When you said the words that helped us think the pictures." (Barton 1986:8)
'What's the use of stories that aren't even true?' (Salman Rushdie – Haroun and the Sea of Stories 1990)

The U.K. National Curriculum for English recommendations for Key Stage One includes the telling of stories under speaking and listening. Within the reading section retellings of traditional folk and fairy stories and stories and poems from a range of cultures are included. The Key Stage Two Literature recommendations also include classic poetry, myths, legends and traditional stories and texts drawn from a variety of cultures and traditions. Within the History curriculum for Key Stage One stories are included as sources of information for children to find out about the past. But how true do the stories need to be?

Grugeon and Gardner noted that ' stories set in the past do not have to be true; they have to be authentic. While anachronism has no place in good stories about the past, imaginative reconstruction does.' (Grugeon & Gardner 2000:70). Gordon Wells pointed out that all fiction is firmly based in fact, in the sense that it is about recognizable people acting in recognizable ways, but in a 'possible world' that differs in certain ways from any that has actually existed…within the world created by the imagination rather than the truth provided by documentary evidence… (Wells 1986:204)

However, if a fictional story appears to be true, it should not be put forward as such 'the novelist and the historian might both be storytellers but nothing is gained by blurring their different ways of telling' (Lamarque 1990:151). 'It matters to us…whether Alex Haley's Roots is a history or a fiction even if many of us would not be able to determine on purely internal evidence which it was.' (Bell 1990:178).

Storytellers have often set their stories in places and times with which they have knowledge. 'History…allows for the possibility of telling the past as a different story' (West 1988:38). Many classic historical tales have retained the image of when they were first printed rather than their date of origin. 'Arthurian romances tell us mostly about courtly life in the Middle Ages, though there are echoes back to the sixth century historic Arthur and forward to the nineteenth century poets' (Maddern 1992:8)

We need also to remember that the historic chronicles were sometimes written down in the manner of the journalist. Froissart is one such 'historian'. His 'Chronicles' of the Hundred Years War whilst not necessarily regarded for historical accuracy can be relied on for its description of 'all the material aspects of life… customs, dress, eating and drinking, housing, trade, ceremonial, warfare…' (Brereton 1978;17)

When using folk collections and tales as historical evidence we must remember they often cannot be properly authenticated to a time or place as 'the documented material or dated texts that do exist… merely show that the contents were in practice at the date of the documentation' (Stewart 1977:10).

2.5 Stories and Cultural Diversity

'The teller through both cultural and personal homework brings a story to an audience and builds a bridge relating audience, teller and story.' (Heckler & Birch 1997:14)
Storytelling involves sharing, therefore in a multi-cultural society the options, the traditions, the voices are increased a hundred fold and should be utilised. Storytelling has a central position...in most ethnic minority cultures.' (Gobey, P 1988)

'country folk in Haiti sing songs about Africa… in Jamaica and Barbados, Antigua and Trinidad, Grenada and Guyana, [old men tell] stories about Anansi the spider' (Sherlock 1981:5). The stories of Anansi, or Buh Nansi, Compé Anansi, Nancy, Anancy or even Aunt Nancy (Abrahams 1985:19) trickster stories provide a lasting link between Africa and the Caribbean, forged when the slave ships forcibly transported African people from their homeland to the Americas. They could take no possessions but they could carry their culture, their songs and their stories, including those of Brer Rabbit, which grew in importance in the Southern United States.

In a world of increasing immigration, more and more people are living amongst cultures that are not their own. It is important to ensure that people who have recently moved into a place are not 'disenfranchised' (Walsh 1992:159). An acknowledgment of the stories of the immigrants' culture will help them overcome feelings of alienation. A project that has helped this aspect is one outlined in Liz Weir's *Telling the tale: A storytelling guide. T*he Library Association Youth Libraries Group booklet outlined the 'Mother Tongue Storytelling Project which 'offers children and adults wider experiences and increased opportunities for sharing as an individual, a group, a community' (Gobey, P 1988). A project set up by the Harambee Development Education Centre in Cambridge, England encourages Black women to share their stories between themselves and with others, particularly in local schools.

Even though a family may be settled in another country for many years, the experience of the ancestors will always be relevant. Homi K Bhabha found through analysis of a film made by the Black Audio and Film Collective, that there were profound links between the experiences of Black people in the Handsworth district of Birmingham and 'ghosts of other stories' from Black history (Bhabha 1994: 156).

Shohat and Stam reported that 'since the multiple cultures invoked by the term 'multiculturalism' have not historically coexisted in relations of equality and mutual respect. It is therefore not merely a question of communicating across borders but of discerning the forces, which generate the borders in the first place. Multiculturalism has to recognise not only difference but even bitter, irreconcievable difference' (Shohat & Stam 1995:15).

In setting up a project to reflect another culture, as with the setting up of displays 'that curators are aware of the significance of what they choose to say and what they choose to leave out, and of the implications in the words they use to tell other people's stories' (Coxall (1997:100). As Heckler and Birch noted, with regard to storytelling projects - 'when we are outside a culture, we have to take care not to season the story stew so inappropriately that it becomes putrid to those who it once fed' (Heckler & Birch 1997:9). They outlined examples of good practice in researching for telling cultural stories.

Chapter three

The Postmodern Museum: a place for narrative and storytelling?

This final chapter will consider how museums have reacted to social inclusion issues and whether the introduction of narrative and storytelling will help them to fulfil the recommendations. This will be followed by an exploration of how postmodernism may have opened the way for the narrative in museums. The conclusion with then summarise the findings and apply them to the research question – 'What can investment in narrative contribute to museum education?

3.1 The Inclusive Museum – a place for narrative and storytelling

> *Museums enable people to explore collections for inspiration, learning and enjoyment. They are institutions that collect, safeguard and make accessible artefacts and specimens, which they hold in trust for society. (Code of ethics for museums Museums Association 2002).*

The aims of museums today are likely to be much different from their predecessors. Curators have a broader approach. To quote Rex Ellis, Director of the Centre for Museum Studies at the Smithsonian Institute, Washington DC:

'I am not interested in a museum…that sees artifacts, objects and things as sacred and the visitor as secondary… I am not interested in any institution that displays, exhibits or showcases hate, bigotry, violence, genocide, abortion, drugs, oppression, slavery or AIDS and not take a stand about their affects on our society…and I certainly am not interested in museums who avoid such issues giving such excuses as, it does not relate to our collections; such issues are not a part of our museum's mission; we're a science museum and science and technology is neutral, or we're an art museum and only special people can appreciate art'. (Ellis Smithsonian Symposium Speech 6)

In the United Kingdom, in the 1999 report '*A Common Wealth- Museums in the Learning Age',* David Anderson looked at 'The claim of museums to be 'public institutions'. He pointed out that it is one of the Government's highest priorities to widen participation in education. Museums, are now 'expected by the Government to enable as many people as possible, beyond their predominantly middle class audience, to use their resources' (Anderson 1999:103)

'Museums for a New Century' - A major American report on the future of museums, similarly pointed out 'quite unequivocally that the educational role of the museum, understood in its broadest sense, is going to become of greater and greater importance' (Hooper-Greenhill 1988:215).

David Anderson found that 'around 40% of the adult population will visit a museum or art gallery in any one year, but the percentage varies widely – between 22% and 68% – in different localities. Whilst the decision to use museums is for many a matter of personal choice, it is also clear that many people are deterred or excluded from using museums by their past experiences or the policies and practice of museums' (Anderson 1999:103).

In order to comply with Government recommendations to become socially inclusive institutions, museums must have a clear understanding of their visitors and non-visitors. '…their interests and their abilities… to offer programmes and exhibitions with which they will identify… to reveal the richness of museum collections' (Jensen 1991:274).

It is relatively easy to find out the opinions of people who regularly visit museums. Roberts found that all the visitors had been satisfying two basic human needs: the need for individuality and the need for community - those who were comfortable with the museum visits were able to create their own narratives (Roberts 1997:140)

As regards negative opinion, a study by the London Museums Consultative Committee (Du Bery 1994) found that museums 'are seen as boring, musty gloomy and stuffy'. The atmosphere was compared to that of a church or a library, The study did, however, find that people viewed museums as having a 'worthy purpose – that of preserving, and educating people about cultures and artefacts' 'the qualities of stillness and quiet… associated with "serious" learning processes' (Lumley 1988:7)

With regard to local museums, people viewed their purpose as 'preserving and communicating the history of their local area' (Du Bery 1994:61). This would, according to research by Nick Merriman appeal more to those of 'middle and lower status' (in class or occupation) as they tend to rank 'family and local histories higher than those of high status (Merriman's term for wealthy or well-educated groups)' (Walsh 1992:161).

But, as Anderson acknowledged, though 'many museums develop profiles of their audiences…and… identify which groups are experiencing barriers to access… to establish targets for change', 'such systematic approaches to increasing access are not common in museums' (Anderson 1999:104). Anderson described 'the principal barriers to access to museums are social class, poverty, educational disadvantage, ethnic and cultural background, disability and an individual's own attitudes. These factors often operate in combination…' (Anderson 1999:104).

Barriers of poverty and disability, whilst being of crucial importance to museums, are not relevant to this report. Educational disadvantage can be overcome by matching education sessions to research into learning styles. McCarthy and Pitman defined four categories of learners, though individuals may relate to more than one style they are likely to prefer one more than the others
1. the imaginative learner
2. the analytical learner
3. the common sense, problem solver learner
4. the dynamic, experiential learner (Cassels 1992:41)

George Heim in his research into Howard Gardner's concept of the 'constructivist museum' found that it must offer 'the opportunity for the visitor to make connections with familiar concepts and objects. In order to make meaning of our experience, we need to be able to connect it with what we already know' (Heim 1995:21).

When relating the experience of hearing stories to the above learning styles we can see that if they involve the imagination in a profound way, they can help that preferred learning style. As Regina Bendix noted 'Folklore has been defined as expressive culture and artistic communication, and it is arguably this implied aesthetic dimension that endows it most powerfully with affective potential. (Bendix 2000:1).

Gillard felt that 'the value of offering history as story is that it will linger in the minds of children long after the telling…once students take history into their mouths and bodies, once they put on and feel its emotions, they no longer remain passive memorizers of its facts'. (Gillard 1995:120). Stories, because they are
remembered tend to be analysed and also involve the problem solver in the narrative. If the story is pitched at the right level then it can make connections with the familiar.

And, as mentioned earlier in this report, stories from other countries and about collections and communities can cross ethnic and cultural barriers. Involvement of communities in setting up (or as a focus of) museum exhibitions, particularly when they include familiar objects and texts (and folklore), can have a very positive impact in including previously excluded sectors of the population. Use of the techniques that have been refined by the media can also help with breaking down many of the barriers, including the final one on my list, that of social class.

As John Carey noted 'for the majority of people television has immensely extended the opportunity for knowledge. It has also given the majority, in Britain, at any rate, unprecedented access to traditional culture…television must ensure that it can be understood by a wide and not necessarily highly educated audience…' (Carey 1992:215)

The British Museum has, for some time now, recognised the power of the television in influencing educational and public interest. In 1985 Michael Wood's series '*In Search of the Trojan Wars'* 'resulted in enormous interest in educational events at the Museum' (Reeve 1988:76). This included several study days on the Trojan Wars. More recently the movie 'Gladiator' saw a major exhibition, which even included a clip from the film, plus a large number of linked activities at all levels.

Michael Wood is one of a growing number of media historians, who have dominated popular history putting themselves 'centre stage' in the way of the storyteller (Hunt 2002:50). Simon Schama, though recently criticised by Will Hutton in The Observer (under the headline – 'Great television, but is it great history? (Sunday 16/06/02), has recently negotiated a £3m multi-media deal with the BBC, is the newest of this group acknowledged for his 'knowledge and power as a communicator' (The Guardian 5/8/02:8).

Whilst museums do not (always) have the assistance of the moving image in their presentations, nor the budgets offered to television programmes, they can still reach their audiences by taking note of research such as that of cognitive psychology. Sam H

Ham suggested that 'information rich in associative character and couched in meaningful context will be more accurately recognized, recalled and understood by audiences.' (Ham 1994:116). And the space to tell these stories, in their diverse ways, can be the museum gallery.

Birmingham Museum and Art Gallery's new Gallery 33 has seen twenty percent of the exhibition space given over to an area which has seating for thirty people and is fully equipped with audio-visual equipment and which 'can be used for a wide range of teaching activities, workshops, and performances….the aim (here) is to integrate oral, intellectual, and performance aspects of culture into the static artifact exhibition and to promote intercultural understanding through person-to- person contact.' (Jones 1992: 228). Alongside their exhibitions, many museums now offer exciting programmes which include aspects that might appeal to all sectors of the population including lectures, workshops, family days, children's activities and school sessions. Many museums are now also giving over some of their space to relaxation area such as café's, with the British Museums Great Court the most notable example.

3.2 Postmodernism – how it has opened the way for the narrative in museums

> *The post-modern has been described as "living without fixed laws and standards, seeing institutional authority and its dominant discourse dissolved by (contradictory and complimentary) feminist, post-colonial and other theoretically denominational thinkers." (Dawtrey et al 1996:179)*

As outlined earlier in this report, museums have over recent years, been moving away from just focussing on the objects and including more of the narrative of the individual objects and integrating them with their respective cultures. The periodisation approach (outlined in section 2.2) which has 'been regarded by postmodernist thinkers as 'false narratives' because they offer at best only a partial account of the human past, has been abandoned' (Meecham & Sheldon 2000:204). Michael Ames noted that

> 'by the1980s, after one hundred years and more of boxing others, museums…are only now beginning to hear what the objects of classification… have been saying all along; they want to be out of their boxes, they want their materials back, and they want control over their own history, its interpretation… this is surely a cornerstone of postmodernist ideology… (Ames 1991:99)

Hayden White also asserted that the postmodern is informed by a programmatic, if ironic, commitment to the return to the narrative as one of its enabling presuppositions. (Hutcheon 1989:232). Similarly, Umberto Eco noted that the postmodern recognises the past, 'since it cannot really be destroyed, because its destruction leads to silence' and that the past, 'must be revisited; but with irony, not innocently'. (Eco 1985:227).

Postmodernism has freed us to look back analytically, and even critically at the past- at the way things have been represented, to take and amalgamate ideas and methods of communication. It has recognised that 'The past is something with which we must come to terms and such a confrontation involves an acknowledgement of limitation as well as

power. We only have access to the past today through its traces – its documents, the testimony of witnesses, and other archival materials… '(Hutcheon 1989:239) from these we can construct our narratives, explanations or stories.

Today, as well as the specialists, museums are increasingly making use of professional actors, living history interpreters, performers and storytellers in their presentations and each of these can help to tell the stories of the collections. To quote Rex Ellis once more – 'The storytellers must be archaeologists, anthropologists, authors, historians, curators, community leaders, educators, politicians, folklorists, ethno-musicologists, scientists, craftsmen, performing artists, and anyone with a piece of the puzzle. And if it is to be told the way it should be told, in its totality, with all the dignity, understanding and credibility we can muster, it must be a story that embraces our common humanity. Because it is our collective story that has the greatest potential to heal, understand and traverse an increasingly divided and dynamic world'.

3.3   Conclusion - What can investment in narrative contribute to museum education?

Within this report I hope to have shown that investment in narrative can contribute to museum education in a number of ways. It is a natural human form of expression and communication, the most fundamental way that we make sense of the world, it should be an integral part of communication in museums too.

The narrative and the ancient stories formed the backbone of ancient civilisations – they structured the belief systems, and provided rules for people to live by. Using the ancient stories when looking at classical and prehistoric imagery and artefacts can only enhance the value of sessions provided by museum education staff.

The telling of Stories was important in pre-industrial Britain. We have a large collection of stories about characters from history that can inform teaching and enhance collections of British material. Stories can also give museum education staff the chance to help teachers fulfil the requirements of the National Curriculum for History and English in a setting that will provide objects to back the stories.

Folktales and folklore, which were marginalized in the past, can as a response to postmodernism be reintroduced as a means of teaching about pre-industrial beliefs. If allowed to assist with the construction of narratives within the museum education framework, communities can feel more of a sense of 'ownership of the collections'

Social inclusion is high on the agenda in museums. They need to provide equal educational opportunity for all sectors of the population. Stories, storytelling and the narrative can provide a valuable tool for assisting learning about museum collections Stories can cross cultural boundaries and can be used by museum education officers to cover diversity issues.

Postmodernism has allowed for diversity in teaching methods and display. It has allowed museums to look back at the past and change things without feeling guilt, for times and attitudes change. I believe it is now time to reintroduce the narrative, stories and folklore in to museum education and like Rex Ellis 'I believe that the power of storytelling is the one best hope we have to improve the communities we live in and the people we love.'

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