

Enough  
**By Sue Black**

They had come to her school over the years, the storytellers. Standing at the front of the room they could make her classmates laugh and smile and chant. Standing at the front of the room, they could make her dream. So when she got the chance, she knew she had to try. Fear would not hold her back from standing in front of 100 first graders and telling her story. After all, how hard could it be? They made it look easy. What was the worst that could happen?

She knew her story by heart because she had practiced. A lot! -- alone in her bedroom, in front of the mirror, for her sister, the dog and the cat, with friends, in the back seat of the car on the way to soccer, in the shower. But, suddenly she wondered - had she practiced enough?

At this last minute, her stomach was in knots, her mouth was dry and it was hard to take a deep breath. For the moment, her mind had failed her; her story was not there. Instead, the questions that kept swirling through her mind had shifted in tone. How hard would this be? What was the worst that would happen?

And those questions had been joined by new ones. Who did she think she was to do this? She wasn't like them -- the real storytellers. What was she thinking when she said she would?

She wasn't one of the smartest kids in the class; others got better grades. She was shy so she didn't raise her hand and she hoped the teacher wouldn't call on her. She wasn't one of the popular girls; no one pushed and shoved in the lunchroom trying to sit next to her; her mom left early for work every day so her sister tried to braid her hair but it was never just right. What did she have to offer that would make her "enough"?

And the story, oh why had she chosen that story? It wasn't even unusual or one the first graders had never heard before. Someone had probably read it to them or they had seen it on TV. What did she have to offer that would make her story "enough"?

Enough of those thoughts! The first graders were filing in. Their teachers were directing them to sit in straight rows, cross their legs, put their hands in their laps. She heard her name and all eyes looked to her. The students and their teachers were applauding politely, welcoming her to the front of the room. It was time. It was *her* time.

"Once upon a time" she said, pushing the nervous thoughts aside. And so it began, her unique telling of The Three Bears. She had spent so much time alone with those three bears that she knew them well. Papa Bear always spoke with his eyebrows knit together and his hands on his hips. Mama Bear seemed to always flutter her eyelashes, tilt her head to one side, and sigh as she folded her hands under her chin. Baby Bear was a spoiled little bear, selfish and impatient and unwilling to wait his turn or share. She took those first graders to a little house deep in the woods far away from their school. They felt the hot porridge burn their tongues. They heard a cracking sound and felt the floor hitting their backsides as the chair collapsed. They felt the soft pillow against the sides of their heads, and they fell asleep.

The first time they laughed, she looked surprised. The second time they laughed, she stood a little straighter. After that, when they laughed she laughed too. She realized it was a story they were telling together -- her words, their imaginations painting pictures. The pictures she carried in her heart, touching their hearts.

Her story ended. Looking around the room she could see....

It wasn't enough! They were clapping and cheering. They wanted her to tell another one!

One hundred first graders were looking at her with smiles and anticipation. They wanted her to take them to another time and place again. They wanted her heart to reach out and touch theirs again. They wanted to be just like that smart, beautiful, smiling, fifth grade storyteller who had helped them to dream.