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## This Is Not a Fable: Using Storytelling in a College Classroom to Enhance Student Learning

Diann C. Moorman

University of Georgia, [dmoorman@fcs.uga.edu](mailto:dmoorman@fcs.uga.edu)

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# USING STORY TELLING IN THE CLASSROOM



TO ENHANCE STUDENT LEARNING

- ▶ “No doubt about it, the best speakers are good storytellers. The best writers are good storytellers. The best leaders are good storytellers. The best teachers and trainers and coaches are good storytellers”.

**Forbes Magazine,  
2014**



**Grandpa, Grandma, Carol Lee  
and a dog named Damnit**

## **I come from a long line of tall-tale- tellers....**

*"Children's and Household Tales"* is a collection of German fairy tales first published in 1812 by the Grimm brothers, Jacob and Wilhelm. The collection is commonly known in English as *Grimm's Fairy Tales*.

- Hanzel and Gretel
- Sleeping Beauty
- Cinderella
- Rapunzel
- Snow White



## WALT DISNEY

“That’s what  
**STORYTELLERS**  
do. We restore  
order with  
**IMAGINATION.**  
We instill **HOPE**  
again and again.”

Walt Disney in "Saving Mr. Banks"

# What Storytellers do.....

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- ▶ Stories powerfully connect us to our students.
- ▶ When we share our own real-life stories or the stories of others (Stories to provide an example or offer some form of proof) our students feel that they get to know us as real people – people who have lives outside the Ivory Tower, people who have struggled with similar problems (both academic and personal) and who have figured out how to overcome them—or are working to overcome them.

# Tools required.....

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- ▶ As a learning tool, storytelling can encourage students to explore their own experiences and can heighten a student's ability to communicate thoughts and feelings in an eloquent manner.
- ▶ No “special equipment—no clickers—no laptops—no Top Hat—nothing” beyond the imagination and the power of listening and speaking is needed to create lasting images.



# With that said.....

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“I know only one thing  
about the technologies  
that await us in the  
future: we will find  
ways to tell stories  
with them.”

Jason Ohler



Jason Ohler: Digital Story Teller....advocate for educational technology



## Storytelling Embraces Technology.....

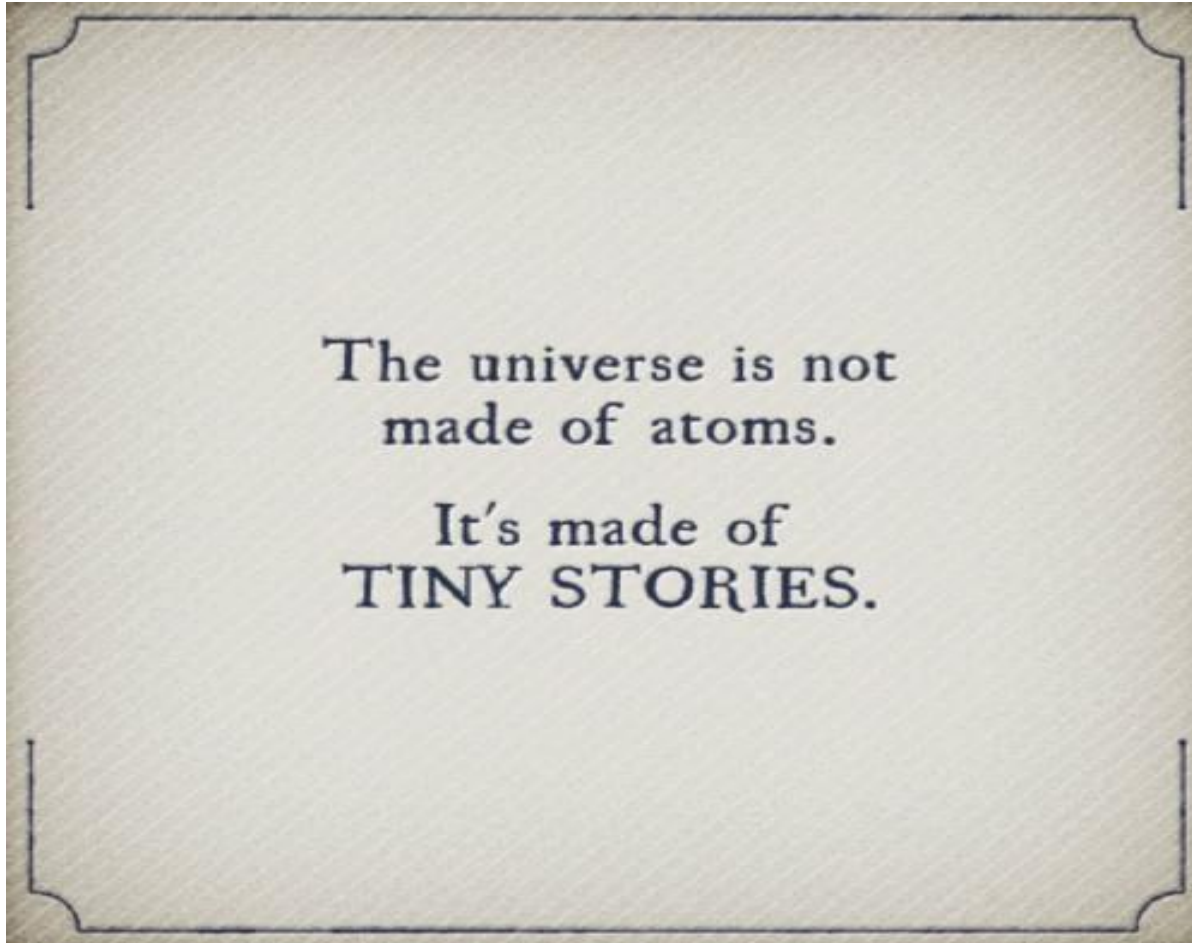
- ▶ Video games are more capable than any other medium of immersing the audience. We can build worlds that could never exist in reality, interact with them, and become a part of them in a way that other mediums could wish to surpass (Dexomega, 2014).

To that  
end.....



A Love Story

## Storytelling Transcends Majors.....



### EINSTEIN

“If you want your children to be intelligent, read them fairy tales. If you want them to be more intelligent, read them more, fairy tales.”

Storytelling is our past.....

Come then, and let us  
pass a leisure hour in  
storytelling, and our  
story shall be the  
education of our  
heroes.

*Plato*

meetville.com



# And our future.....

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- ▶ TED Talks have carried that practice forward and their world-class speakers are expected to speak in simple narratives, using stories and powerful imagery to convey their message.



# Storytelling is research based....

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- ▶ Neuroscience is discovering that the brain is wired to organize, retain and access information through storytelling and that every relationship experience and object is recorded in the mind as a story. (Caine, et al., 2005)
- ▶ Brain based learning theory is built upon the structure of how the brain receives and interprets information (Dwyer, 1998)

- 
- ▶ According to the authors of Brain/Mind Learning Principles in Action (Caine, R., Caine, G., McClintic, C., & Klimic, C., 2005), educators must employ three elements of brain-based learning in order for *effective learning* to take place:
  - ▶ **I) Relaxed Alertness:** An atmosphere of low threat and one that creates a sense of community contribute to a state of *relaxed* alertness and learning.



# Maybe a little too relaxed 😊

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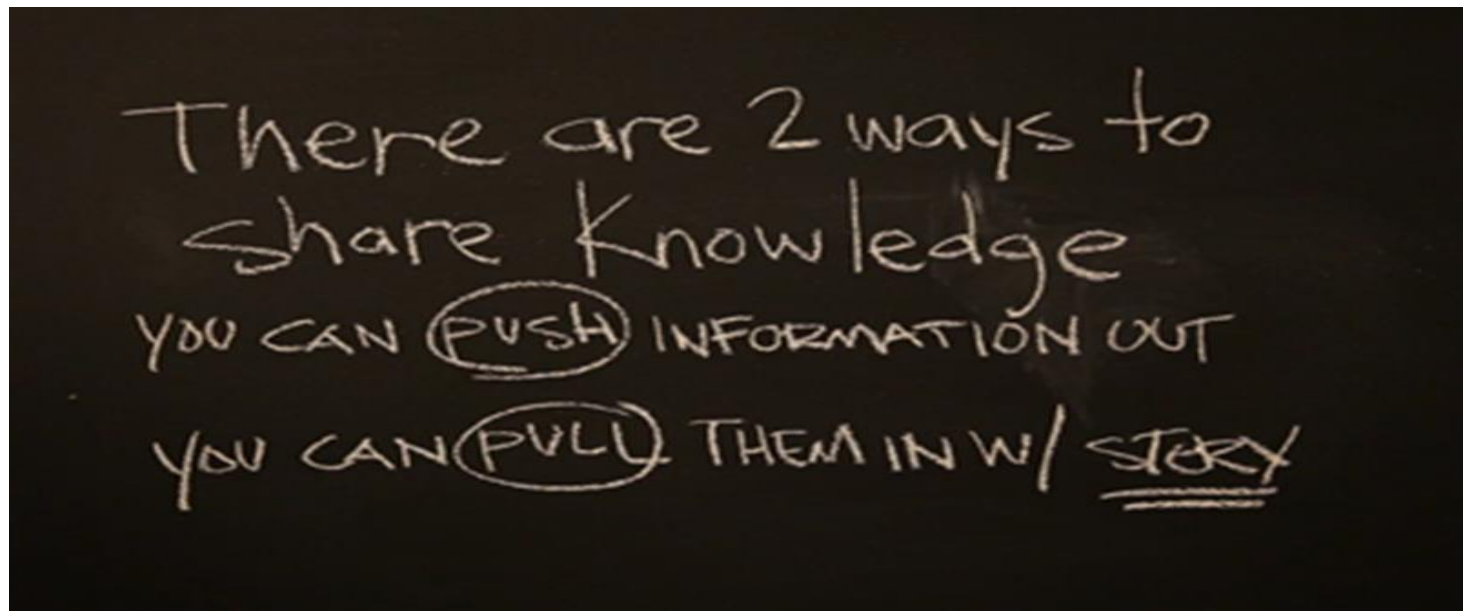


## Relaxed and Alert: Campfire stories (and smores)

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- ▶ **2) Planned Immersion:** The creation of an environment where students are exposed to or engaged in “experiences” relative to the objectives of the course or particular lesson.



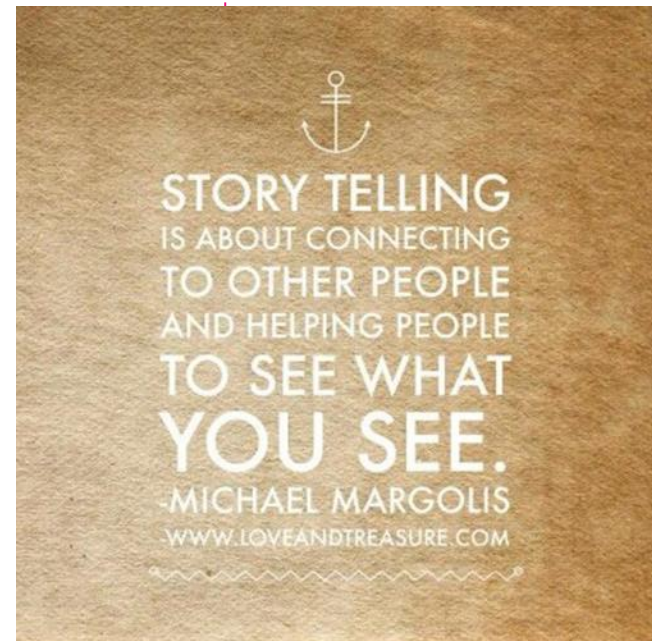


## Lesson: FRAUD!!!

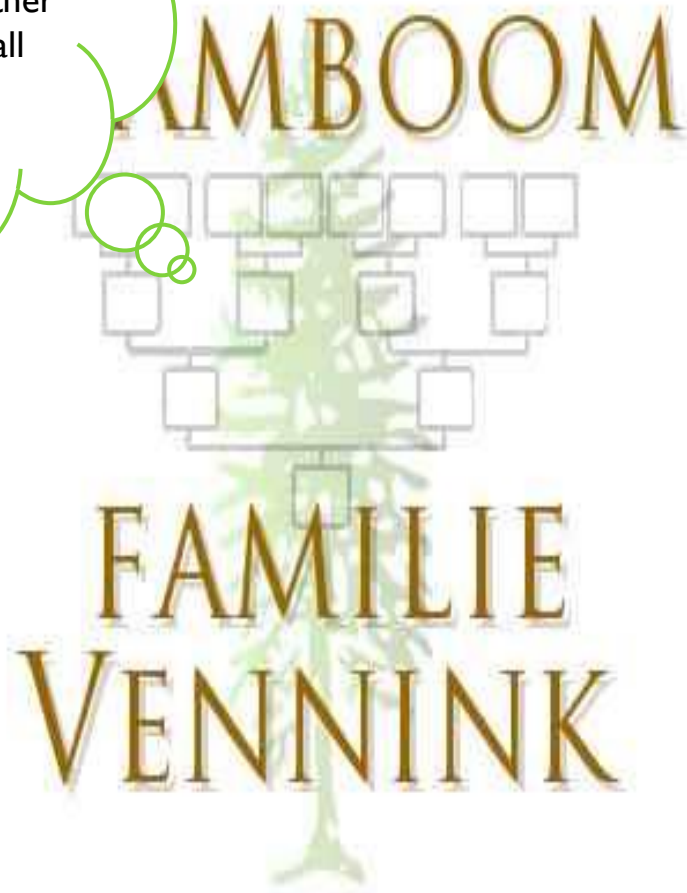
Two Truths and One Lie!

- I have a black belt in Tae Kwon Do
- I have six sisters and two brothers
- I have two degrees from ISU

- ▶ **3) Active Processing:** Utilization of learning methods that encourage the students to *reflect and integrate* the information in a manner that is *personally meaningful* (p.233).



RIP: Father,  
Mother, Brother  
Dean...and all  
my other  
relatives



**Lesson:**  
**Externalities (when  
a purchase you  
make is bad for  
those around you)**

...smoking bad for the person  
and also = 2<sup>nd</sup> hand smoke.



# TIPS

- ▶ Create an “inciting incident”
  - ▶ This stirs curiosity—we are hard wired to be curious animals
- ▶ Be the main character
  - ▶ The closer to you the story hits; the more likely the students will recall it
- ▶ Tell stories about stuff you like
  - ▶ Tie it to the course content...I like peppermint ice cream so it is a theme 😊
- ▶ Pacing is key
  - ▶ Pause.....for emphasis!

# TIPS

- ▶ Evoke VAK
  - ▶ Stimulate visual, auditory, kinesthetic; when the mind starts to imagine all these parts of the brain light up!
- ▶ Like Chubby Checker....give 'em a twist.....
  - ▶ The unexpected or a cliff hanger.....HOLD THEM OVER UNTIL THE NEXT CLASS PERIOD!! (they haaaaatttttteeeee this!!!)
- ▶ Avoid the “moral of the story” types of endings.....
  - ▶ Let the story resonate with each individual; don't tell them what they should take away from the story.



# EVIDENCE THAT IT WORKS FOR ME

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## **FHCE 3100 NO STORIES**

- ▶ Same course
- ▶ 295 Undergraduate Students
- ▶ Fall 2013
- ▶ Miller Learning Center
- ▶ Me
- ▶ 61% Males
- ▶ 16% are my majors

## **FHCE 3100 STORIES**

- ▶ Same course
- ▶ 287 Undergraduate Students
- ▶ Fall 2013
- ▶ Miller Learning Center
- ▶ Me
- ▶ 57% Males
- ▶ 14% are my majors

# EVIDENCE THAT IT WORKS FOR ME

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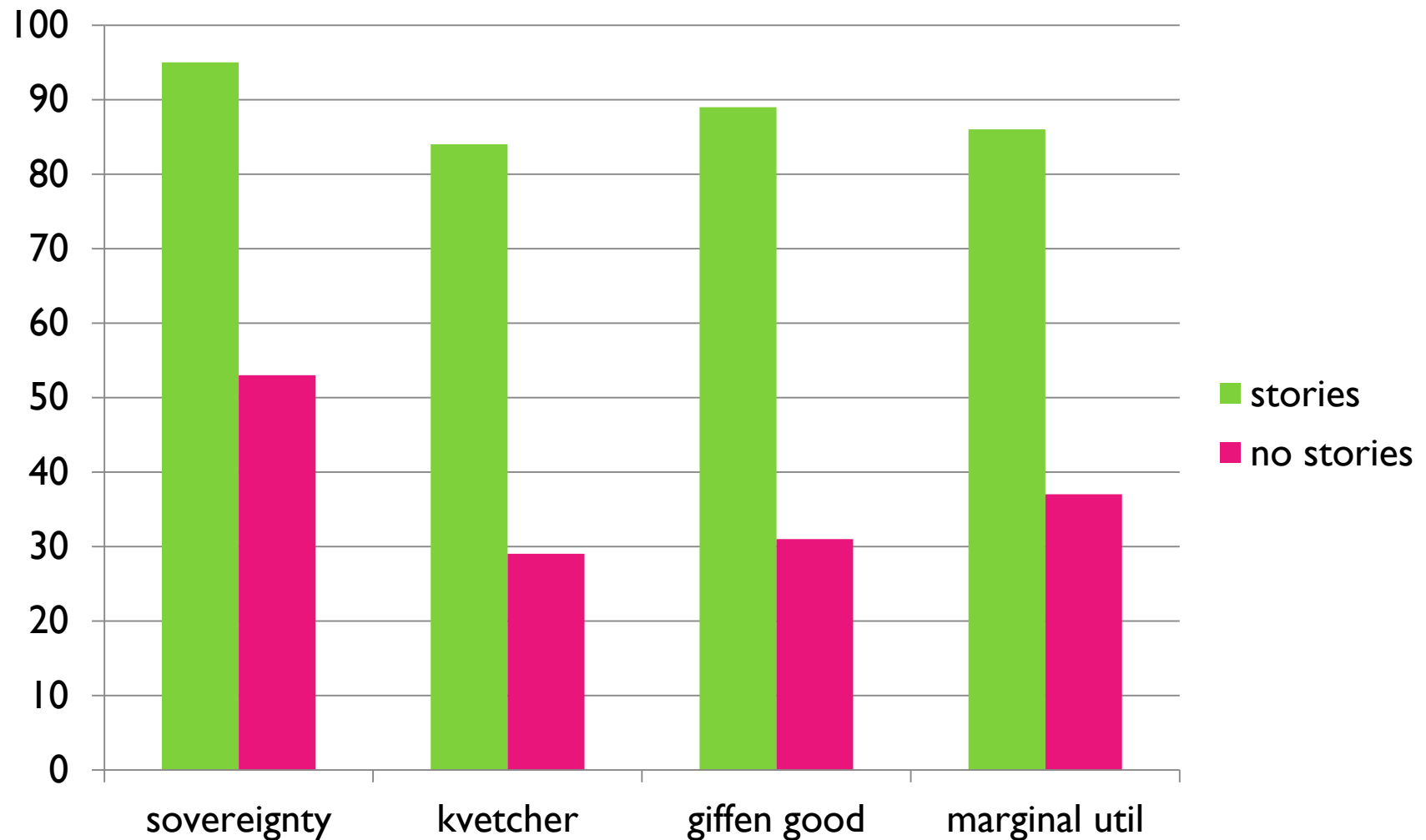
## FHCE 3100 NO STORIES

- ▶ Exam answer correct:
- ▶ Consumer Sovereignty: 53%
  - ▶ Determine what makes it or not in market place
- ▶ Kvetcher: 29%
  - ▶ Person who complains for you
- ▶ Giffen Good: 31%
  - ▶ Price increases, buy more
- ▶ Law of Diminishing Marginal Utility: 37%
  - ▶ Each unit equal less satisfaction

## FHCE 3100 STORIES

- ▶ Exam answer correct:
- ▶ Consumer Sovereignty: 95%
  - ▶ Peppermint ice cream
- ▶ Kvetcher: 84%
  - ▶ Crazy baby sister
- ▶ Giffen Good: 89%
  - ▶ Wino buys more Boone's Farm
- ▶ Law of Diminishing Marginal Utility 86%
  - ▶ 1, 2, 3 bowls of peppermint ice cream

# Crosstab Results (stories by correct answer)



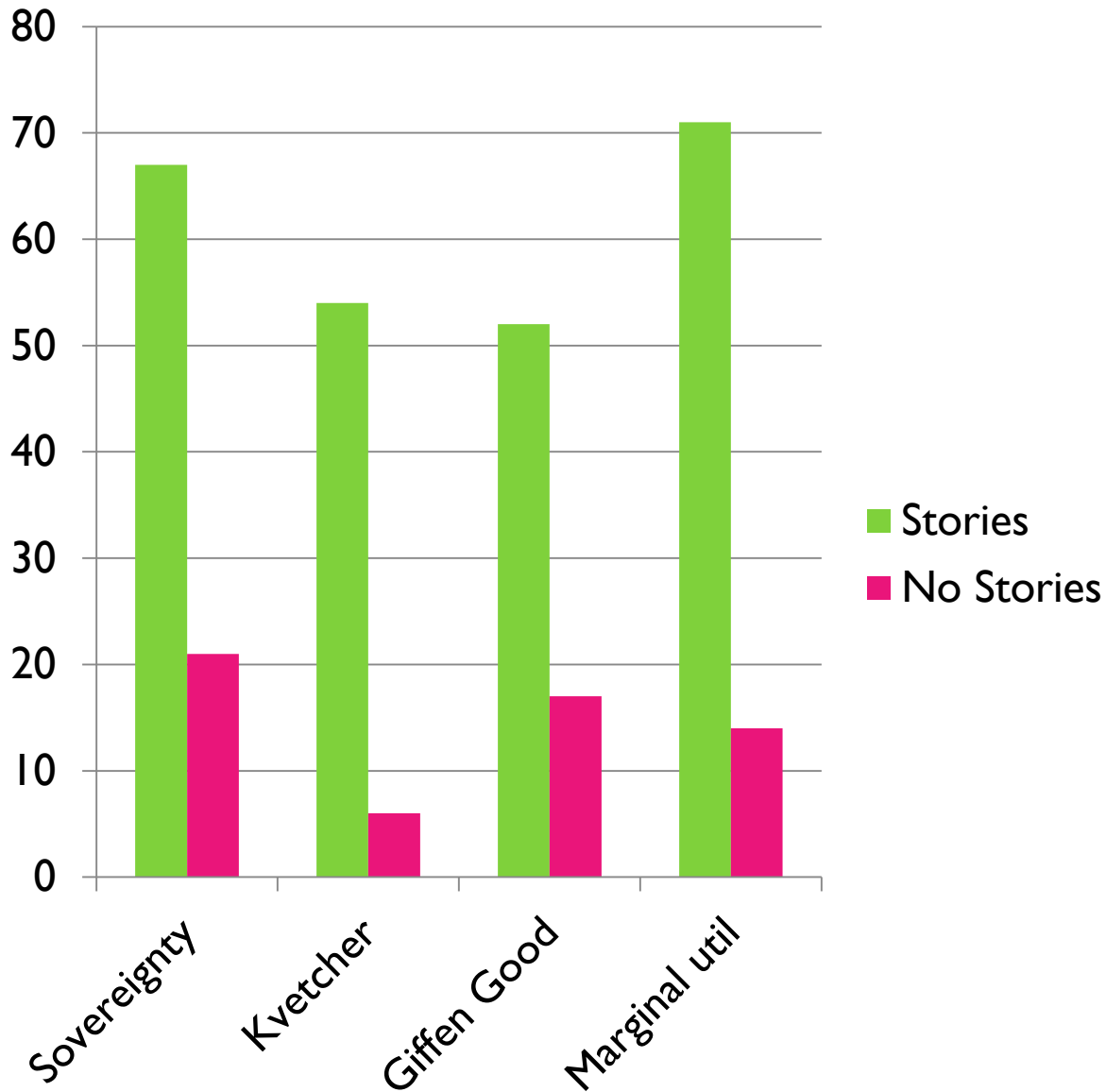
1.5 years later: concept retention?

SPRING 15.....FHCE 5100 class: on-line quiz tool consumer econ assessment.

- ▶ Consumer Sovereignty: 67%
  - ▶ Peppermint ice cream
- ▶ Kvetcher: 54%
  - ▶ Crazy baby sister
- ▶ Giffen Good: 52%
  - ▶ Wino buys more Boone's Farm
- ▶ Law of Diminishing Marginal Utility 71%
  - ▶ 1, 2, 3 bowls of peppermint ice cream

## WHO KNEW?

I truly just thought I was giving them and myself a break from LEARNING by telling stories!!!



## Grandma Miller:

You throw enough cooked spaghetti at the walls and some of it has to stick 😊

## UNSOLICITED STUDENT RESPONSE

- ▶ Dr. Moorman is great! She explains everything and is very helpful when asked questions. She includes real life applications, so I felt like I really took something away from the class, not just enough info to pass the tests. ***She's funny and tries to engage students with stories.***

12/03/2013



Confession, yes I  
read the comments!



# My Poor Husband ☹️

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- ▶ Professor Moorman is a great professor. She makes the material interesting and relates it to students' lives. **She tells funny stories about her family (related to the material) to keep people interested.**
- ▶ 3/5/2010



# I guess...if its not broke—don't fix it!

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**We must teach the way students learn.**

*—Pedro Nogeura, Professor of Education, NYU*