

Why AI Can't Replace Storytelling's Power

The real intelligence in education is not data—it's meaning.

THE DATA

1,001 reasons

Origins of Scholarly Passion

Maria Tatar, Harvard's leading folklorist, traces her life's work to a single attic in Highland Park, Illinois.

Her childhood experience as a displaced person and resident alien—framed by a German copy of the Grimms' fairy tales and a World War I Pickelhaube—created a deep, formative tension between trauma and wonder. These relics weren't just objects; they were psychological portals. The number 1,001 is not literal but symbolic: it reflects the multiplicity of emotional and cultural forces that shaped her academic mission. She later became a senior fellow at Harvard's Society of Fellows and a lifelong scholar of stories that survive catastrophes.

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<https://news.harvard.edu/gazette/story/2026/09/helping-us-make-our-way-through-a-world-that-can-feel-broken/>



01

Trauma and Imagination Are Partners

This insight challenges the AI orthodoxy that equates learning with data processing. Real education is not about speed or scalability—it's about resonance.

02

Stories Outlive Their Creators

In a world where AI writes syllabi, the most valuable skill may be the courage to tell a new story from the ruins of the old.



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