

FINAL REPORT

WWO Orphan Ranger Program: Addis Ababa, Ethiopia, June 10th-27th

Submitted by Helen Wheelock, Director, CUNY/Creative Arts Team Early Learning Program

REPORT SUMMARY

From June 10th to June 27th, 2011, I traveled from New York City to Ethiopia to serve as a guest teaching artist at the World Wide Orphans Academy. My in-country supervisors were Dr. Sophie Mengistu, Country Director and Makseba “Mimi” Asfaw, Deputy Country Director. My primary contact at the Academy was Ato Berhane, the Director of the school.

While in Addis, I spent eight days on-site at the WWOA. During my time at the Academy, my objectives were to:

- 1) Model interactive drama strategies that help to expand and develop children’s English language skills
- 2) Help WWOA teachers identify how these teaching strategies support their students’ learning
- 3) Train teachers in the use of these techniques in their classroom and
- 4) Provide documentation to support the sustainability of the trainings

SERVICES PROVIDED

At the Academy, I provided

- 30 in-class workshops servicing the entire school population of 240 students
- 1 all-day professional development in Interactive Storytelling for 22 teachers and staff members.
- Both hard and electronic copies of CUNY/CAT handouts in support of the teacher training
- Video and photographic documentation of in-class work and the professional development for staff to refer to for future implementation

NARRATIVE

I arrived in Ethiopia mid-evening on Saturday June 11th. The flight from New York to Addis Ababa is long, but rather painless – especially if you’re fortunate enough to fly Lufthansa. Going through customs was straightforward as was the on-site money exchange. I was met at airport by WWO drivers and quickly delivered to my hotel.

While in Addis I stayed at the Edna Hotel. It was a lovely hotel with a delightful staff and a delicious (if somewhat limited) breakfast and dinner menu. It was also a convenient spot in that

it was close to Des' Village and allowed me to join the students on their bus trip to school every morning. This ensured I arrived at WWOA at 8am, giving me ample time to either meet with Director Berhane and Assistant Director Cholachew or visit with the students. When I wasn't teaching, I spent my time with Ato Berhane discussing the work, the students and education. I ate lunch with the students and, when school ended at 4pm, I joined them on bus home.

Initially, I hoped to be able to work with the students and teachers for 11 days (10 days in the classroom, one Saturday all-day professional development). Because the State moved up end-of-the-year testing, my work time needed to be somewhat truncated.

WORKSHOP CONTENT

During my in-class work I led interactive storytellings based on the following picture books:

- ***No Dinner!*** by Jessica Soulhami – a story set in India about a quick thinking grandmother. Reminiscent of the classic tale, “Little Red Riding Hood,” the grandmother outwits several hungry beasts while traveling to visit her granddaughter. The granddaughter’s clever idea almost gets her grandmother home safely, but ultimately the “crafty, crafty, crafty” grandmother is the one who rescues herself.
- ***Ruby in Her Own Time***, by Jonathan Emmett – a story about a young duck who does everything at her own pace and how her slightly anxious family learns to honor her learning process.
- ***Kitten’s First Full Moon*** by Kevin Henkes – a story about a hungry young kitten who believes the moon is a bowl of milk, and her misadventures as she tries to reach it. A story about youth, determination, and knowing when it’s time to go home.

An Interactive Storyteller uses storybooks as a starting point and transforms them into an oral storytelling. They then add specific “points of participation” that invite the students to participate in the storytelling both verbally and physically. Depending on the age and language skills of the students, these invitations can be teacher-directed (“Let’s all roar like a lion!”) or student centered (“What other scary animals might there be in the jungle?”).

After the storytelling, the picture book is shared with the students and, as it’s read they look for how the two stories are the “same” or “different.”

During my in-class and out of class time I also introduced the students to several name games, hand games and call-and-response chants and songs. These activities enhanced their verbal and physical literacy. They also served to reinforce the interactive teaching methods I was modeling. It was exciting to observe both the teachers and students independently using the games in and out of the classrooms.

The first week I told two stories: *No Dinner!* and *Ruby in Her Own Time*. In order to service all the classrooms I worked with the second and third grade English Language classes on Monday and Wednesday – a total of six classes a day. On Tuesday and Thursday I worked with the kindergarten and first grade classes – also six sessions a day. Friday was to be a “catchall” day

where we could assess on the impact of the work to decide how to move forward but, unfortunately, I was laid low by a stomach bug.

On the Saturday between my two weeks, I led an all-day professional development to train the teachers in the interactive strategies they had observed. The workshop was required for all the English Language teachers and Global Arts teachers, but was open to any other interested parties. 22 teachers attended the session, including Ato Berhane, Ato Cholachew, and two teachers who hadn't had any opportunity to observe me in action. Initially I thought that the majority of teachers would have to leave at lunch, but all stayed for the entire session.

The exam schedule meant my work during the second week was limited to Monday and Tuesday. Which classes I would work with and what kind of work I would so was to be dictated by the teachers' goals. I was sensitive to the fact that they had to prepare their students for their Wednesday final exams and it important to me that the teachers understood that I was there to not interrupt or interfere, but support them. At a teacher's request, I worked in three third grade classes modeling an interactive version of the story "*Foolish Dog*" as well as *Kitten's First Full Moon*. Also by request, I visited three of the Kindergarten/1st grade classes to lead some of the call and response songs as well as a shortened version of *Kitten's First Moon*.

PLEASE SEE THE ATTACHED JOURNAL ENTRIES FOR A DETAILED DESCRIPTION OF THE PROJECT, STUDENTS & TEACHERS RESPONSES AS WELL AS PERSONAL REFLECTIONS AND OBSERVATIONS.

NON-WWOA ACTIVITIES

Des' Village, Tuesday, June 14th and Friday, June 24th

I had two opportunities to visit the WWO orphanage known as Des' Village. The first was on Tuesday, June 14th with the WWO's Sarah as my guide. While she did interviews with some children, I had time to "hang" with the others outside. We sang, told stories, danced and played games. Even though it was only my second day working with the students, I was intrigued to note that some of the residents who were too old to attend WWOA had learned some of the games.

The second time I visited the Village was on Friday, June 24, with Marie, a Ranger visiting from Mt. Sinai Hospital's School of Dentistry. We hung out with the children, shared our personal observations and, as we toured the orphanage, brainstormed creative ways she might implement her dental hygiene goals.

Birding in Akaki, Sunday, June 19th

One of my personal passions is bird watching, so I was particularly pleased to learn that Ethiopia an international birding area. Due to the generosity of the WWO's Million, I was able to take a Sunday morning tour to visit some of the countryside outside of Addis. It was a wonderful opportunity to see some of rural Ethiopia as well as catch glimpses of some of the extraordinary birdlife the country offers.

Wild for You – owner Milka, Wednesday, June 22nd

While unexpected events prevented Sarah from serving as my “Addis Tour Guide,” one of the gifts she offered me was the introduction to the store “Wild for You.” As I spent time perusing the store’s beautiful offerings, I was befriended the store’s owner, Milka. We spent a delightful amount of time talking, drinking coffee and, well... other adult other beverages. I was particular honored to be invited to her home where I shared dinner with her friends and young daughter.

Clinic Visit/Tour/Meet with Dr. Sophie Wednesday, June 22

My visit with Dr. Sophie and tour of the clinic made one thing perfectly clear: The WWO has a powerful triangle of support working in Ethiopia. The clinic is impressive not simply because of its facilities, but because of the community-centered ethos that guides it. That ethos is reflected in the care reflected at the orphanage as well as at the Academy. Considering the challenges faced by the population and those who wish to serve it, the WWO has developed a small, yet powerfully strong beacon of hope and change.

During our meeting, Dr. Sophie and I discussed some of the content and structure of the workshops they were going to lead with care givers. I also met Marie, a medical Ranger scheduled to work with the WWO for the next two months.

Downtown Addis/National Museum, Thursday, June 23rd

Having read Abraham Verghese’s *Cutting for Stone* as well as Phillip Brigg’s essential *Bradt Travel Guide for Ethiopia*, I was eager to visit the National Museum. Mimi and Dr. Sophie were kind enough to provide a driver, and I got my wish. A small, intimate museum, it was delightful to . I also appreciated the expert guidance of a local college student studying history. Knowledgeable and personable, he clearly has a future in the field.

Closing Lunch with Dr. Sophie , Mimi and Marie, Friday, June 24th

Dr. Sophie and Mimi celebrated the conclusion of my Ranger duty, and the beginning of Marie’s, by treating us to a lovely traditional Ethiopian lunch.

SUGGESTIONS

For future rangers:

I understand that everyone prepares for travel differently. Some study their destination deeply, others simply want to arrive and experience. That being said, I can’t recommend strongly enough that visitors to Ethiopia read *Cutting for Stone* and the *Bradt Guide to Ethiopia*. (I especially liked reading *Cutting for Stone* while in Addis.) Both books offer invaluable insights to the history and people of the world you’ll be entering. The Piazza, the shoe shiners and the ripe smell of eucalyptus will all make sense.

For the program:

Timeline Checklist: I think all the preparation materials the WWO were thorough and accurate. I might suggest that there is a one page timeline checklist that identifies ongoing deadlines for

paperwork and medical needs. Check in times with the home country sponsor to discuss itineraries, agendas and supply needs could also be included.

Hotel: Clearly, if the Edna Hotel is going to become the WWO's "official" hotel, contact information will need to be updated. It would also be lovely to have a "cheat sheet" of the local area – where to eat, where to get supplies, etc.

Supervision: I think it would be helpful to clarify the relationship between Rangers and their in-country supervisors. Dr. Sophie, Mimi and Ato Berhane were superb hosts – I simply didn't know how often they (Dr. Sophie and Mimi) needed (or wanted) me to check in.

For the work being done in the country:

Library: Space is at a premium at the WWOA, but I wonder if some rearranging within the Library might make it even more welcoming to students. Specifically, drawing on examples I've seen in other schools, I might suggest that some of the desks and chairs might be removed and replaced by rugs and large, comfortable pillows. This could encourage students to sit together and share books. In fact, perhaps some floor level book cases might allow the students easier access to books – books that didn't need to be signed out, but could be picked up on impulse.

It's clear the current librarian is very organized and respectful of the materials he supervises. I understand there are discussions of hiring an assistant and wonder if searching for someone who has a background in active learning techniques might provide a nice compliment.

CONCLUSION

I would like to believe I made an impact on the teachers and students with whom I worked. I certainly know they had an impact on me. I can't measure the "success" of the program objectively. I can only reflect on what I saw: In the classroom the children were engaged and enthusiastic. The teachers were willing participants and pro-actively followed up on suggested extension activities. I know some took the initiative to spend their prep periods doing more observations of me in action. In the school halls and yard I saw students teaching hand games to teachers and teachers teaching them to fellow teachers.

When I reflect with my co-workers about my time in Ethiopia, I keep on drawing parallels to our work in New York City, the most essential being this: a community of children in need being served by a community of adults deeply invested in their development. Neither language nor ego was a barrier to their will to learn whatever would help their students. I applaud, and am humbled, by the generosity of spirit I encountered. I would welcome the opportunity to continue building on our collaboration.

APPENDIX 1: Daily Journal

Day 1 Teaching, Monday June 13th

It's early yet, but I think my lasting impressions of Addis will be sheet metal (actually, I've since discovered it's corrugated tin) and diesel exhaust.

Lots of "little" cars running the streets, and most are of a "certain age." Saw a beautiful VW bug that looked to be circa 1975. Streets are lined with people walking and small stores built of misc. items, though the main building material is sheet metal. Often it's painted bright colors. When they open up, it's hard to see what's inside -- except when it's a butcher. Disconcerting to see a huge slab of some sort of animal stretched along the wall with no refrigeration. Saw piles of mangos and tomatoes as well as ears of corn perched on their noses in the shape of a little house.

On the way to school, four cows and some goats walking the road. On the way back, goats, sheep, donkeys.

Monday started bright and early: 6:45am wake-up call that came too soon after a restless night of sleeping. Dreams inspired, I'm sure, by jet lag flavored with a little performance anxiety and set to the song of dogs barking in the distance, kept me tossing.

A breakfast of porridge was a good antidote to a gray sky that threatened rain. About 7:45am, Million, the driver of the bus that picks the children up at the orphanage, popped into the hotel lobby and escorted me to the chariot de jour. It's an extended mini-bus crammed to the gills with children. They all seem tiny, sitting on laps, standing or draped over each other -- let's not tell the Transportation secretary about this, shall we? There are 60 or so coming from the orphanage. Not all 60 are in the bus. I think. Perhaps I'll try a head count tomorrow.

For all the children it contains, the bus is not raucous, nor is there a lot of pushing and shoving. After I get picked up -- to some curious stares -- we head to the school, which is 20-25 minutes or so away, moving up hills. Roll call is taken, and students respond "abet" (or something close to that). There are some giggles when they ask me my name and discover that I have the same name as one of the students. I entertained them by spelling my name aloud as I used sign language. They were fascinated and we spent some time mastering the letters. (During the school day, students came up to me and asked me to "Spell it." One even asked me to spell his name.)

Their new school (they just moved into this year) is farther away from students than the previous building. But they needed to find something that fit their expanding student body. There are 240 or so students, picked up from various centers and transported to the school. I'm not totally clear on the process of acceptance to the school, but it starts with the orphans first (about 60+, as I mentioned), then moves to students recommended by health centers, then expands to include members of the community who are struggling financially.

For anyone who knows anything about Ethiopia, that is a LARGE subset.

Students are provided uniforms, lunch, snack and educational materials. They hang around the

schoolyard before the official start time (school runs 9am-4pm). There are exercises (some led by the children) and singing. Yes, they know "The Wheels of the Bus Go Round and Round." The Director, Ato Berhane (who is an extraordinary man) was surprised when I recognized a song they were all singing. "It's in Amharic," (the dominant language of Ethiopia) he explained. "Odd," I thought. "I know this song." It was Old Lang Syne.

The school day moved inside after the singing of the national anthem and the raising of the Ethiopian flag.

I met with Dir. Berhane and his Assistant Director Ato Cholachew at 9am to figure out the schedule. Aware that the State had pushed exams up a week and that that meant I might have less time with the students week two, I said I'd do six classes a day in order to hit all the 2nd and 3rd grade classes. (I, or at least my throat, may regret that by Friday) A plan was made, and I started my rounds at 9:45. Luckily there was a tea break after the first two classes and a lunch/coffee break after the second two.

The school is neat and space is tight. The second and third graders sit behind wooden desks that remind me of something Ikea may have put together. There doesn't seem to be a ton of books and supplies but, of course, I was coming in to English language classes and interrupting (or disrupting) their regular work. It felt very "old school" (or, at least, I think I'm flashing back to my 4th experiences) because when I made my entrances (I was escorted by teachers, Atos (Mr.) Berhane or Cholachew) all the students popped up and said "Good morning, Miss." Of course, if I said "Good morning," they all popped up again and said "Good morning, Miss." Yes, there were some moments of intended and unintended humor. <g>

The students are clearly structured -- a word seems more appropriate than disciplined, because that word seems to lack any warmth or generosity. Like most students, at first they were hesitant to answer questions, but were eager to call-and-respond. Obviously, the fact that English is their second language has a major impact on the kind of participation they engage in, but it's equally obvious that they don't "talk over/with teacher." Usually students in NYC pick up the call and repeat phrases and start to recognize my physical signals as an invitation to join in on my call - to the point where we actually say a word of phrase in together, not repeated. That didn't happen as much today. They did join me, but we almost always had to repeat.

I told the story of "No, Dinner!" which is about a skinny, old lady who is traveling though the jungle to visit her granddaughter. There she will eat, eat, eat and get nice and fat. Trouble is, she encounters three huge, scary animals who want to eat her up. Fortunately, even though she is terrified by them, the old lady is still very smart. She tricks the animals by saying, "Okay, you can eat me now, but look at me, I'm nothing but skin and bones. Wait until after I visit my granddaughter, when I'll be nice and fat."

The animals fall for it, the old lady gets to her granddaughter's house, stuffs her face, starts for home and realizes, "Oh, oh! Someone's waiting to eat me up." Her clever granddaughter has a trick of her own to help get grandma home safe – cut off the top of an enormous pumpkin, clean it out, stuff grandma inside and roll past all the animals, safe and sound. It works brilliantly as

two of the three animals stop the rolling pumpkin and ask it, "Have you seen an old lady?" "Nooooooo," squeaks the old lady, "I'm just a pumpkin, roooolling home."

Unfortunately, the final animal catches the old lady laughing about having tricked him, pulls off the top of the pumpkin, and out pops her head. "Give me your leg so I can eat you up!" Sure she's sunk, the old lady reaches in, only to find her long skinny walking stick. Quickly, she puts her sock and shoe on the end of the stick and, as she reaches it out to the beast, warns, "Here's my leg, but I told you, I'm still skin and bones." The beast chomps down hard on the stick, only to howl in pain, having broken several teeth. "Owwww! Now I have to go to the dentist!" "That will teach YOU to mess with a smart, old lady!"

After six sessions, it's hard to remember specific details of what the children added to the story, but I'll always remember the young boy who identified one of the friendly jungle animals as a "Rrrrrrrrrrrabbit!" The scary animals the children offered included the regular offerings – lion, tiger, snake, with a few leopards, hyenas and a random fox and elephant thrown in. I was relieved to hear one "dinosaur." When the old lady feasted, there was plenty of pizza, fish, sweet or spicy chicken, bananas and, of course, lots of cake and ice cream.

Either the Director or Assistant Director stepped in to observe all six sessions. They also had teachers who had free blocks step in to observe. It seemed that all but one teacher was willing to participate in the storytelling. Perhaps it was not so surprising that they seemed as shy as the students. No surprise, most of the teachers are young women.

The sessions are 40 minutes with no time between classes, so I didn't share the actually storybook the telling is based on. I will see what happens on Wed when I return to today's classrooms. I'll bring the book to do a classic NYC "compare/contrast" with the telling, but I don't know how that will be received. Should I do a quick re-tell to highlight their recall? Will they want to look at the book? How will the fact that they're all sitting at desks (there's no rug space like there is in most NYC schools) impact sharing the book? (Though, it's been fun to use the aisles in the storytelling. There've been a couple of times when the "old lady" has pointed down one at a terrifying, hungry animal walking towards her, and I've seen children look down the aisle to see if they can see what she's "seeing.")

While the focus of my two weeks is "Storytelling for Literacy," much of our work in New York is about making a link between the telling and the book. Since I've not met with the teachers (and probably won't till Saturday's workshop), I'm feeling my way through what I'm modeling and when to bring in the book and/or suggest follow up activities.

I'm interested to see what happens with the last class of the day (right before 4pm dismissal), since I had to stop the story just before the old lady chowed down. I suggested the children draw pictures of the big, scary animals (maybe I should have suggested they draw the food). Will they? Does the teacher see the connection? Obviously there is only so much I can do with the teachers, what with only a 3hr Prof. Dev., and I clearly need to give myself time to "assess" the impact of the storytelling on the students. We shall see what happens tomorrow with the first and kindergarten. Rumor has it the little ones have little English. It may be a song filled day!

The last two sessions ran to the rhythm of a lovely downpour that knocked out power. I like to think that the fearsomeness of the animals was heightened by the moody dark.

Dismissal was much like any school, though probably less frenetic. Students enthusiastically (and almost all successfully) hopped a large running stream that had formed to reach their various modes of transport. I squeezed myself onto Million's bus and we headed home. After a quick, and well-received round or two of the ELTA call-and-repeat chant "Ooof a lay a lay," roll call was taken again. We wound our way through the city, avoiding puddles and dropping off staff. Children chatted with each other, asked me to spell my name, or played with my hair.

I jumped out at my hotel and waved them off. It's likely that I'll see most of them tomorrow. Considering many of their home situations, said Ato Berhane, coming to school is a joy, something they look forward to. Even if they're feeling poorly, they want to attend. When they do miss, it's often because their parents have become ill (HIV/AIDS) and can't get them to the centers for transport. Dir. Berhane says the State rules say a child that misses 25 days should not be allowed to sit for exams. "Feh," says Dir. B (a former journalist, teacher, with degrees in Ethiopian languages, Mass communication and sociology). "We do whatever we can to catch the child up to the work they've missed. Why shouldn't they at least have the chance to try the exam? If the State wants to come in and look at us... okay."

His teachers are there, he says, not just because they want to teach, but because they want to help these children succeed and give back to their community. It shows. There is so much quiet love offered. Hugs, high fives and hugs. It's a school of warmth.

So now, a quick shower and a long email later, I'm ready for dinner and then it's early to bed for it's early to rise.

Day 2 of Teaching, Tuesday, June 14th:

Mimi, who's WWO's Ethiopia logistics queen (otherwise known as WWO's Deputy Country Director), was kind enough to call and check in last night. I told her that I was going to indulge in some spaghetti (with the Italian history here, is it any wonder they make a killer spicy-sweet tomato sauce) and sample the local brew. A good choice.

Morning arrived with gray skies (yes, Virginia, it is the rainy season). Million and the bus arrived smack on time, and I discovered a seat was saved for me. Later, during roll call, the youngster in charge included a second (big) Helen. "Abet!"

When he was done with his task, he turned to me and said, "Miss Helen. The song yesterday? You sing." And so began the first of MANY rounds of "Ooof a-lay-a-lay." And I do mean many.

I was again asked to sign my name. Some of the children are very quick and have picked up many of the letters. As we tried to master the missing ones, we fell into going through the letters A to Z(ed). It was hard not to be moved when the whole bus recited (and some also mirrored) the alphabet as I signed it to the front and back of the bus.

Rain on our arrival at school meant no outside play. I was escorted-kidnapped by several youngsters and taken up to a classroom and we hung out for the hour before school. I was asked to lead more rounds of “Ooof a-lay-a-lay” and gave myself a respite by introducing the hand/chant game that’s usually played in pairs:

Double, double – Fist, fist
This, this – Palm, palm
Double, double – Fist, fist
That, that – Back of hand, back of hand
Double – Fist
This – Palm
Double – Fist
That – Back of hand
Double, Double – Fist, fist
This – Palm
That – Back of hand

I may have to apologize to Dr. B, because both the chant and song are running through the school like a computer virus. I hear Ooof-a-lay-a-lay wafting up the steps. As I navigate those same steps, I’m often waylaid to play Double, Double. Students are teaching each other. One even took it upon herself to teach Dr. Berhane Double, Double. He’s almost got it. <g>

My teaching started smack at 9am with three sessions with the Kindergarten classes. Wisely, they’ve recognized the shorter attention span of little ones, and have only allotted 35 minutes per session. After lunch I had the three 1st grade classes back-to-back. Once again, Dr. B and Asst. Dir C took the time to drop in and observe/participate, though other duties (like, you know, running the school) prevented them from attending all the sessions.

As I mentioned, I decided to take the younger grades a tad slower, easing in to the story. I also wanted to underline, support their understanding of English by using written words and pictures during the sessions.

First, since I was encountering many students who’d ridden the bus with me, each class started with a call and repeat of Ooof so they’d get used to participating. I then asked if anyone knew my name. Some volunteered, and we all signed/spoke it together.

I then asked them to help me write my name on the chalkboard. Sometimes they identified the sounds, sometimes they air-drew the letters, sometimes they simply knew how to spell it and guided my writing. Then, I put a big ole arrow next to my name pointing to me. That moved us into a name game/song. In the morning we sang/danced “Good morning, good morning, and what’s your name?” “Name.” “Hello, name!” The afternoon called for “Hello, hello, and what’s your name?” “Name.” “Hello, name!” Each game allowed every child to be in the spotlight, even if for only a moment. It also reinforced the call-and-response vs. call-and-repeat. I led the game so that I was the final person pointed to and paused to open up the opportunity for them to fill in my name for me, again suggesting they could speak independently, not only repeat what I’ve said. More often than not, they did say “Helen!”

I made some adjustments to the story. First, because of their English language skills and age, it was almost totally teacher-directed. Second, I took the time to illustrate parts of the story. When the old lady decides to go through the jungle, I paused to ask if they knew “jungle.” Some did, some didn’t, so I drew a big tree (and labeled it “tree”). Then, we added the “friendly” animals – either identifying the sound (bird) or the (so, so) drawing of a rabbit, and labeled them. (I don’t think it’s a comment on the quality of my drawing that some identified it as a cat. I think.)

After the old lady had tricked the three scary, hungry animals (of my choice): lion, snake, hyena, the story paused until Thursday. Don’t know if it worked, but I tried to set up a “cliffhanger” by having the old lady knock at her daughter’s (not granddaughter, for language clarity sake) and get no answer. She waits, knocks again, and as she hears footsteps and the door handle turns.... We stopped, wondering if it was the snake (I added a drawing), lion (Another serviceable drawing that sometimes was id’d as the sun – until I put fangs in) and the hyena (I’ll admit it: a “total fail” drawing).

I’m going to have to look up some pictures of hyenas because, during my break between classes, I started wondering if I could make stick puppets of the characters and use them to retell the story – both as an example of a follow-up storytelling activity for the teachers and as a way to get the students to storytell. I’ve started to sketch copies of “No Dinner!” author Jessica Soulhami’s fabulous renderings for the old lady (thin-terrified-fat), but the animals will have been changed to suit the country.

Over lunch (Injera, the traditional bread, with something spicy and oniony and yummy on top), I was treated to children walking by me, catching my eye, the leaning back, arms holding their huge, imagined tummy, as they said, “Nice and fat!”

There was also a young boy who revealed himself as a bit of a jokester. In class (3rd grade), he keeps his tall, lean body in a pose of general disinterest – observing, but offering little. At lunchtime, he ended up on the end seat of one of the lunch tables that was near me. As we were eating, we locked eyes, and before we knew it, we were giving each other a silent 1-2-3, EAT! It went on for several minutes until my view was block for a moment by a mass of students exiting the lunchroom. When they cleared, he’d cleared his plate and disappeared.

The day finished under clear skies and we all piled onto the bus. More Oof, more signing, more Double, Double.

Sarah, an American who is working with the WWO, dropped by and walked me over to Des’ Place, the orphanage that hosts many of the WWO Academy students. I hung out with the children for an hour or so, some who knew me, some who didn’t. They made up various different dance moves to Oof and we taught Double, Double to several of the grownups. I responded to the demand of “a story,” and told the group one about Otis the Neat, Neat pig. By request, one child got a version of “Ruby,” a duckling who does everything at her own time (I got her promise to not tell anyone about it, since it was going to be my second storytelling text).

When I first arrived, young man came up to me, someone who is too old for WWOA. He gave me a look and then launched in to “Oof-a-lay-a-lay.” Clearly, the students are becoming the teachers, sharing what they’re learning with their fellow residents.

I then dragged out the song “Dum, dum, deedle, deedle, dum, dum, deedle” etc. (it goes on for some time.) The kids picked it up in a flash (and I was able to lure some adults in, too). I added the simple gestures (tap your lap, the lap to your left, the lap to your right). Then I added the more complicated ones: tap your lap, grab your nose and opposite ear, repeat and what I call the finger-elbow Macarena. There was great hilarity on all sides as we stumbled our way through. As the group ebbed and flowed, I saw some of the adults draw in other adults and start to teach them Double, Double.

Walking home, I popped into a crafts store Sarah recommended and no, I didn’t buy anything for you all, so don’t ask. Milka, the owner, was charming. We talked about her husband, who is in forestry doing research, and she invited me back for coffee. I will definitely take her up on her offer so I can not buy anything again.

Day 3 of teaching, Wednesday, June 15th:

It was a return visit with the second and third graders. In all the classes I did “Ruby In Her Own Time” (except for the class who’d only gotten half of “No Dinner!”). Briefly, Ruby is a story about a duckling who does things at her own (slower) pace, much to her father’s frustration. He’s constantly told by his wife to “Wait, she’ll hatch (eat, swim).” At the end of the story, Ruby (Or, #5, as I called her) outstrips ducks 1-4 and zooms away to visit... the children offered Ethiopia, Canada, Japan, China, New York City, Brazil, Pakistan And now, as she watches #5 disappear, it is the mother who is worried. She asks, “Will she ever come back?” To which the father replies, “Wait.” (A reversal which made one of the 2nd graders laugh in delight.)

Again, I used the chalkboard to support the vocabulary of the story – sometimes with words, sometimes with really, really bad drawings of a duck in a nest. I also kept my number of words to a minimum, using lots and lots of body/gesture. This story is particularly helpful in giving students moments when we can call-and-respond – and the students are picking up on it. They really began to enjoy turning the “Will she?” and “Wait!” into a dialogue between me (as the father) and them (as the mother). To a degree, the work is group storytelling with a lot of acting out (the good kind, not the annoying kind).

Because Ruby is a shorter story, I had 10 minutes or so in each class to share the book and “picture walk.” We identified “same” and “different,” starting with the cover: the duck was the same, but “Ruby” was “#5.” Also, in our story, “In her own time” became “wait.” They loved seeing the book afterwards. Looking at the book from their perspective, I realized that the drawings, though beautiful, are a little confusing. It’s hard to pick out Ruby/5 from the other ducks – they’re all male or female mallards. So, I took a little masking tape and a magic marker and put a green dot on every picture of Ruby.

Had a wonderful discussion with one of the teachers about what she’s seeing. “It’s not just a story,” she said of Ruby. “There’s math, colors, sequence of growing, science (eggs), and

emotions (patience).” This is the same teacher who’s translated Double, Double into Amharic. When she showed it to me, we discussed how you could change the English words (Maybe, yes, no or Warm, hot, cold) and put some emotion/meaning into the rhythm.

It was fun to return to the half class (and, since Day 1 was a blur and today didn’t run in the same order, I really appreciated the teacher whispering to me, “you remember you didn’t finish, right.” Sure I did.)

The teacher had taken my suggestion (What scary animal might be next?) and all the children had created fabulous drawings – snakes, tigers, crocodiles, lions, rhinos and foxes, that they’d id’d in English and Amharic. As they shared them, I got the idea of using them to do a “physical review” of the first part of the story – that is, go from the beginning of the story and say, “So, on Monday I told a story about a....” and have the children offer up answers.

They got, “little old lady,” “skinny, skinny, skinny,” “nice and fat.” When we came to the scary animals 1 & 2, I had one of the children’s pictures become that animal. I stood behind him/her and we said, “I’m going to eat you up!” Then the children said, “Okay, eat me! But I’m skinny, skinny, skinny. Wait until I go through the jungle, to see...” It was interesting to observe their physical and verbal fluency improve significantly during the review. (Hopefully the video turned out.) I decided to make the third animal EVERY animal they’d drawn, and they all shock their pictures at me as they threatened to “Eat me up!” When the old lady rolled home in the pumpkin, they decided it was a dragon who figured out she was trying to trick them.

In this class, I was able to bring out the “No, Dinner!” book and do “same/different.” There even was enough space in the room to get them out of their chairs and onto the floor in a clump. It was great to (again) retell the story using the picture book.

After all the sessions were done, Asst. Dir. C spoke to me about the enthusiasm of the children and the impact of the storytelling. As we both acknowledged, supporting the teachers in adopting and integrating the techniques will be challenging, especially since we only have 3hrs on Saturday do work together. At this moment, I’m thinking that we should work on their storytelling skills by getting them to re-tell either Ruby or No Dinner.

We shall see what happens.... Until next time.

Day 4 of Teaching, Thursday, June 16th

Day 4 – finished up all the K & 1st grade classes “No Dinner” storytellings. Really encouraged to see how much the students had retained, and the delight they had in recalling/retelling the story from the beginning. Equally pleased to see an increased level of fluency and word acquisition. I need to remember to not “sing” the call and repeat phrases too smoothly (I think my mom would say “legato”). A little staccato will help them hear the different sounds of the English words (think of that interesting letter in the A-B-C song: LMN.)

There’s a little guy I have developed an odd relationship with: he started talking to me, big smile on his face. To be honest, I don’t have much of an ear for Amharic, but it sounded like he was

just gibberishing with me. So, I started speaking Spanish back. We got into a dialogue that was full of smiles and attitude as other children looked on. Later, after lunch, we struck up another “conversation.” Then, as everyone was loading the bus, we started up again, now full-out gibberish.

Later, Ato Berhane spoke to me about the young man. There’s a family history there – a bad family history - that has pushed this child to the edge. Teachers are leery of him, because of his tendency to strike out. At least for this moment, he’s full of smiles.

Friday, June 17th

Woke up at 3am. At 4am heard the traditional Muslim call to prayer. Found I was soon answering my own (unfortunate) calls. Did make it to school, but realized I was in no shape to teach. Ato Berhane was kind enough to use the van to take me home. Almas (Diamond in Amharic, soul in Spanish), who is in charge of purchasing for the school, made sure I got to the hotel.

Basically, the day was lost to an upset tummy.

Ato Berhane continued his role of perfect host by dropping by after school to check in and make sure I was okay. I certainly was better, but not top notch.

Saturday, June 18th – Teacher Training

Ato Berhane greeted me at the hotel at 8am and we took a “normal” taxi (a deep turquoise and white affair, as are most taxis) to the Academy. There are no meters here – just negotiation. Needless to say, watching Ato Berhane cut the price down 20 birr was an education in bargaining.

The workshop was held in the multi-purpose room – an open space used for games, music, drama and art classes. I was pleased to have been informed by Ato Berhane that 22 people (“Including me,” he said. “And I count for at least two people,” he added with a smile.) had signed up. Per school policy, each attending teacher gets a 60 birr per diem for travel and lunch. That being said, they are still giving up a Saturday – and a long Saturday at that (9am-3:30/4pm). Of course, some of the teachers (English Language/Global) were required to attend, but others volunteered (including, I discovered, two who had never seen me in action). Cool!

Storytelling Workshop with teachers

I must say, I was a little anxious about the workshop, mostly on account of my complete lack of Amharic. In New York, my “just-enough-to-get-you-in-to-trouble” Spanish and (long ago) high school French often proves to be helpful when working with the diverse group that are NYC teachers. Neither are of any help to me in Ethiopia. But, I knew I could draw on the lessons I had learned from working with multi-lingual children – less words, more action, keep things clear and direct.

The big advantage I had was that all (well, almost all) of the teachers had seen me lead interactive storytelling – some only once, some several times. Therefore, unlike most other storytelling trainings I've led, we all had a shared frame of reference. Now, any discussion we had about the techniques I modeled or of impact the interactive storytelling had on their students was rooted in personal experiences.

Workshop outline:

Icebreaker: “Hand shake hello.” In 30 seconds, go around the room and shake everyone’s hand, introducing yourself and sharing what you ate for breakfast. (*Like every group, most were on time. Like every group, even though they knew each other, there was a level of shyness. That soon faded.*)

Groups according to....

If you are a man or a woman
shoes you are wearing (*much discussion about whether a closed-toe sandal belonged with the open-toed sandals.*)
of years you've been a teacher
brothers and sisters (no sound) then put yourself into numerical order (*Success!*)
favorite subject in high school (Math, English, Science, History) – come up with phrase/sentence (*The phrases I remember: Based on fact, Applies to the practical world, Has a daily use*)
Story you liked – Duck/Old lady - Come up with a word or phrase to describe essence (*Smart/Wait*)

Debrief: After both exercises, a quick discussion about possible re-application to their classrooms, and identify that both activities included storytelling – one verbal, one physical

Micro labs: In groups of three,

#1 going first – 30 seconds each to discuss: What did you notice about your student’s reaction to the stories
#2 going first – 30 seconds each to discuss: What did you notice about what I was doing?
#3 going first – 30 seconds each to discuss: Why are you here? What do you want to learn?

Share back:

#1: Engagement, smiles, participation
#2: Used this to ID storytelling skills modeled: Voice, physical gestures, drama, the fact that when I asked a question (the few times I asked them – I said it was harder to do so in English) whatever answer I was given got a “Yes.” For instance, when I asked, “What other friendly animals were in the forest?” A child answered, “Lion.” “Yes! There was a friendly baby lion!”
#3: How to storytell, how to manage students, how to bring it into my class

ID workshop objectives: To work on their storytelling skills using the stories they'd seen. To have them work on those skills in Amharic, because to do so in English would make their heads hurt. It's far easier to be creative and free in your native tongue.

After a break, we reformed the Old Lady/No Dinner and Ruby groups and I asked them to come up with three still pictures to tell the beginning middle and end.

When we shared back, the Old Lady group had assigned people different characters/beings (they'd gone first) and in the Ruby group, everyone was the same character. There was a moment when the Ruby group looked as if they felt they'd done something wrong. I took this as an opportunity to refer to our shareback observation about questions: "YES!" to answers. This was THEIR response, I pointed out, so it was totally "correct."

Of course, I was doing this exercise so they could, as a group, get a clear understanding of the different characters and their evolution in relationship to each other. So, in some groups, I gave them five minutes more and two tasks: Old Lady - - add two extra pictures. Ducks - add characters.

Shareback of pictures. (*It was interesting to observe the Old Lady group changed some of their still pictures. They also were willing to portray "objects" as in, using someone's arm as the tree branch the Old Lady snaps off for a walking stick, or getting everyone to form the "pumpkin" around the old lady.*)

Read Aloud

The next step was to have each group read their storybook to their group. I asked them to consider how my story was similar and/or different to the book. Also, since they were all clumped around the reader, I asked them to consider their experience of being read aloud to: Could they see? Was it enjoyable? What were the challenges to for the reader? How had hearing the story before having in read to them impacted their listening?

Moving in to storytelling

The rest of the session was spent working in groups of three.

Each group was to practice their story: Person One the beginning, person Two the middle, person Three, the end. I then paired up opposite stories and they shared their stories. Afterwards, I asked them to give each other feedback (since, of course, I couldn't) focused on 1) What had they enjoyed about the storytelling? Referencing our Storytelling Skills list, where had they seen examples of those skills? 2) What did they want more of? Was the story clear? Were the characters clear? Was there a build?

They then broke off back into their groups of three, integrated the feedback and had a second go at telling, though with a new group. More feedback. I popped in to the groups and suggested a next step would be to take this "three person story" into their classrooms, frame it as "Remember

the story Helen told you? Here's our version." And have a go. "Practice! Practice! Practice!" I reminded them.

We then came together as a whole group and shared back a little about their experience of storytelling. (*Hard. Fun. Creative.*)

Moving in to Interactive Storytelling

The last 20 minutes or so, we touched on making the stories interactive (in a teacher directed manner) – that is, using the phrases "Let's all do that" or "Let's all say that" to get the audience to participate. I modeled a section of one of the stories in English, and asked for a volunteer. Brave Sir Berhane stepped into the breach and quickly discovered that it was harder than it looked. He and the teachers laughed as he worked his way through the new rhythm call and repeating demanded. I have no doubt that his willingness to risk his "dignity" publicly encouraged the other teachers. Three others stepped up, each improving as they learned from the previous leader. With a round of applause for their courage, we broke for lunch.

POST-LUNCH

After a long morning of work, I decided to focus on reviewing the call and response songs I had already introduced in the school, as well as adding a couple more to their repertoire. After each activity, we identified they could support a child's growth in so many areas: coordination, fine and gross motor skills, language acquisition, fluency, self-confidence, cooperation, creativity, focus, expression etc.

With the songs, we also explored how we could change the words to meet particular needs (like the end of the school year) or make them more student-centered by asking the students to provide the matching movements. We worked through:

Oof A Lay A Lay

Good Morning and Hello, Hello Name games

Dum Dum Deedle (*and yes, the accompanying physical movements, a crossed-armed nose-grab caused great hilarity*)

Double, Double (*in English and Amharic*)

A Rum Tum Tum (*Funny, issues with left and right are universal*)

Hide the Leader (*A game they were already familiar*)

As a final activity, we played Urban Ball – a game where you crumple up a piece of paper into a tight ball and the group tries to bat it up into the air a certain number of times. While they weren't particularly brilliant at the game (Is anyone?), they did finish off the day with great energy.

At the conclusion of the workshop, I invited the teachers to tell me what they wanted from me next Monday and Tuesday (there are exams Wed.): Games? Stories? An English Language teacher asked me to help her with the story "The Foolish Dog" (I believe it's a classic "story for testing" text) and promised to give me a typed copy Monday.

I did grin when another asked me if I had a CD of the songs. While I did promise to find a way to leave them an audio copy (maybe a flip), I'm wondering if I should start a label: Don't Sing, Just Bellow.

Ato Berhane was kind enough to "escort" me home as we took what I call the "Oy, ye! Oy, ye!" cab system home. Those who recall New York City in the mid-90's will remember the "Dollar Cabs" that picked up people in the outer boroughs who were often faced with long waits for buses. A short "toot" on the horn asked if you wanted in and a dollar took you towards the subway station.

Here in Ethiopia, vans/micro buses zip along the street with a driver and a "caller" hanging out the door or window shouting out stops and destination. We took two such taxis (with a confusing walk between end-stations), and got home for about one tenth of the price. Definitely for locals. Figuring out the system seems easy enough – if I could get my head around Amharic and a map. Perhaps next time?

Sunday, June 19th Birding

Those who know me know that I love to go bird watching. Ethiopia, as it turns out, is a great birding area. I was able to snag Million for a morning, and he took me out to the outer edges of Addis, an area called Akaki. It was lovely to get out to a more rural area. Just so you know, farm animals here have as much disdain for cars as New York pedestrians have. I swear a donkey was playing "chicken" with us.

We visited Woodland Park, Atlas Resort (a hotel with lovely grounds), and then another hotel call Dreamland. It had a lovely café with a beautiful view of a lake. While there I noticed a small group that also sported binoculars. Turned out to be some English ex-pats who work for the Ministry of Education taking advantage of a Sunday to do some birding. What are the chances?

I don't know the names of most of the birds I saw, but I do know they were a riot of color. Just stunning.

Day 5 of Teaching, Monday June 20th

As promised, I was handed a copy of "Tommy the Foolish Dog." It's about a hungry dog who wanders here and there looking for food. He goes and gets some meat. Decides to go to a lonely place to eat his food, looks in the river, sees another dog with some food, tries to grab it and whoops! His food drops into the river.

I had also brought along my copy of Kevin Henkes' "Kitten's First Full Moon" because there were so many similarities between his story and ye olde Foolish dog. It is the tale of an adventurous kitten who thinks the full moon is a bowl of milk. Even after climbing a tree, she is unable to reach the "milk." But, when she looks down she sees a bigger bowl of milk in the lake. So she jumps in only to discover, much to her dismay, that it is water. "Silly kitten."

Studying the “Tommy” text (as strains of “Good morning, good morning and how are you?” drifted out of one Kindergarten room), I began to feel a little cranky at its rather challenging vocabulary (*foolish, wandering, lonely place, image*) and somewhat obscure and illogical narrative. As I played with turning it into an interactive storytelling, I wondered how much (or hard) I should hit those vocabulary words and how far afield I could go from the story. I was very glad I’d brought “Kitten,” because it’s a story that I know well and the vocabulary and theme (Foolishness/mistaking a reflection) paralleled Foolish so nicely. Also, the story is beautifully supported by the book’s illustrations.

I did two sessions, back to back, improving and simplifying my “Tommy” story as I went. Using the chalkboard to track, illustrate and recall vocabulary was essential in supporting comprehension. I will say the children are no fools. They could “feel” the difference between the two stories (both the quality of the story and my storytelling), but they could take the concepts/vocabulary from Tommy and reapply it to Kitten. Though we only had a few moments at the end of each class, I was able to “retell” the story using the book and doing a “picture walk.” I hope that it was useful for the teachers to see the sequence of “required text” storytelling to “parallel text” storytelling to “written storybook” read aloud. (Not to mention that a storytelling can last 10 minutes or 40 minutes.)

During the break between classes, I heard the Kindergarten class again, this time singing the call and repeat song, “A Rum Tum Tum.” The teacher was leading it enthusiastically, but she was getting lost in the phrase sequence. Taking a risk, I knocked on the door. I was welcomed in and, after congratulating her on trying something new, we co-lead the song. I then wrote up an outline of the lyrics on the chalkboard. We all sang the song through a few times, I handed off the class and made my escape. Moments later, the halls echoed with the enthusiastic singing of both teacher and students.

Observation: Sometimes when you’re in a new country you notice different “habits.” In the US, for example, when we’re listening to someone, we often exhale an “ahh,” or “uh, huh.” In Ethiopia, they inhale a sharp “hahh.” Today, as Ato Berhane and I chatted philosophy over a doughnut and a macchiato, I suddenly realized I was responding... Ethiopian-ically.

Amharic intrigues me. I understand it is a Semitic language, and it’s something I see in the written version – the script has shape-echoes of Hebrew. But the sound... As I listen to the conversation happening around me, I hear the rhythms of Spanish – fast, round sounds without the up-and-down musicality of French or Arabic. And then, occasionally, you’ll notice the “tok” click that you hear in the music of Miriam Makeba. I must go back and re-read Phillip Briggs’ description of the language in his “Guide to Ethiopia.”

Also during the break, Ato Berhane and I had more interesting discussion about WWOA’s teacher evaluation process. (It’s the end of the school year, so all the teacher’s are having final evaluations.) Apparently, this is another way WWOA differs from other schools. “By tradition,” says Ato Berhane, “when we evaluate, we only say good things to the employee’s face. The bad things we write, and submit, and someone can get fired not knowing why.” At WWOA, he has instituted a transparent evaluation process, where in November the supervising staff discusses the teacher’s work to date in various areas (supported by “evidence”) and a work plan is

outlined. This serves as the framework for end of the year evaluation (unless an intervention is needed) – another discussion that leads to a final written evaluation in July. This, in turn, serves as source material for September decisions of advancement or termination.

The last period of the day was my 3rd pass at the dang “Foolish dog Tommy” story – link to Kitten story – link to Kitten book. Foolish was much better in terms of flow, focus, character and overall story “pay off.” It was really nice to have the English Language teacher (who’d made the request) see all three of my attempts. During the Saturday workshop, I had told all the teachers that storytelling required a lot of practice – that I had been telling “No, Dinner” and “Ruby” for almost five years and I was STILL discovering new details to add. With Foolish, she had the opportunity to observe my process: “spew and hew.” That is, throw something out there then, using the students’ reaction as a guide, slowly adjust, refine and edit. I also had to find a smoother, more organic way to include the “target” vocabulary.

I will say, I had so much fun sharing the picture book with all three classes. I have never seen such pure delight in the Kitten’s misadventures. (I particularly liked the classroom teacher who, when the Kitten landed in the lake she thought held a bowl of milk spat out the water she’d slurped, covered her face she was laughing so hard.)

I spoke with Ato Berhane and Ato Cholachew about tomorrow and working with the K’s and 1st graders. It will be up to the teachers as to what they want – me doing Kitten, or maybe teaming up with them and running some of the songs and games with them so they get set in their brain.

As I walk through a small river of children to get to the bus, my arms are constantly tugged to play games of Double, Double. (One child showed me her variation: Double Double Ice, Double Double Cream. “What a great version to practice compound words!” I think.) I can’t help but notice, like a doctor would notice, the different sized hands and strength or weaknesses of arms. Some children are so confident. “FAST!” they demand. Others are delicate and barely put up resistance.

As we wait for Million to arrive, a youngster studiously quizzes me on my family, as if quoting an English language reader. “Miss Helen, what is your father’s name?” I answer. “Miss Helen, what is your aunt’s name?” I answer. “Miss Helen, what is....” (There’s a thoughtful pause.) ...your uncle’s name?”

My gibberish friend and I have one last drama-filled exchange, and then the big white bus arrives. We all squeeze on (“Skinny, skinny, skinny!” I say), and we’re off.

The trip home is a *mélange* of requests. Children start Oof, quote “nice and fat,” show me the “hatching eggs” from the “Ruby” story, or demand that I make my (suddenly) famous animal noises. “Cow!” “Dog.” “Hyena.” “Monkey.” One young man silently signs my name at me.

Dinner provides me with one last literacy experience: the chef has used yogurt to draw a big “H” on my carrot soup. “Good appetite to you!” comes the message.

Cheers to that!

And with that, I'll sign off for the evening.

Final Day of teaching, Tuesday, June 21st

Started with the entire Kindergarten gathered in the front yard doing pre-school singing and exercises. One of the teachers requested that I lead "A Rum Tum Tum." Then there was a request for "Oof." We sang it several times but, when we stopped, we heard the 1-3rd graders singing it in the back yard. Moving over a bit, I could look down the short walkway to the back yard and see the front edge of the first graders. Suddenly, I was leading the entire school in a call-and-repeat. What fun!

The day was spent at the call of the K teachers (exams are being given tomorrow, and it's totally up to them if they want to bring me in. I totally understand wanting to prepare the students for their exams). One K teacher brought me in to lead several rounds of a Rum Tum Tum, and that sufficed. Another teacher popped in to Ato Berhane's office (where I've all but moved in) and asked if I had time to tell a story. So I pulled out "Kitten" and away we went.

During lunch, I ask Ato Berhane about something I've observed – teachers feeding children. "It's taken by the children as a sign of love. Some don't have mothers, don't have fathers, and have never experienced such a thing. Also, if we don't, these children will say they have no appetite and only eat a little."

When I went to drop off my rough stick puppets for the Old Lady story in the Multi-Purpose Room for the Art teacher (Never got to use them, but I'm thinking I most certainly will in the future.), I stopped by a group of students on the porch singing A Rum Tum Tum with their teacher. Some of the students saw the "No, Dinner" book I was carrying and were intrigued by the cover (it's a wolf – which they renamed a hyena). So, with the teacher willing, I retold the Old Lady story, using the book. Some really impressive recall (though they're not quite hip to my *pause* as I wait for them to fill in an answer or phrase. I think it's the teacher-student training still holding.) There was also a nice moment of sequence-recall. When I originally told the story for the young'uns, I made the scary animals lion, snake, hyena (HIGHna, as they say it). In the book, it's a wolf (aka hyena), bear and tiger. When the old lady rolls home in the pumpkin, she passes the animals in reverse order. As I held the page turn to see if they would predict accurately, one youngster nailed all three.

An interesting side effect of storytelling outside on a porch: some of the security guards drew close to observe, one close enough to read/see the book. We also had some outside observers from the street stop to listen/watch. Whoopee! It's a storytelling "happening!"

When I haven't been in the classroom, I've been busy transferring video and photo to Ato Berhane. I know today will be the last time I see the children. (Tomorrow exams, Thurs & Fri they're at home as the tests are graded and reported to the Ministry of Education.) I know I want to say good-bye to them, not just disappear, but I'm not quite sure how to arrange that. That being said, the school and children are quite used to strangers coming in, doing stuff and vanishing. Not only do other guest artists visit, but the have MA candidates doing observations and potential funders dropping by. Transience of people, not place, I guess.

As I leave for the bus, 1-2-3 EAT! man comes by and hands me two pieces of paper. One is a drawing of Ruby, the duck, visiting NYC. The other is a neat transcription of Auld Lang Syne in English and Amahric.

When the bus lets me off at the hotel, Million helps me translate my thanks to the students. I'm suddenly emotional. So, I start singing Oof, exit the bus and wave the children off.

It's impossible for me to "wrap up" this experience (and it's not like this one is over). I'm sure it will take months to unpick. I do know this: like the best schools in any country, WWOA is an oasis, a safe haven for children in need. And isn't every child a child in need?

APPENDIX 2: Sample Photos

Skinny, skinny, skinny!



Nice and fat!



Helen teaching.



Teachers teaching each other Double, Double



Students showing their scary, hungry animal drawings.



Helen with the miracle workers in the kitchen.



APPENDIX 3: Quantitative Data

Date	Description of activities	# Children involved	# staff involved	Length
6/13/11	Interactive storytelling, “No Dinner!”	2 nd grade – approx 20 children	2 teachers, 1 staff	40minutes
6/13/11	Interactive storytelling, “No Dinner!”	2 nd grade – approx 20 children	2 teachers, 1 staff	40minutes
6/13/11	Interactive storytelling, “No Dinner!”	2 nd grade – approx 20 children	2 teachers, 1 staff	40minutes
6/13/11	Interactive storytelling, “No Dinner!”	3 rd grade – approx 20 children	2 teachers, 1 staff	40minutes
6/13/11	Interactive storytelling, “No Dinner!”	3 rd grade – approx 20 children	2 teachers, 1 staff	40minutes
6/13/11	Interactive storytelling, “No Dinner!” Part 1 (session was truncated because students needed time to collect and leave for bus)	3 rd grade – approx 20 children	2 teachers, 1 staff	40 minutes

6/14/11	Interactive storytelling, “No Dinner!” Part 1. Sessions included a name game as well as a call-and-response chant.	1 st grade – approx 20 children	2 teachers	40 minutes
6/14/11	Interactive storytelling, “No Dinner!” Part 1. Sessions included a name game as well as a call-and-response chant.	1 st grade – approx 20 children	2 teachers	40 minutes
6/14/11	Interactive storytelling, “No Dinner!” Part 1. Sessions included a name game as well as a call-and-response chant.	1 st grade – approx 20 children	2 teachers	40 minutes
6/14/11	Interactive storytelling, “No Dinner!” Part 1. Sessions included a name game as well as a call-and-response chant.	Grade K– approx 20 children	2 teachers	35 minutes
6/14/11	Interactive storytelling, “No Dinner!” Part 1. Sessions included a name game as well as a call-and-response chant.	Grade K– approx 20 children	2 teachers	35 minutes
6/14/11	Interactive storytelling, “No Dinner!” Part 1. Sessions included a name game as well as a call-and-response chant.	Grade K– approx 20 children	2 teachers	35 minutes
6/15/11	Interactive storytelling, “Ruby in Her Own Time!”	2 nd grade – approx 20 children	2 teachers,	40minutes

6/15/11	Interactive storytelling, “Ruby in Her Own Time!”	2nd grade – approx 20 children	2 teachers	40minutes
6/15/11	Interactive storytelling, “Ruby in Her Own Time!”	2nd grade – approx 20 children	2 teachers	40minutes
6/15/11	Interactive storytelling, “Ruby in Her Own Time!”	3rd grade – approx 20 children	2 teachers	40minutes
6/15/11	Interactive storytelling, “Ruby in Her Own Time!”	3rd grade – approx 20 children	2 teachers	40minutes
6/15/11	Interactive storytelling, “No Dinner!” Part 2	3rd grade – approx 20 children	2 teachers	40 minutes
6/16/11	Interactive storytelling, “No Dinner!” Part 2. Sessions included a name game as well as a call-and-response chant.	1st grade – approx 20 children	2 teachers	40 minutes
6/16/11	Interactive storytelling, “No Dinner!” Part 2. Sessions included a name game as well as a call-and-response chant.	1st grade – approx 20 children	2 teachers	40 minutes

6/16/11	Interactive storytelling, “No Dinner!” Part 2. Sessions included a name game as well as a call-and-response chant.	1st grade – approx 20 children	2 teachers	40 minutes
6/16/11	Interactive storytelling, “No Dinner!” Part 2. Sessions included a name game as well as a call-and-response chant.	Grade K– approx 20 children	2 teachers	35 minutes
6/16/11	Interactive storytelling, “No Dinner!” Part 2. Sessions included a name game as well as a call-and-response chant.	Grade K– approx 20 children	2 teachers	35 minutes
6/16/11	Interactive storytelling, “No Dinner!” Part 2. Sessions included a name game as well as a call-and-response chant.	Grade K– approx 20 children	2 teachers	35 minutes
6/20/11	Interactive storytelling, “Foolish Dog” and “Kitten’s First Full Moon”	3rd grade – approx 20 children	2 teachers	40minutes
6/20/11	Interactive storytelling, “Foolish Dog” and “Kitten’s First Full Moon”	3rd grade – approx 20 children	2 teachers	40minutes
6/20/11	Interactive storytelling, “Foolish Dog” and “Kitten’s First Full Moon”	3rd grade – approx 20 children	2 teachers	40 minutes

6/21/11	Session included a name game as well as a call-and-response chants and songs.	Grade K– approx 20 children	2 teachers	35 minutes
6/21/11	Interactive storytelling, “Kitten” Session included a name game as well as a call-and-response chant.	Grade K– approx 20 children	2 teachers	35 minutes
6/21/11	Session included a name game as well as a call-and-response chants and songs.	Grade K– approx 20 children	2 teachers	35 minutes