Let's hear that story one more time! Helping students to become more confident in a public speaking class through a simple story-telling exercise.

Goal
To increase student confidence in public speaking.

Learning Objective
To give students a voice and creative outlet in a public speaking course.

Directions
The instructor will choose a story (preferably a children’s story that is available online with illustrations). Students will be given access to the chosen story – via link to the website that hosts the story. The instructions are to tell the story in any way that the student sees fit. The students are given one week to prepare, but are encouraged to spend no more than an hour organizing and preparing for the speech.

a. Any additional rules or guidelines can be set by the instructor. For example, students may be instructed to include the main characters and also include the word “delicious” in the story.

b. I find that this exercise works best when few instructions are given. It allows the students to think creatively without the added pressure of strict guidelines.

c. I also do not grade this assignment and count this exercise towards their participation grade.

Here is an example of the assignment that I give to my students:

Visit www.sniffyandfluffy.com. Tell this story to the class in any way that you see fit. You must keep the main characters, Sniffy and Fluffy, and you must use the phrase “nutritious lunch” during your presentation.

Spend no more than one hour preparing for this speech.

Be Creative! This can be done individually or in pairs.
Examples of student submissions

Most students use PowerPoint to deliver the speech. They will often:

- **Tell the story in a different language.** College students today often speak more than one language, and English may, in fact, be a second language for them. This exercise allows them to tell a story in a language of their choice.
  - Languages have included Spanish, Bengali, Farsi, Uzbek, Chinese, Japanese, Hebrew, French, ‘Jamaican,’ Korean, and Romanian.
  - How do we understand what they are saying? Well, we will hear the same story approximately twenty five times in one class session, so the class is usually able to decipher the language and the story with no problems.

- **Perform the speech in a creative way.**
  - **Dance.** Two students teamed up in my summer course and told the story in Chinese while dancing through various parts of the story.
  - **Hand Puppets.** Students have used stuffed animals and hand-made puppets.
  - **Video.** This semester, I had quite a few interesting presentations, including a youtube video with students acting out the story in a fun and lighthearted manner.
  - **Singing and Rapping.** Some will use their singing voices and tell the story as a rap or love song.

- Keep the story and change the pictures
- Change the story and keep the pictures
- Change the order of the pictures

Feedback:

I have been performing this exercise with my students for about four years, and it seems that these presentations become increasingly more creative with each passing semester.

On student evaluations, they often mention that this was one of their favorite sections of the course and that it allows them to show their creative abilities to the class.

After this exercise, the class is generally more relaxed and comfortable when delivering future speeches.