

## What Makes Nifty Stories Nifty?

When I was a kid, I often heard the word "nifty" in reference to things like fancy cars and outrageous fashion. It alluded to the uniqueness and stylishness of the subject being described. As time passed, I heard the word used in a wider range of conversations, including nifty evenings out, nifty concerts, and nifty songs. Later still, it cropped up in conversations about more "cultural" experiences: nifty books, nifty poems, and nifty stories. Whenever I heard the word I assumed it meant something good, something attractive. Still, I did not really define the word until I found myself using it to refer to the stories I tell to audiences and on recordings. Actually, I hit the books when a listener said my stories were nifty. The current Wiktionary defines the word as "good; a general term for anything that is good, useful or beneficial." The standard reference Compact Oxford Dictionary states: "particularly good, effective, or stylish."

Whats so nifty about nifty stories? The stories I choose to tell are, indeed, particularly good and rather effective at making a point, a lesson, a message, a bit of perspective. You could say that my idea of nifty stories is stories that enlighten as well as entertain. There needs to be a message beyond a witty punch line.

For example, a story with a moral is one that provides a clear message. It teaches by example. However, the lessons in many other stories may not be as obvious. The meaning is hidden in the actions of the characters. Listeners are left to figure out the message for themselves. And there may be a different message for each listener. Stories such as these are inclined to be more widely popular. The subtler lessons tend to come from longer tales. One can learn many lessons from epic stories. Just compare a tale from the Arabian Nights to a fable by Aesop to see the difference. Which one gives you more freedom to choose your own message? Personally, I like to find my own message when listening to a story. Check out my World Full of Stories and Fables in Four Minutes CDs for some examples of nifty stories with more subtle lessons.

Nifty stories are stories that teach. Nifty stories appeal to a broad audience. Nifty stories travel beyond the culture from which they originate. Nifty stories are always in vogue. These stories are naturally very attractive. Nifty stories are worth their weight in gold![More](#) . [More](#) . [More](#) . [More](#) .

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