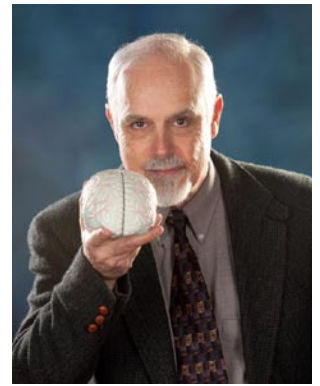


# Slaying the Gorgon

## *How the Mediums of Storytelling Shape How We Think and Act*



People have told stories since earliest times to entertain, inform, and pass on cultural values. They have also used stories to persuade. In today's fast-paced world, corporations use stories to sell products and gain competitive advantages. Political parties use stories to elect candidates and garner support for controversial policies. Military leaders use stories to inspire courage and foster unit cohesion. Social activists, educators, environmentalists, economists, religious leaders, and a host of others use stories to promote their views and agendas.

*Slaying the Gorgon* is a fascinating and provocative multimedia presentation by storyteller, writer, and public radio producer Joe McHugh that looks at how stories are told in the modern age given the dynamic and transforming influence of new technologies. From the venerated saints and cathedrals of the Middle Ages to the pop stars and cineplexes of today, he explains why images and sound are increasingly supplanting the authority of the printed word, and by so doing, radically altering the cultural, economic, and political landscape in the United States and around the world.

What does the myth of Perseus and Medusa tell us about how the technologies of storytelling shape the way we think and act? Why do political candidates need the blessing of media saints to get elected? Is society becoming more tribalized because of media? Why do people respond so favorably to the word "thousand?" How does today's industrialized storytelling overstimulate and exhaust the imagination and what can we do about it? These are some of the questions Joe explores using a combination of plain language, intriguing images, recorded stories, and humor. His goal is to provide an opportunity for

*"Joe captivated the audience as he spoke about the importance of story and its changing role in our lives. He set the perfect tone for the entire day with his expertly crafted presentation. In addition to being a talented speaker with a stimulating message that challenges listeners to "think outside the box" and stretch their vision of stories, Joe was a pleasure to work with."*

~Nancy Schultz, Training and Staff-Development Specialist, Timberland Regional Library System



## About Joe McHugh

Joe McHugh is a storyteller, radio producer, musician, and home-grown philosopher who has worked for over thirty years helping young people, organizations, and communities find and tell their stories. He has collected and published books of traditional folktales from the mountains of Appalachia, produced multicultural festivals, directed a museum, designed a literature camp for children, pioneered the use of radio dramas with young people, and produced and hosted programs for public television and public radio. He has presented at numerous national and regional conferences and has served as a project consultant for several state departments of education, the National Council of Family and Juvenile Court Judges, the National Legal Aid and Defenders Association, and other organizations. He is the author of *Kilowatt*, a modern-day fable about the energy industry and the nature of time, and is currently writing a trilogy examining the art and practice of storytelling in the modern world.

Joe lives in Olympia, Washington, with his wife Paula Blasius-McHugh who is a painter, graphic designer, and musician. Audio stories from Mr. McHugh's archived public radio series *The Telling Takes Us Home, a Celebration of American Family Stories* can be heard at:  
[www.americanfamilystories.org](http://www.americanfamilystories.org)

*“Slaying the Gorgon was a powerful and innovative look at how viewers, especially children, regard images and how teachers and librarians can help support students in an electronic, digital, super-speed age. I heard from many members that his presentation was the “best I have ever seen at a conference.”*

~Sarah Applegate, President, Washington Media Library Association

*“Mr. McHugh came to Metropolitan Omaha to give a presentation on youth and the media that generated important dialog as to how we could continue our efforts on behalf of youth and their families. Mr. McHugh is extraordinarily well-versed, articulate, entertaining, and a pleasure to be around. He has the unique ability of communicating with anyone and is one of the most gifted presenters I have ever known.”*

~Lawrence D. Gendler, Judge, Sarpy County Juvenile Court, Nebraska



*“I have received nothing but positive comments about Joe McHugh’s thought provoking presentation. It reminds us of the importance of stories and how much they impact our view of the world. I believe many participants saw more clearly our responsibility to redirect mass media in a positive manner. Joe gave that message to us very clearly.”*

~Doris “Cookie” Roberts, director, Department of Human Services, City of Chesapeake, Virginia

*“Mr. McHugh exceeded our grandest expectations. A masterful storyteller he provided a provocative presentation. It was obvious that Mr. McHugh had spent thoughtful time in preparation and evident that participants greatly appreciated his remarks, their evaluations revealed they believed his session to have been a highlight of the conference. Mr. McHugh challenges the listener and presents a perspective that expands one’s horizons.”*

~M. James Toner, Associate Director for Continuing Judicial Education, National Council of Juvenile and Family Court Judges

*“In his work with our association members, Joe McHugh has always shown high levels of professionalism, quality work, interaction, and follow-through to commitments made. His closing session keynote for our fall conference helped us see how storytelling could enhance our efforts as educators. Combining video, powerpoint images, and personal stories, this session was well-received and prompted us to invite him to present at our annual summer retreat.”*

~Mack Armstrong, Ed.D. Dir. of Professional Development, WA Assoc. of School Administrators

*“I would definitely invite Joe McHugh back to share the wealth of useful information he has for teachers at all levels. He is flexible, easy to work with, and there is something about his warm demeanor that makes people want to open up and share their stories with him. Joe’s presentation for our Equity Team Conference: Classroom Strategies for Bridging the Gap, was consistently ranked as one of the teachers’ favorite parts of the day. His work takes into account the complexities of living in a diverse society and the power of sharing stories to bring us together.*

*This is what one of our participants wrote:*

*“Joe McHugh did a phenomenal job! His presentation is one of the best I’ve ever participated in in our district. Please bring him back. I will consult his website for lesson plans on citizenship, make a tree of objects re: family/neighbor stories, and listen to personal stories on his CDs to inspire our writing and discussions.”*

~Ilsa Govan, Equity and Race Relations Specialist, Seattle Public Schools

*“To be charged with delivering an address that generates concern, and inspires action on the part of participants is one not easily met. Mr. McHugh definitely hit the mark! His genuine, captivating style incorporated his knowledge of history and culture with thoughtful information about the media’s influence on youth and contemporary beliefs and behaviors. He brings a unique perspective.”*

~Vivian Linfor - Safe Schools and Violence Protection Office, a joint project of the California Department of Education and the California Attorney General’s Office.

*“I’ve been so excited about storytelling since Joe McHugh came to our conference. I see stories everywhere! Joe’s speech, Slaying the Gorgon gave us a context to storytelling that we librarians did not have before. Joe also provided to us a vocabulary from which to talk about the power of story in our lives. Member’s of our listserv are still talking about mythos and logos!”*

~Connie Hamner Williams - president California School Library Association



*Slaying the Gorgon* can be designed to be a sixty or ninety minute multimedia keynote presentation followed by Q & A.

Joe also offers half-day and full-day workshops that explore the art and practice of storytelling in the modern world and how organizations can shape compelling narratives and choose effective mediums to advance their causes.

**For more information contact:**

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