

THE STORY BEAST

For Story Artists, Listeners, and Dreamers

GROWING GAB



Cover Art

“Two Lips”

By Asia Starr

mamastarrstorytelling.com/



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featured in the next issue.*

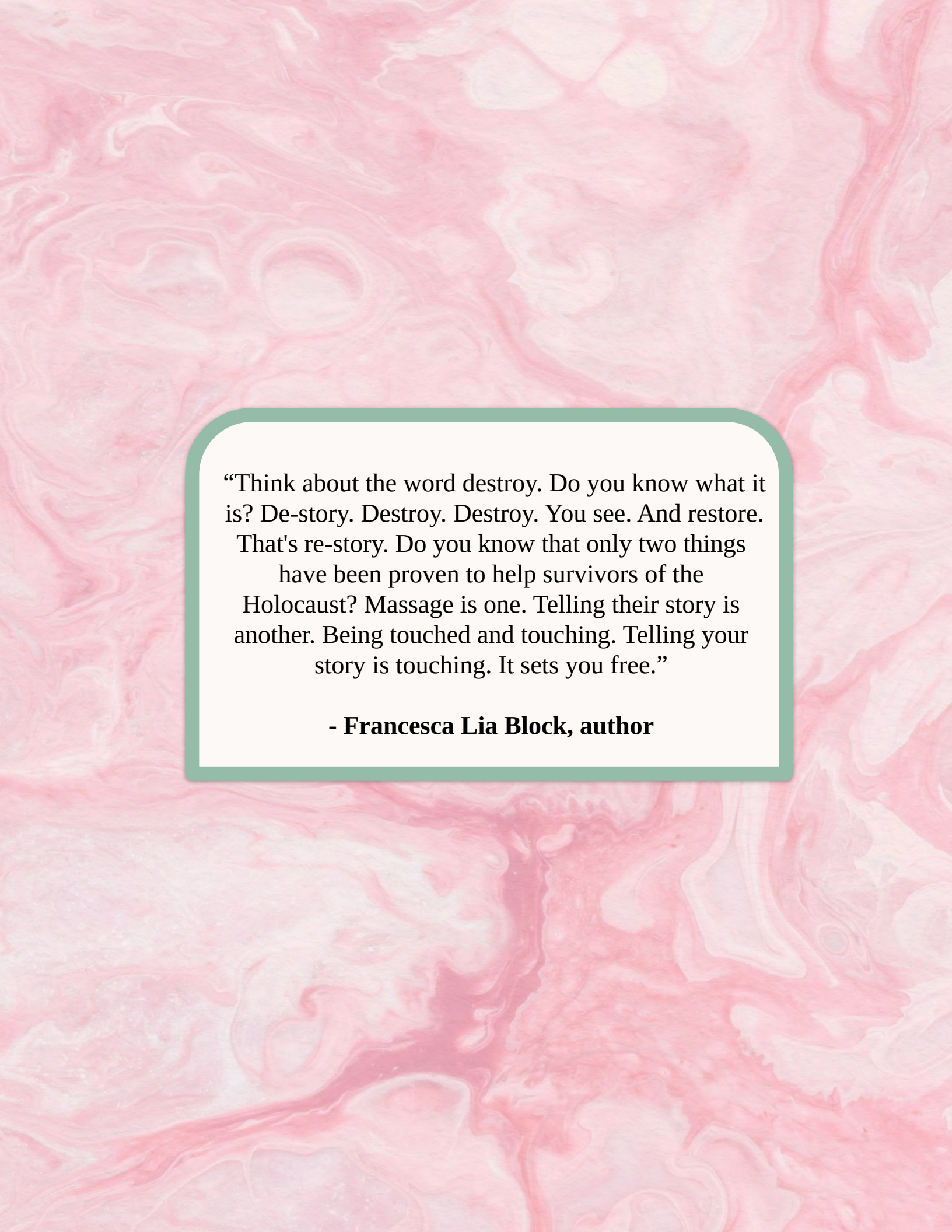
The Story Beast 2025 Themes

**Summer - Sizzling Splendor - Due May
15**

Fall - Quirky Quandaries - Due Aug 15

Winter - Frosted Glass - Due Nov 15

Spring - Boisterous Blooms - Due Feb 15

The background of the entire image is a marbled pattern in shades of pink, red, and white, resembling stone or liquid swirls. A white rectangular box with rounded corners and a thin green border is centered on the page, containing the text.

“Think about the word destroy. Do you know what it is? De-story. Destroy. Destroy. You see. And restore. That's re-story. Do you know that only two things have been proven to help survivors of the Holocaust? Massage is one. Telling their story is another. Being touched and touching. Telling your story is touching. It sets you free.”

- Francesca Lia Block, author

THE STORY BEAST

Growing Gab

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Into the sunny day was thrust the face of mistress Hibbins.
Hugh Thomson

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-LETTERS-

March 2025 WELCOME

We made it to March, yay! Yet we appear to be in a whirlwind of perpetual perturbations, natural disasters, and man-made challenges. It seems almost as if we are in that future predicted by W.B. Yeat's poem, *The Second Coming*:

Turning and turning in the widening gyre
The falcon cannot hear the falconer;
Things fall apart; the centre cannot hold;
Mere anarchy is loosed upon the world....
The best lack all conviction, while the worst
Are full of passionate intensity.

What can we do as artists and storytellers? What is our obligation? According to Robert Kikuchi-Yngogo of Eth-Noh-Tec, our charge as artists is to help people open their hearts. We need to humanize the other and draw out compassion. Throughout history, storytellers and artist have been tellers of truth. This reminds me of the Jewish teaching story of *Truth and Story*:

In the beginning Truth walked among people unclothed and unadorned. Whoever saw Truth, turned away in shame or fear, and gave her no welcome. Truth wandered through the world rebuffed and unwanted. She noticed in her travels, that Story walked a similar path, but unlike Truth, Story was welcomed wherever she went, adorned in her brightly-coloured clothes, speaking her lyrical language, and flashing her smile to all.

One day, Story came across Truth, naked and cold, huddling in the doorway of a ruined house. Truth explained that her nakedness frightened people, that she was unwelcome and unwanted. Story gathered her up and took her home. She dressed Truth in fine clothes, warmed her, and fed her. And from that time on, Truth and Story have traveled hand in hand. When they knock on doors, they are readily welcomed in, invited to dine at the table, and warm themselves by the fire.

Story does not tell people what to do. It invites folks to come to their own conclusions. It is one of the most respectful ways to share knowledge, wisdom, and truth. What we can do is to do what we do best -- tell the truth wrapped in story. Our actions do not have to be large or grandiose. It can simply be part of what we do every day -- telling stories with intention and conviction. Facts do not change people's minds. Feelings do. We can help folks feel more compassion for the other.

The Story Beast is your quarterly e-Publication forum and is a place of community. Please share your creative works -- poems, stories, artwork, or articles -- with us and tell your friends about us. Let us know what you think and send your contributed works to storybeasteditor@gmail.com.

The deadline for contributions for the next issue of *The Story Beast* is May 15 for the Summer 2025 issue. The Summer issue's theme is Sizzling Splendor. Thanks for reading and remember that truth wrapped in story is a beautiful thing, easy to accept, and love.

Respectfully,
The Spirits of the Beast
storybeasteditor@gmail.com



Dearest Crone:

I feel lost in all the noise of the world today. There's so much shouting — about injustice, about money, about who deserves what — that I don't know where I fit in or if my voice even matters. How do I find my own voice when the world feels like a storm of opinions and inequalities?

Drowning in the Din

Dear Drowning in the Din:

Ah, the world is a tempest, a great and howling wind that carries the voices of the desperate, the hopeful, the furious, and the wise. If you're drowning, my dear, it's not because your voice doesn't matter. It's because you've been listening too hard to the noise outside and not enough to the voice within.

The trick is not to be the loudest. The trick is to be the truest. That means asking yourself: What do you care about? What breaks your heart? What sets your soul on fire? Injustice and economic disparity aren't just headlines; they are lived realities, and every person — including you — has a piece of wisdom to offer. You do not need to be an expert, a scholar, or a warrior to matter. You need only be honest and clear.

Remember, the greatest voices in history did not rise above the storm by being the loudest. They cut through it with clarity, with conviction, with an unshakable knowing of who they were. Your voice is not meant to compete with the chaos — it is meant to be a lighthouse in the fog.

Take a breath. Sit with your thoughts. Read widely, listen deeply, but most importantly, trust that what you have to say is worth saying. If the world is a chorus, then your voice — distinct and true — adds a note that no one else can.

If you seek guidance, books can be great companions on the path to self-discovery. I recommend:

- The Courage to Speak by Susan Cain (Dewey Decimal: 153.6)
- The War of Art by Steven Pressfield (Dewey Decimal: 808.02)
- Emergent Strategy by Adrienne Maree Brown (Dewey Decimal: 303.4)
- Finding Your Own North Star by Martha Beck (Dewey Decimal: 158.1)

For deeper dives into social inequalities and how to navigate them:

- The Color of Law by Richard Rothstein (Dewey Decimal: 305.8)
- Nickel and Dimed by Barbara Ehrenreich (Dewey Decimal: 331.2)
- The Shock Doctrine by Naomi Klein (Dewey Decimal: 330.9)

There was a time when the village crone sat atop the highest hill, watching the stars and listening to the whispers of the wind. She was the keeper of forgotten wisdom, the weaver of words that could untangle the most knotted thoughts. In those days, people sought her out not for the loudest proclamations, but for the whispers that resonated with the soul. You, too, must climb to your own high place — perhaps not of stone, but of solitude — and listen to the magic that lingers between breaths.

In the realms of fantasy, the hero does not find their voice in the clamor of the marketplace. They find it deep in the forest, in the quiet murmur of an enchanted brook, or in the flickering candlelight of a dusty library. Let your journey be the same. The world's cacophony will not grant you clarity; only stepping into the quiet spaces will. The dragon's roar does not silence the true sorceress — it only strengthens her resolve.

So go forth, traveler. Collect the fragments of your truth like a mage gathering ancient runes. Speak when you are ready, and not a moment before. The world does not need another echo. It needs a voice as deep as the roots of the oldest tree, as fierce as the storm, and as unwavering as the North Star. And that, my dear, is where your magic lies.

Speak. Someone is waiting to hear exactly what you have to say.

Yours on the Road
- The Crone of All Crones



WANTED



Content for THE STORY BEAST

Looking for Story in all its exciting forms: traditional, modern or melded!

- Short Stories
- Articles on Storytelling
- Art
- Story Based Activities
- Poems

Themes for Upcoming Issues:

Summer - June 2025 - Sizzling Splendor - Due May 15

Fall - September 2025 - Quirky Quandaries - Due August 15

Winter - December 2025 - Frosted Glass - Due November 15

Spring - March 2026 - Boisterous Blooms - Due February 15

For Submission Guidelines go to storybeast.org/submissions

Submit to storybeasteditor@gmail.com



-BOOK NOTES-

“So many books, so little shelf space!”

BOOK NOTES

SPECIAL INTERVIEW

MARGARET READ MACDONALD

Storytelling's "Ambassador of Joy"

by Jo Radner



Margaret Read MacDonald has been a pillar of the storytelling community in the United States and around the world for more than forty years. Storyteller, librarian, folklorist, her storytelling reference books and handbooks, her folktale collections, and her folklore studies have nourished storytellers, and her own storytelling and published stories have spread the pleasures of telling into myriad libraries and households. Enjoy her website:

<http://www.margaretreadmacdonald.com/index.cfm>.



Jo Radner: You are such a universal storyteller. You've done storytelling work in more places in the world than anyone I know. Possibly not Antarctica?

Margaret Read MacDonald: No, not Antarctica. Definitely.

JR: So there's still a goal out there! But you've done so many different kinds of things. I'd like to start by asking you what you look back on with the greatest pleasure in your career.

MRM: I think the thing that actually makes me happiest about the things I've done is being able to teach librarians and storytellers and teachers to tell stories, and instigate them to actually get out there and tell stories. I think that's the thing that really pleases me most. When I get an email from a librarian or a teacher who took a class with me, sometimes a class, but often just a workshop -- years ago -- and they'll say, Oh, I'm still telling "The Squeaky Door." I'm still telling "Jack and the Robbers" or some of the stories that I taught them. And how much they've enjoyed sharing that with children. And what I really am proud of being able to do is to get people to actually do it -- to convince them that it's easy. It doesn't have to be difficult! You can just pick up a story and go start doing it without even practice. Just start sharing and pretty soon....

And I've been able to shape stories in such a way that it makes it easy for someone to learn. They are very, very, very oral in the way they're put on the paper. So the story comes out orally. It comes out the way it should be told.

And then I'm very pleased that I've taught my daughter Jennifer to become a storyteller. And then her husband Nat became a storyteller. I really love working with those two guys and I know that there's a heritage there, that when I disappear from the planet, which will happen one of these days, not too long from now, probably, there will be someone to take all my library here, love it, and keep on telling the stories.

JR: That is crucial. That is crucial. When you teach people how to tell stories -- and that, of course, has been something you've done brilliantly all over the world -- what do you tell them about the importance of what they're doing?

MRM: I don't know that I've stressed the importance of it, but I stress the joy that they can get and bring to their children and the audiences they work with through telling, and how important it is to create those moments of joy with the kids.

Take five minutes every day just to share a story. It doesn't take very long at all. I try to stress how easy it is and how much joy it'll bring to the group.

JR: So you're a kind of ambassador of joy! I like that image.

MRM: That's what I'm trying to do. I'm sure a lot of stories have wonderful morals that we want -- they're in there and they're great for teachers to use. But I tell them it's not just about that. It's about the shared joy of doing it and the bonding that occurs within a group when they hear a story, which is really important in the classroom. The first week of school in particular, it's a great way to bond the kids. If you tell them a story, they all experience it with you and it just bonds the group.

JR: You've taught storytelling in a lot of different countries in the world, a lot of different cultures. How is that different in different places?

MRM: Wow. When I was in Kenya, in Nairobi, I was invited by a friend of a friend to come and visit her and do some storytelling. And I thought, well, if she asks what I want to do in my spare time, I'd love to go and hear this storytelling group I read about in my Lonely Planet Guide called the Sigana Storytellers. And when I got there and she gave me the schedule sheet arranged for me -- and I was going to international schools and to other schools and telling stories that she'd arranged for me to do -- I was doing a two-day workshop for the Sigana Storytellers! The ones I was hoping to go hear! So I did the workshop for them, I did, you know, a whole day workshop, and by afternoon, they said, "Wait a minute, let us show you how to really tell stories!" And they get up and they stand up in a circle and they're all dancing and singing and everybody's taking part at the same time. It was just incredible, just incredible. I loved it.

JR: So the teacher becomes the student. Which is, of course, wonderful.

MRM: The teacher becomes a student. The main difference there is that when they tell stories, they are moving. It's all about joy. They're singing, they're dancing. I know that a lot of the stories that I have retold are from Africa or the Caribbean because you can see the songs in them. They don't have the songs often in the text, but I get them from folklore sources, anthropology sources. You can see that there should have been music there, dancing there, and call-and-response going on. So I try to put that back in. But to be in the middle of it was great.

One of the stories that I actually created is a story of two goats on a bridge. You've probably heard me tell that or heard someone tell that. [JR: Yes.] It's in Peace Tales. I put together two different stories that I found in two different sources from Eastern Europe. Once I was in Indonesia and I was telling to some teenage kids who didn't really have English and I had to make it really simple. So I just created this finger play with the story, which worked very well. My friends in Southeast Asia use it a lot. Once a teller from Kenya came to Southeast Asia to a workshop. And they taught him this story and he took it back (you can see it online, on YouTube). And he, of course, "Kenyanized" it and added more singing and more movement. It's my story, but even better. I love it. And of course, it feels like it's definitely a Kenyan folktale, because it has all the elements!

Stories just go traveling around the world. It's really fun. You can see them just flying here, flying there. It's really great.

JR: Nowadays we're so careful about being true to a particular culture and knowing the culture and telling the story with respect for the culture. And I do believe in that. But as a folklorist -- and you're a folklorist too -- I'm aware that that's not the way the folk process works.

MRM: Exactly.

JR: A Kenyan can hear an Indonesian folktale or an Indonesian version of a goat story from someplace else, and turn it into a completely culturally appropriate story. And that's the process.

MRM: Exactly. That's what happened.

JR: I'm always caught between those two poles.

MRM: Yeah. Well, it's important when we're using the stories in the schools and the libraries that we talk about the background, so that the children understand where the story came from and it has a meaning, so that they're learning about other cultures.

JR: Yes. Stories are also a thing of possession in some cultures. That's real.

MRM: That's true. And here, here in the Northwest, Native American stories are often owned by families and by individuals, not even just by tribes. We have all this discussion about, Who can give permission to tell the story? Because sometimes a person gets permission, but someone else in the tribe says, well, wait a minute, they didn't have permission.

Hildred Ides is a Makah teller. One year I was teaching at an Elderhostel up at Port Angeles, and she was there one night to tell stories. And I asked her afterwards for her permission and I said, "Can I tell some of your stories?"

"Which story?" And I said, "Well, you know, like the story about the bear."

"No, you can't tell that. That belongs to another family. And they gave me permission."

"Well, could I tell the story about so-and-so?"

"Well, that's my thing. I have to ask my family permission, but I could ask them if you want."

"What about the elk and the ram?"

"Oh, everybody knows that! You could tell that, no problem." So even within our hour-long program, stories had different ownership qualities to them. [JR:Mm-hmm.]

JR: So let me switch gears. You and I and a number of other storytellers are now real elders. [MRM: Yes.] And I'm wondering what that actually means to different ones of us. How do you see your career now -- your projects and yourself -- as an elder teller?

MRM: Yeah, that's a good question. Many years ago I was with Vi Hilbert, and she was impressing on me the importance of being an elder. That, to her, was a very important thing and she took that very seriously. Maybe I don't take it seriously enough!

What I've been doing recently is trying to make sure that things are saved. I just ran across two manuscripts from my friend [the late] Wajuppa [Tossa]. She did these incredible translations of Lao folk epics that were stored in a rural monastery in palm leaf manuscripts. [JR: Wow.] They're in an ancient script that only a few of the priests can still read. And she had worked with a monk near where she lived. He had translated them for her and then she translated them into English. And she created two books that got published and then two that didn't get published. I've got copies of these manuscripts here. I don't know if there's a copy anywhere stored in Mahasarakham, if her student assistant Prasong Saihong has put them in the library there or not. But I contacted the library at Indiana University, the Folklore Archive, and they're going to accept them.



Nat, MRM, and Jen

Things like that, that I have stuck here in corners, I want them not to be thrown in the garbage when I disappear. So as an elder, I'm taking that seriously.

And we need to get all those teachers and all those librarians telling stories! They aren't doing it. It seems like it comes and it goes.

JR: So you're charging along on the same path, trying to do as much as you can of what you have been doing all along! [MRM: Exactly. Yeah!] Well, may you have many more decades to do it!

MRM: Well, one, at most, we could hope for. I'm 85, so you know.

JR: The last thing I'd like to ask you is, what do you hope will happen with storytelling from now on -- in this country, in particular?

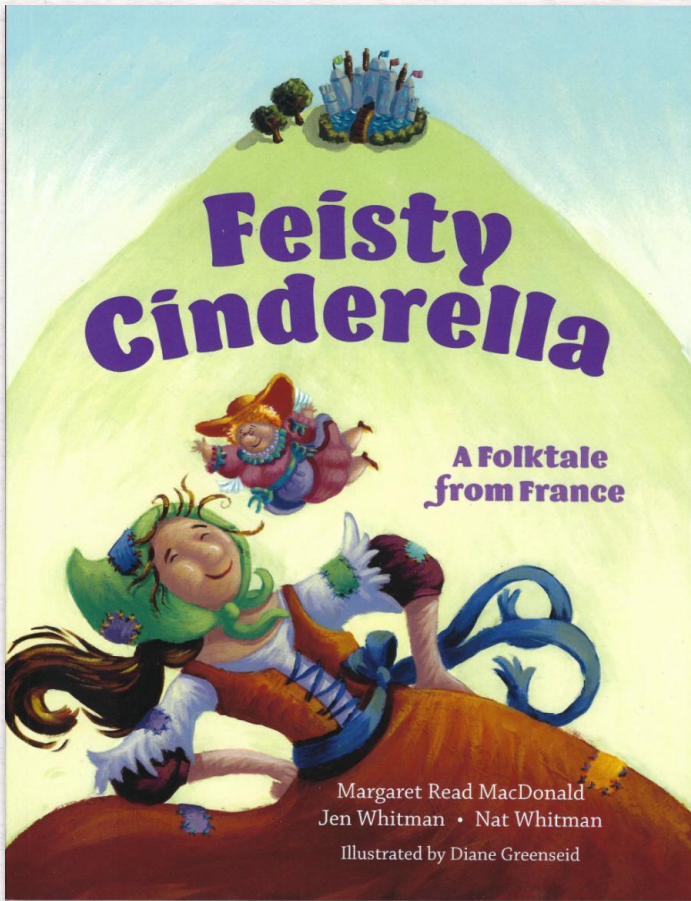
MRM: I hope that teachers and librarians start telling stories to kids. And, you know, keep on passing the stories on. When I was working as a librarian, I always felt that I had two missions: one was to find the right book for the child, and the other was to find the right reader for the book. And it's the same way with stories: there are these wonderful stories that need to be heard and the stories are asking someone to please tell me, pass me on, pass me on, pass me on. And then there are all these audiences that need to hear them.

JR: And that's lovely because you're thinking, not only tell stories to children, but be involved enough to know your audience and to know your listeners and to have the right story for them. Really, that's the art, isn't it? Matching the story.

MRM: Yes.



I close this special Book Notes piece with a note about Margaret's latest book -- her 66th!



Margaret Read MacDonald, Jen Whitman, and Nat Whitman, *Feisty Cinderella: A Folktale from France*. Des Moines, WA: Tellable Tales, 2024. \$9.99.

Margaret Read MacDonald, her daughter, and her son-in-law have told and told and finally adapted to print a classic Breton folktale from Geneviève Massignon's *Contes de L'Ouest* (1954). The Cinderella figure is here nicknamed "Little Flea," because "her best friends in the world were dogs, cats, squirrels, and chipmunks." There is of course a Fairy Godmother, ingenious and earthy, and there is a Prince and a ball. But the Prince is snotty, and Little Flea (as Margaret told me when I asked her what she loves about this book) is sassy! Do they marry in the end? Maybe, maybe not. This is a wonderful tale, illustrated with lively charm by artist Diane Greenseid. And as she does with so many storybooks, MacDonald has written this one with a storyteller's ear for rhythms. Someone you know needs this story!



About the Author

Jo Radner has been studying, teaching, telling, and collecting stories most of her life, and has performed from Maine to Hawaii to Finland. Professor emerita at American University, Jo returned to Maine as a freelance storyteller and oral historian. She is past president of the American Folklore Society and the National Storytelling Network. **Website:** joradner.com



-TAMING *the* BEAST-

The Art of Crafting Stories

Anansi Stories?

By Patricia Coffie

I took my two international students to the Austin, MN Storytelling Festival. The girls heard “festival” and came out dressed very nicely, but with no hats, gloves, coats, or boots. I explained the drive north in February would be very cold and sent them back for winter gear.

We drove the two hours talking about “ground blizzards” where the wind whips the already fallen snow up into the air in blinding whirls. We spoke of the mile markers and how helpful it was to use them to indicate location when calling in for help.

At the Austin MN Storytelling Festival, we parked the car then made our way over small drifts on the sidewalk to a small café for a warm-up snack and then along more snowy sidewalks to the theatre. I introduced them to the festival producers and to some of the storytellers. We settled in to listen.

We were seated in an auditorium, all facing forward, with tellers standing on stage with a microphone. A tall North American told his carefully studied and planned Anansi story, standing still and using a microphone. That presentation upset my Ghanaian guests and their agitation showed.

When we began the drive back to Waverly, the students burst out with indignation about that telling of an Anansi story. One of the students was in the back seat and one was in the passenger front seat. They said, “Anansi stories are from our country! Those are from Ghana! We grew up listening to them!”

Anansi the Spider is a wise, funny, mischievous, and loveable folk hero who pops up in traditional Ashanti tales from Ghana, in West Africa. Stories of this trickster are told far and wide and picture books of such stories are in many libraries.

“Anansi stories are not told by men standing on stage, with a microphone, to people sitting looking straight ahead!” they exclaimed.

Yes, exclamation marks filled the car until they began to tell the same Anansi story as it should have been told and would have been told at home in Ghana.

My little car rocked back and forth along the highway as they told of the proper setting. People would be gathered and be sitting all around, some on the ground. The teller would walk among them, touching one on the head and another on the shoulder and engaging them all in the telling.

The storyteller might say “And that leopard had a very long tail—wasn’t that a long tail?” And the chosen listener might reach down and stroke an imaginary but very long leopard tail while saying, “Yes, yes, that tail was very long.”

I had read the stories in picture books and heard them told at festivals and story times, but now for the first time, I experienced the lively call and response in the proper telling of one of the Anansi stories.

I learned so much about other lives in a few, simple, in-person encounters. Seeing Iowa as a foreign country to some affects my view of the rest of the world and storytelling. We all live in countries foreign to some.

Contributor to be contacted regarding permission to tell this work



About the Author

Patricia Coffie was born interested and Iowan. She tells personal and family stories filled with love and laughter and sometimes tears from a heart that belongs to the Midwest. Previously published in *Hot Rod Magazine*, *Our Iowa*, *Storytelling Magazine*, and in “Stories from Home” Waverly Iowa Newspapers, print and digital.
maemaude@mac.com

Storytellers Should be Spies

by Kevin D. Cordi

As storytellers, we are spies, or at least we should be. Our mission is to find story, where we least expect. To help you fulfill this mission, I offer the following tips in sleuthing.

Don't be in a hurry. Story is a trickster that runs on his or her own time. If you rush, you may miss the arrival of story. Instead, stay longer in the post office and listen to the conversations as packages are being wrapped. You should deliberately get lost in a neighborhood you don't know (be safe), take a notebook, and record the possible stories, which could happen. Enter a diner and for fun write down the possible conversations, which people are having. Let your mind flow, don't be in a rush to get to story. Engage in the practice of allowing story to arrive. Remember, story may come at unexpected moments, don't be in a hurry. Instead, be ready to catch story when it arrives.

Play and Play again. Sherlock Holmes didn't arrive immediately at who-done-it. Instead, he played out scenarios to discover the possible and even explored the improbable. The same should be true of your story-making process. Instead of learning one version of a folktale or writing down a story and immediately telling it, become the sleuth. Explore the hidden cracks and corridors, which lie within the story. Discover your character's motivation. Has she acted this way before? If she met the wild Gunnywolf again, what would she do differently? Play with the possible, the improbable, but more importantly, discover more about the story.

Magnify and Minimize your story. Like Holmes, look closer into the smallest problem and make the "what ifs" and the "imagine this" in your story larger. What if the Gunnywolf was only a baby wolf? What if the wolf liked to laugh uproariously? Does the story change? Change the perspective. What if the Gunnywolf was only a small part of the story and you concentrate on the heroine's fears? Are they rational or irrational? How did she show fear before? Play with making things bigger and smaller in your story. You will often be surprised and amazed at the results.

Don't close the case. As some of Holmes' cases were revisited and expanded, so too it can be with your stories. No story is ever closed. It is simply on pause until it calls to you again. Remember, stories are tricksters. They shout, sometimes whisper, and we must pay attention to the voice which calls out to us. Lying in wait is perhaps the next part of the story journey, or a clue that you need to revisit a character or change how much you intensify the conflict. The key to unlocking this mystery is knowing when stories are reaching out to you and then answering them. As a spy, you need to explore various ways to unlock the mystery the story is trying to tell you.

Don't always find the familiar, explore the unknown. Sherlock didn't always interview people he suspected. Instead, he explored those who added to his understanding. He investigated people, whom he found curious, because he didn't understand their "why." As storytelling spies, reach out to enrich your story community by talking to more and more people with undiscovered stories. Listen as each person reveals a clue. Don't get trapped in one genre or audience level. "I only tell for kids," or "I only tell folktales" may limit you from discovering story. Play, risk, discover. The stories are there. They can trick you. They can bring you to new, exciting, and unexplained places. Be the spy. Discover what awaits.

To be told in educational and professional settings with attribution



About the Author

Kevin Cordi has told stories in over forty states, England, Scotland, Singapore, Canada, Japan and in Qatar. His has been commissioned by The Kennedy Center, American Library Association, National Storytelling Network, Newsweek, and the Qatar Foundation International. He is an Associate Professor at the Ohio University Lancaster.

SURVIVING

My Art

What Assembly?

By Megan Hicks

The tellers at a festival were sent into surrounding schools for assemblies. I was assigned middle schoolers at a K-8 school. I had requested middle school classes. It's my favorite age to work with.

My escort and I arrived during lunchtime cacophony. He went to check in with the school secretary.

"We're here for the storytelling assembly."

Secretary checks calendar.

"What assembly?"

My escort displays festival flyer with the school's name included among the events.

Secretary heaves a sigh and pages the custodian.

The custodian meets us in the gym-a-torium, where we all get busy pulling bleachers out from one wall. The secretary, en route to the equipment room to find a microphone, is intercepted by the gym teacher asking what the heck is going on, he's warming up the basketball team.

Middle school kids and teachers start filing in and filling up the bleachers. And then, to my surprise, on the other side of the gym, grades K-4 start filing in, requiring more frantic bleacher expansion on the other side. It had become an all-school assembly.

Coach is not happy about taking basketball practice outdoors.

I am given a cordless mic with a sputtering battery. The teachers all sit together in top bleachers. And visit. Down on the floor, I try to bridge the gulf between about 80 primary grade kids and 80 middle schoolers, who had no idea why they were out of class.

It was a long 40 minutes.



About the Author

Megan Hicks makes stuff and makes stuff up. For the purposes of this bio, she is three decades into a storytelling career that has taken her to four continents and from sea to shining sea. With her husband, whose name is (aptly) Jack, she co-produces the Rose Valley Storytelling House Concerts series, now in its 8th season. When she's not working on new stories, she's making art from things most other people throw away.

Contributor to be contacted regarding permission to tell this work

A Newbie Experience

By Jo Radner

Long, long, long ago when I was just barely a storyteller, I was invited to be the teller-of-the-day at the Southern Maryland Celtic Festival. Wow! What an opportunity! I would be an instant pro! I had all kinds of Irish stories, some of which I had translated myself. I was not dismayed, when I arrived, to find that the storytelling tent was in a rather remote location. I wasn't dismayed to find that the tent was a bit smaller than my kitchen (and thunderstorms were predicted). But then – as I launched into my first story – the worst revelation: the storytelling tent was next to the pipers' practice tent! Every story I told that day had bagpipes in it.



About the Author

Jo Radner has been studying, teaching, telling, and collecting stories most of her life, and has performed from Maine to Hawaii to Finland. Professor emerita at American University, Jo returned to Maine as a freelance storyteller and oral historian. She is past president of the American Folklore Society and the National Storytelling Network. **Website:** joradner.com

Scab!

By Jane Dorfman

One summer I was telling to a large group of very young kids, they were sitting on the floor.

The a little girl near the front said in a loud voice, "Who wants to see my scab?" and proceeded to peel off the band-aid.

There was no way I could compete with that, they all crowded around to look, I looked, admired her knee. I eventually got them all reseated. The parents at the back and I all laughed. One was blushing furiously.



About the Author

Jane Dorfman tells stories--folk and fairy tales, legends, personal stories, and a few lies--for adults and children. She has two award-winning CDs and tells at festivals, libraries, and for community groups. She was the featured teller at the Glens of Antrim Festival in Northern Ireland. <https://www.janedorfman.me/>
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—STORYCOLOGY—

Storytelling for Environmental Awareness and Action

“We believe that the future of humankind depends on our stewardship of the Earth and that storytelling plays a major role in educating, informing, sparking conversations, and moving people towards taking actions for a more sustainable world.”

A Drop At a Time

by Bowen Lee

The forest raged with fire. The monstrous blaze engulfed the trees, and all the animals fled to the fields on the other side of the river. They watched as their home was consumed by fiery red flames.

A hummingbird flew to the river, dipping to take a mouthful of water, then flying over the fire and letting the water fall from its beak. It did this again and again, regardless that only a drop or two fell on the blazing inferno.

The other animals didn't see the point. It wasn't making any difference in the fire. "You could always help," suggested the hummingbird.

Many animals simply stayed where they were. They were safe, and although it was a terrible event that was happening, they felt lucky to be alive and out of danger.

Others started putting water on the fire. Whatever they could manage, even if it was a small amount, when they all pitched in, that water put out some of the blaze.

Others found ways to help those fighting the fire. They tended to the injured, gathered supplies to make the work more efficient, fed the fire fighters to keep them going. They also helped the animals displaced by the fire, making sure they were safe, fed, and sheltered.

In some versions of this story there is divine intervention, and some omnipresent being comes to the aid of the hummingbird and puts out the fire. In some versions it's the animals who all join in and put that fire out.

But in this story, the fire burns on, and the hummingbird tirelessly endeavors to put it out, one drop at a time. There is no foreseeable ending, but the hummingbird doesn't care. It just keeps working.



In an earlier Storycology column I wrote about Isaac Lihanda of Kenya. While we in the United States are dealing with the effects of climate change in disasters such as hurricanes, floods, and wildfires, coastal Kenya is experiencing drought -- every day, endlessly. The coast of Kenya threatens to become a desert, devoid of fresh water. Imagine a hurricane that never stops, a flood that doesn't let up, or a fire that can't be put out. That is what this region of Kenya is facing. No water, ever.

Regardless, Isaac Lihanda is doing his very best to change the situation and reverse the effects of climate change in the area. When water districts were closed because there was no water, people abandoned their villages and only the poorest of the poor were left behind. They had no resources, no schools, no food. Isaac stayed with them and has been trying valiantly to change their lives for the better.

In the three years I have known him, Lihanda has started new agricultural practices to re-green the area and feed the people using very little water. The trees now bear fruit; there are mangos to pick. The food plants can be harvested and resown for more crops. The young trees provide shade and retain water in the soil. Villagers carefully tend these plants, knowing this is a lifeline to a better future.

Lihanda has started a school for 300 children. There is no government support for such a project, and the teachers are volunteers. Despite no funding, no supplies, no curricular materials, and no technology, the community has built a schoolhouse and sent their children, boys and girls, to be educated for a better life. The school is a community focal point where people can come together and do something positive for each other.

Poverty, illness, hunger, and ignorance are what Lihanda is combatting along with the effects of climate change. He is not exempt. He is not paid for the work he does. He recently had a serious case of yellow fever from which he slowly recovered. His father recently passed away in Lihanda's home in the Rift Valley, and Lihanda did not have the money to go to his father's funeral. He has been pleading his cause with people in the developed countries for years, but few have given assistance.

If you are reading this, I hope you realize that Isaac Lihanda is a bona fide hummingbird. He is valiantly trying to put out the destructive flames of climate change, poverty, social injustice, and apathy.

Lihanda visited India very recently to bring the plants his community grew to an ayurvedic pharmaceutical company to sell as medicinal herbs. It will be the first cash crop for the people of coastal Kenya out of the new agricultural practices Lihanda has begun.

The hummingbird makes a difference, one drop at a time.

If you would like to make a difference, donate to Isaac Lihanda's GoFundMe. - <https://gofund.me/9c2818e3>

To be told in educational and professional settings with attribution.



Storycology Head Editor

Bowen Lee divides her time between cities, forests, and the ocean around Monterey, CA. She has been a teacher, a writer, an illustrator, and now, she tells stories, incorporating storytelling into all aspects of teaching. She conducts workshops on storytelling to teach educational content in national and regional education conferences.

Website: storyrex.com



-TEACHER TALES & TENTACLES-



Story Seeds: The Enormous Turnip across the Curriculum

By Jen and Nat Whitman

Benchmark:

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RL.2.2

Recount stories, including fables and folktales from diverse cultures, and determine their central message, lesson, or moral.

Spring is here! Time for new beginnings. Time to prepare our gardens. Time to watch the blossoms grow. Time to plant storytelling seeds in our classrooms!

One way to “Grow Gab” with our students is to harness the magical power of folktales. We love a repetitive folktale with plenty of room for dramatic play. These tales allow us to connect to many curricular objectives while having FUN with our students.

The ENORMOUS Turnip is one of our favorites. It's a classic that lends itself to repeated story play. You might already have this in your personal story garden, but here's the way we tell it, along with a few suggestions for bringing students into the story and connecting it across the curriculum:



About the Authors

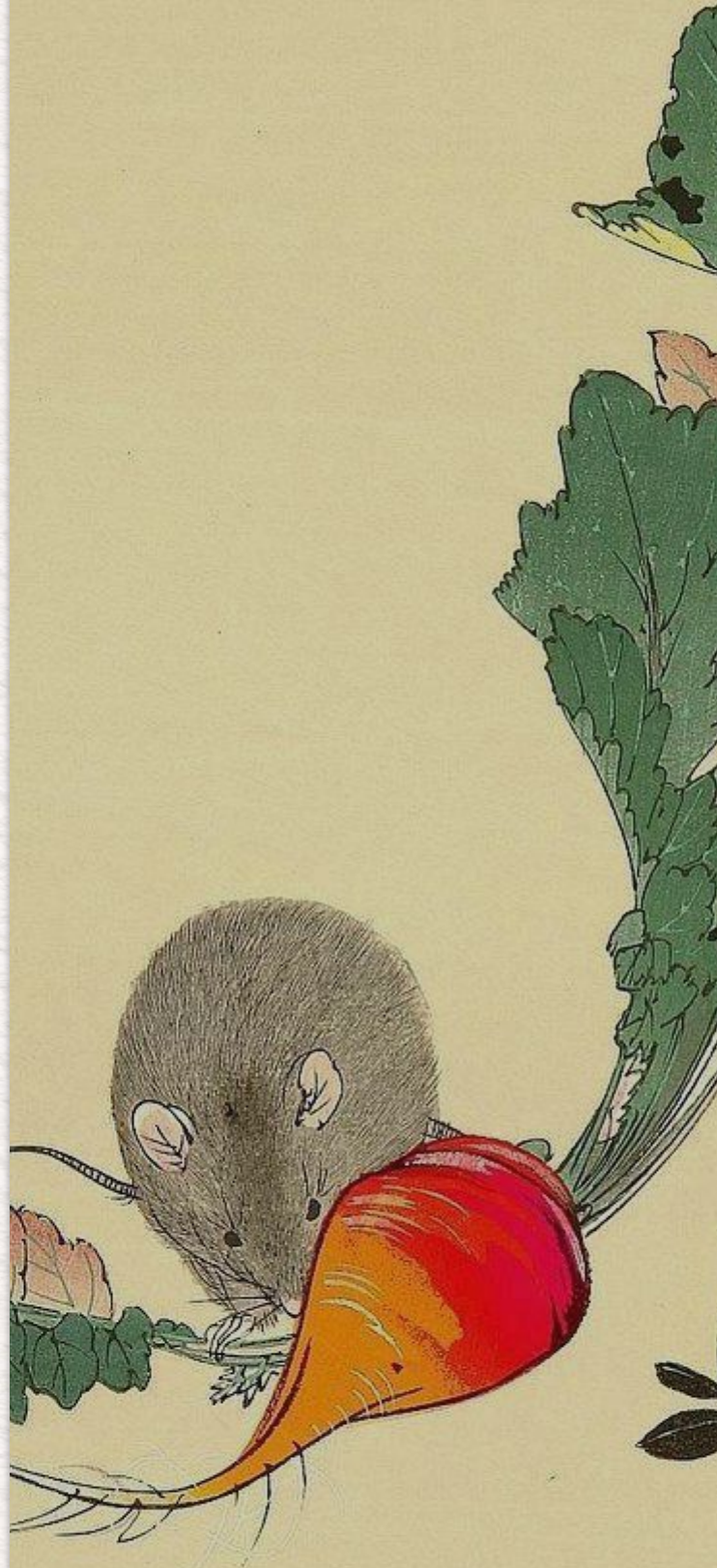
Jen and Nat Whitman recently moved back to the United States after 23 years teaching and telling in international schools in Thailand, Germany, and Hong Kong. Jen is an Early Childhood teacher and Nat is an Elementary Librarian. They teamed with Margaret Read MacDonald to write a “How-To” guide for using stories in the classroom called, *Teaching with Story: Classroom Connections to Storytelling*. Jen and Nat perform in tandem together as The Whitman Tellers. They are currently sharing stories of political cooperation across the 50 States with a series of social media shorts called “Purple Minutes” for the Purple Points Project. You can learn more about the Whitmans at www.whitmantellers.com.

The Enormous Turnip

A folktale from Eastern Europe

Retold by Nat and Jen Whitman

A seed is like a tiny dream...a wish for the future.
Sometimes, when you plant a dream, magic happens!
So it was when an old man planted a turnip seed.
It grew and grew, until it was big.
It grew and grew, until it was huge.
It grew and grew, until it was ENORMOUS!
The old man pulled and pulled,
but it wouldn't come out.
He began to sing as he pulled on the turnip top...
Turnip, turnip, big and round!
You are hiding in the ground!
I am hungry so I shout,
"Turnip, turnip, please come OUT!"
The turnip wouldn't budge,
so he called his wife to come help.
(Bring a student up to join you in pulling.)
They both took hold of the turnip stem
and they pulled as hard as they could.
They pulled and they pulled,
but it wouldn't come out.
They pulled and they pulled,
and they sang:
Turnip, turnip, big and round!
You are hiding in the ground!
We are hungry so we shout,
"Turnip, turnip, please come OUT!"
(Invite all the children to sing along.)
The turnip wouldn't budge,
so they called their daughter to come help.
(Bring a student up to join you in pulling.)
They all took hold of the turnip stem
and they pulled as hard as they could.
They pulled and they pulled,
but it wouldn't come out.
They pulled and they pulled,
and they sang:
Turnip, turnip, big and round! (etc.)
The turnip wouldn't budge,
so they called the _____ to come help (etc.)



(Time to invite more children into the story play.)

Ask the children who they would like to be:

A cat? A dog? A dinosaur? A doctor? A superhero? An alien?

In this story, anything works!

Take some time to play with the tale.

When you are ready to wrap up the story,

you may have the usual mouse come up and make the turnip pop out,

or maybe something even smaller: An ant? A flea?

OR it could be someone special to your class who finally makes it

possible to pull the turnip out: The principal? A volunteer? The teacher?

The librarian?

(Once everyone has had a turn, it's time to finish the story.)

They pulled and they pulled.

They pulled together as hard as they could.

They pulled and they pulled.

They sang together as loudly as they could.

Turnip, turnip, big and round!

You are hiding in the ground!

We are hungry so we shout,

"Turnip, turnip, please come...

OOOOOOOOUUUUUUUT!"

The turnip POPPED out of the earth...

and into the air...

and landed -- with everyone else --

ON THE GROUND!

(Everyone falls down to the ground.)

There was enough turnip to make turnip stew,

turnip mash, and even turnip cakes for the old man

and the old woman and the ____ and the ____ (etc.)

(Offer a little imaginary turnip to everyone to eat.)

And when everyone was full,

everyone turned to each other and said,

"THANK YOU, FRIENDS!"

(Everyone says, "THANK YOU, FRIENDS!")

And went back to their homes.

(Everyone goes back to their seats;

and when everyone is settled, wrap up the tale.)

Sometimes all we need is a little help from our friends.

When we work together,

we can solve any problem.

And even a little seed can make ENORMOUS magic!

A Note About Crowd Control

When we act out tales, crowd control is important. If we're sharing with a large group, we'll pull just a few kids up to help. But when we play with a tale like this with just one classroom, we often give everyone a chance to join the fun. We initially prompt and say, "There were some cats who were ready to help. Where are the cats?" If three children raise their hands, we say, "OH! Three cats jumped up to help!" We'll repeat this a few times with dogs and sheep, etc. After the majority of the class has joined, we'll offer a more open-ended invitation. "Who ELSE was there to help?" Here is where we might get a dinosaur or a superhero. All good. Some children won't want to join in, and of course, that's fine, too.

In a tale like this, where everyone is pulling together, remember: Safety first! There are many ways to approach management. You could have students put their hands gently on the shoulder of the child in front. (This requires a good deal of self-regulation and is recommended only when you know the kids well!) You could have a string that acts as the "stem" to give everyone something concrete to hold. We like to keep it simple and have everyone just stand in a line and mime holding the stem, working together to pull at the same time during the chorus.

Curricular Extensions

The repetitive language of this tale is, in itself, an impactful tool for developing oral language in our youngest students. The Enormous Turnip makes a great addition to an early childhood center where students can act out the tale over and over, playing with the language of the story each time. With older children, a simple folktale like this can be extended in myriad ways. The ages of your students and the time you have to explore the tale will dictate how you use it. Here are just a few of the many ways you might use The Enormous Turnip across the curriculum.

Language:

We love to play with synonyms with this tale.

Let's think about the adjectives. How many different ways could we explain that the turnip is large? Is LARGE the same as GIGANTIC? Is BIG the same as ENORMOUS? Could we put the words in order of relative size? Can we create a word chart with synonyms for LARGE? Can we do the same for small? This becomes a useful resource for our writing center.

What about the verbs? What would happen if we changed the verb PULLED to something similar? Tugged? Yanked? Are they exactly the same? Would they feel the same when we say them aloud? Would they look the same when we act it out?

Reading:

Can we compare and contrast this telling of The Enormous Turnip with other versions of the tale? What about other cumulative tales? What makes a cumulative tale?

Writing:

Can we create our own cumulative tale inspired by The Enormous Turnip, but in a completely different setting? What would happen if the tale were set in the ocean? The desert? Outer Space? Who would be the characters? What would they be pulling?

For younger students, we could make a class book with a sentence frame like this...

They said to the _____,

“JOIN US!”

They PULLED and they PULLED, but it wouldn’t come out!

Students each illustrate a page for their own character, and you quickly have a book to reread throughout the year.

Science/Math:

This folktale pairs beautifully with a gardening unit in science!

Bring in some turnips to observe. How do they feel? How do they grow in the ground? What is a root vegetable? Why can it be hard to pull them out of the ground?

Weigh the turnips! Which are the heaviest? The lightest? Can we put them in order?

Measure the circumference of the turnips! Which are the biggest? Smallest? Can we put them in order?

Music:

We love to add music to any tale. If you’d like to try singing, make up a tune and offer instruments to students to help create a richer musical experience during the story play.

Story Seeds

These were just a few curricular ideas...a few story seeds to keep in your pocket. How will your story garden grow this spring? Interactive folktales offer the perfect vehicle to create a “gabby” classroom, where students explore, debate, and consider the beautiful messages inherent in an oral tale. The soil is ready and waiting, and it’s time to get watering. Let’s all work together to nurture those story seeds and make some magic!



-STORY FEAST-

A bounty to share

STORY FEAST

By Karen Chace

Here in the United States, we are ready to jump into spring and I welcome the return of flowers, warm weather, and listening to the chatter of birds outside my window. With that in mind, and a nod to the theme Growing Gab for this issue, we begin with a folktale about a boy who talked with the birds.

[The Little Boy Who Talked with Birds - Mayan](#)

[The Man Who Never Lied — Africa](#)

[The Speech of Parrots - Thailand](#)

[Talk – Ashanti](#)

[Talk-Talk - Africa](#)

[The Talking Eggs – United States](#)

[The Talking Fish – Armenia](#)

[The Talking Goat – Liberia](#)

[That Talking Skull – Nigeria](#)

[The Two Gossips - Celtic](#)

[The Talking Silver Foxes – China](#)



Small Talk (De la tribu des Badinguet)
By Paul Gavarni, 1861-1862

'If you talk to a man in a language he understands, that goes to his head. If you talk to him in his own language, that goes to his heart.' – Nelson Mandela

CALENDAR

In celebration of our beautiful trees **Arbor Day** is observed all over the world. This year it will take place on April 25 in the United States

[The Mango Tree - Laos](#)

[Spirit of Trees](#) - Cristy West's growing website offers curricular resources, essays, organizational links, poetry and folktales from some of our leading storytellers and scholars. Rest in the cool shade of its branches and let the spirit of the trees nourish your soul.

[The Star Fruit Tree – Vietnam](#)

[The Story of the Coconut Tree](#) -This is the story of a beautiful moon princess, but it is also a story about bamboo, a plant which was once believed to be sacred.

[The Story of the Tree of Life – Tibet](#)

[Trees for Life](#) - "Award winning conservation charity dedicated to restoring the Caledonian Forest in the Highlands of Scotland." From Alder to Yew, this site offers an array of myths and folklore of the Caledonian Forest that will surely complement an Arbor Day storytelling program. Note: Unfortunately, the page is gone from the site, but it can still be accessed via the Wayback Machine at this link.

[The Tree Angel a Vietnam Legend](#) – A lovely story for Arbor Day about how the banana tree was created.

[The Tree That Reached the Sky – Hungary](#)

[Why the Evergreen Trees Keep Their Leaves in Winter by Florence Holbrook](#)

Mother's Day in the United States is celebrated on May 11 this year. This site offers some background information and dates on how and when other countries around the world honor this special day: Mother's Day Around the World. Happy Mother's Day to every woman who has opened their hearts to the children in their lives.

[The Aged Mother – Germany](#)

[The Bad Mother – Romania](#)

[The Disobedient Frog – Korea](#)

[The Dragon Prince and the Step-Mother – Türkiye](#)

[How the Kangaroo Got Its Pouch - Australia](#)

[Native American Legends and Stories About Mother Stories](#)

[The Magic Brocade – China](#)

[Mother Holle - Germany](#)

[Mother's Darling Jack – Romania](#)

[Mother's Legacy – Eastern Nigeria](#)

[The Poor Sick Mother – France](#)

[The Son of Seven Mothers – India](#)

[The Story of the Aged Mother – Japan](#)

[The Story of a Mother – Hans Christian Andersen](#)

Below are eleven fun and interesting folktales featuring talking animals.

[The Bremen Town Musicians - Grimm](#)

[The Cat's Elopement – Japan](#)

[Mr. Fox's Wedding - Grimm](#)

[Puss in Boots – France](#)

[The Story of a Gazelle – Africa](#)

[The Three Billy Goats Gruff – Three versions from Normandy, Poland, and Germany](#)

[The Three Little Pigs – Versions from England, the USA, and Italy](#)

[The Tiger, the Brahman, and the Jackel](#)

[The Ugly Duckling - Denmark](#)

[The White Cat](#)

[The Wolf and the Seven Kids](#)



Resources Provided By Karen Chace

Karen Chace is an award-winning storyteller, teaching artist, workshop leader, and author. Since 2002, she has taught the art of storytelling to over six hundred students. She is the recipient of the LANES Brother Blue-Ruth Hill Storytelling Award and the National Storytelling Network ORACLE Service and Leadership Award. storybug.net



-JOURNEYS-

“What marks do you leave in the places you go?

Who sees them?

Don’t you ever wonder?”



India Under the Aalamaram Tree

by Selina Eisenberg

Have you ever felt like the gods have conspired against you? Well, that's exactly how I felt this past August, weeks before leaving for India to participate in "Under the Aalamaram Storytelling Festival."

First, the e-visa I organized in June for August arrived in my inbox two weeks before leaving. I was elated, until keen eyes discovered that the entry and exit dates were set for June and July. Luckily, I managed to sort everything out in the nick of time.

A few days before my flight to Delhi, my husband decided to trim branches hanging over the driveway using clippers and a ladder. Dare I say more? A frantic neighbor shouted from the garage door, leading me to find my husband slumped on the concrete driveway, half dazed, with his back against a retaining wall. I jumped into action: Ice in a cloth for hubby's head, and a phone call to the local EMS. Eight minutes later, six local medics turned up to assess and bandage him before the ambulance arrived to take him to the hospital.

Was this a drastic attempt to keep me from going? Ten hours later, the MRI determined that there was no brain bleed which meant that the god of "dreams come true" was back on my side!

I had one day to discover New and Old Delhi. A few highlights were: Gurudwara Bangla Sahib, a house of worship known for its association with the eighth Sikh Guru; Jama Masjid, an iconic Sunni Mosque; and Humayun's tomb, built in 1560 for the Mughal emperor. Each landmark piqued my curiosity through architecture, landscape, and the ancient stories behind the inhabitants.

Arun, my tour guide, hired a Rickshaw driver to shuttle us around. This mute driver seemed oblivious to the cacophony of tooting horns as he skillfully cycled through traffic that seemed to defy logic. He left us near the spice market so I could walk the hidden, dusty alleyways where men sat waiting for their next sale. Vibrant colors, sounds, and the aromatic blend of spices and tea leaves awoke my senses.



Gurudwara Bangla Sahib Temple

We visited LOTUS Temple (Light of Truth Universal Shrine), a Bahai House of Worship beautifully designed to look like a lotus flower floating on water. While waiting in the queue to enter, a man asked if his daughters could take a photograph with me. A little stunned at first, I replied, "Sure, but I'm not a celebrity." This didn't seem to bother the girls or their father, and I happily posed with them. Later, Arun explained that they wanted a photograph with me because my skin is so white and exotic compared to their dark skin. That blew my mind. As a child, my friend's mom told me I possessed an aristocratic nose, and now, years later, I'm exotic!

Later that evening, I reflected upon this historical and cultural exploration of a country that had not been on my bucket list. India, like a sumptuous feast, was unfolding and I was ready to journey onward to partake in Under the Aalamaram Festival.

The next day, I flew to Coimbatore to meet the Kathai Kalatta team formed by acclaimed storyteller Jeeva Raghunath, her two business partners, and other festival participants. In all, we were five tellers from India and eight international tellers from Tanzania, Atlanta, Hawaii, the UK, Malaysia, Indonesia, Russia, and Canada (me).

That evening, a local storyteller took us on a walk to see the Ramar Hindu Temple close to our hotel in Coimbatore, Tamil Nadu. I loved seeing the architecture and learning that it is the only temple in India where the idols of Lord Rama and Goddess Sita are seen facing each other, depicting their love. It was intriguing to watch the different ways of worship. A prayer service that incorporated fire, oil, flowers, leaves, white powder, and bell ringing was mesmerizing. It opened my eyes to the intersectionality of these ancient practices, and how one can find threads of commonality between ritual-based faiths.

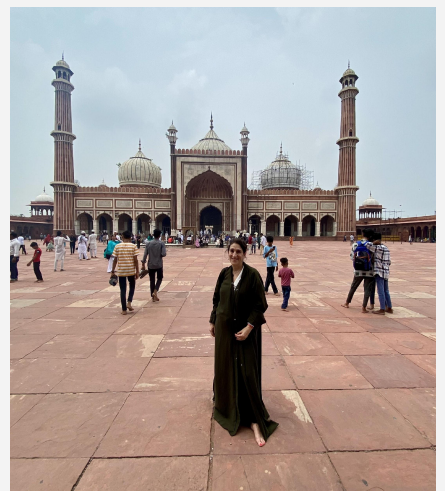
We had a day to ourselves to explore our surroundings, visit saree shops, eat authentic Indian food, and enjoy the rooftop views as we began our collaboration before the start of the festival. Our friend Alla regaled us with a story she created about Valenki, then gifted each storyteller with a small pair of felted Russian winter boots to hang as an ornament or to use as a prop when retelling the story.



The Spice Market



Ramar Hindu Temple in Coimbatore



Jama Masjid Mosque



First Day of the Festival

Each day we were divided into smaller groups and joined by one or two local tellers as we toured different schools in Coimbatore, Erode, and Chennai. Each session was received with gratitude by students and staff alike. I loved listening to each storyteller as they spun their unique tales. Every session ended with us joining the students in group photos, selfies, and autographing their notebooks. Some of the students wanted to know if I had a YouTube channel so that they could listen to more stories. We were treated like royalty and left with full bellies thanks to the delicious hot lunches provided by the school cooks.

On the morning of August 30, we arrived at the SRM Institute of Science and Technology in Chennai. Projected on the wall was a huge screen announcing an International Story Telling Festival by International Storytellers and there was my picture in the second row with my name (and Canada) below. Alton Takiyama-Chung (Japanese-Korean) was above me. On my left was Johnny Gillett (United Kingdom) and above him was Alla Lebedeva (Russia); while on my right was Jeeva Raghunath (India) and above her was Barry Stewart Mann (United States of America). It was a warm and presidential welcome indeed.

I loved sharing stories from my heritage and folktales from Quebec given that I live in Montreal. My stories were interactive, allowing students the opportunity to play with French or Jewish vocabulary. Imagine an auditorium filled with one thousand students all chanting: "sa moustache tremble un peu", or students humming, making the squeaking noise of a rocking chair, the click-clack of knitting needles, and then adding animal noises into the mix thanks to a wise Rabbi.

In one session, I told "The Tale of Meshka the Kvetch" and explained that 'kvetch' is a Jewish word meaning to complain. A youngster raised his hand and asked: "Ma'am, what is Jewish?" Just then I knew that this story opened a door for me to share and leave a little of my heritage in their hearts through story.



Author telling a story



Festival Tellers

In Erode, shoes were not permitted to be worn in the classroom - definitely a new experience for me. Later, in an impromptu workshop for parents on how to bring storytelling into the home through sharing family stories, I joked that, when I first began to tell stories, I only told wearing high heels. So, if I could tell barefoot, they could begin telling stories at home.

On the last day in Chennai, we were involved in a large-scale workshop for teachers who traveled from different parts of India. The thought was that if children learn through observation, so, too, should the teacher. It was a real treat to captivate and share our craft with these teachers who came from near and far to learn from us. Their energy and colorful sarees added a real joie de vivre to the experience.

“Journeys unfold with every story told,” is my motto, and what an adventure it has been. I am grateful to Jeeva for the invitation and to Canada Council for the Arts Travel Grant. This journey has further enriched my storytelling and desire to return to India to visit Cochin in Kerala to learn about the Jewish people who once lived there.

Contributor to be contacted regarding permission to tell this work



About the Author

Selina is a Canadian Storyteller and Early Childhood Educator. She weaves tales of all genre with her voice, a prop or two, or felt creations to open a portal where journeys unfold. Listeners of all ages have heard her tell stories in schools, libraries, galleries and festivals in Canada, US and internationally. Proud member of Storytellers of Canada, FEAST, Montreal and Ottawa Storytelling Guilds; and host of Montreal Storytellers Guild & Friends Virtual Storytelling Swap.

-FUSIONS-

That which brings us together



Energizing Tellers, Tales, and Audiences with Laughter

By Joan Leotta

“Laughter is the best medicine” has become a common saying for an important reason — it’s true. However, how do we laugh and elicit laughter when we’re out of jokes or when cultural differences erase the common ways to tickle funny bones? How do we manage to access the good power of laughing when we are focusing all of our energy on simply getting through to the other side of one of life’s dark tunnels?

Fortunately, Dr. Madan Kataria, a physician, author, speaker, and yoga practitioner, pondered this problem more than thirty years ago and with research, his knowledge of the human body and yoga, developed Laughter Yoga (LY) as a way for anyone anywhere to provoke laughter in themselves and others, without the need for jokes.

His research and experience as a physician and yoga practitioner discovered three important ideas that point to the efficacy of LY. The first is that the body does not know the difference between “real” laughter or laughter exercises — good effects still result. The second is that these exercises often result in real laughter, the kind that children enjoy in play. And the third is that laughter builds community and aids in changing our perspective on the world around us. LY takes participants back to a pure childlike laughter experience that can, as he says, strengthen the immune system and certainly improve one’s outlook by encouraging a change of attitude. (see sidebar: Interview with Dr. Kataria)

I first became aware of LY at an early November 2024 meeting of Artists Standing Strong Together ASST, (<https://www.asst.art/>) a non -profit organization that connects Independent Storytellers with the telling community and resources. Sue Kessler, ASST Executive Director, invited storytellers Lyn Ford and Norm Brecke, both certified teachers of LY to introduce meeting attendees to this practice. Kessler says, “Laughter Yoga ...feels like something that connects mind and spirit with body in a simple and fun way. In my experience, laughter is contagious, and I believe levity and mirth are crucial aspects to happiness in any given moment and deeply connected to one's ability to cope with all kinds of life circumstances.”

Ford and Brecke, after explaining a bit of LY history, immersed attendees in playful exercises that soon had all attendees. laughing. Lyn Ford, Norm Brecke, and Liz Nichols (who attended but did not present at the November ASST meeting) graciously agreed to share what motivated them to learn about LY and become leaders and/or teachers and how LY has enriched their own lives and their storytelling practice.



About the Author Joan Leotta plays with words on page and stage. She performs folk and personal tales of food, family, and strong women, and also presents Louisa May Alcott. Widely published, she has been twice nominated for Best of the Net and twice for the Pushcart Award. She’s been a runner-up in the Robert Frost Foundation Competition, Her latest chapbook, *Feathers on Stone*, is out from Main Street Rag. Contact her at Joanleotta@gmail.com

How did you discover Laughter Yoga?

Lyn Ford: “I was waiting for one of my mother’s routine doctor examinations to be completed, and I needed a little more joy. My eventual (LY) mentor, Meg Scott, had left business cards in the waiting room, about her laughter yoga club and training sessions. I went to a club session and felt more relaxed and revitalized. I then joined a leader training so that I could share exercises with my mom.” Then came a succession of trainings. In 2011, she completed training to offer a form of Hasya Yoga (Yogic Laughter) sessions as a certified laughter yoga leader. In 2012 she became a Level 1 Breathologist, and in 2016, became certified as a laughter yoga teacher. “And in April of 2024, under the tutelage of Sebastian Gendry, I became a certified laughter wellness ambassador. She adds “I became a teacher because I felt drawn to offering to others the playful, joy-filled practices that brought me a sense of wellness and self-awareness.

Norm Brecke: “My wife and I went to a workshop at the NSN conference in Kansas City led by Lyn Ford. We love Lyn and loved the idea of laughing from the inside out rather than waiting for something to tickle our funny bone.” After that session he began training in LY. Brecke is now also certified as a Laughter Yoga Teacher who can train leaders as another way to spread the joy and benefits of laughter yoga. He added, “*Reading Compete to Create: An Approach to Living and Leading Authentically* by Dr. Michael Gervais and Pete Carroll motivated me to become certified as a Laughter Yoga leader. The book’s main question is, ‘What is your goal in life? What do you want to do?’ I had been a teacher and now I was telling stories, singing songs, leading singalongs, and doing workshops. ‘What is my goal in doing of all these things?’ I thought. Then it came to me: ‘I want to facilitate joy in the world!’ Leading and teaching Laughter Yoga is a wonderful tool for facilitating joy for others and supporting my own health and well-being. This practice has been found to lift our mood, reduce stress, stabilize blood pressure, and increase JOY.”

Liz Nichols: I discovered LY through Nancy Wang of Eth-Noh-Tec as a part of the cultural exchange celebrations she and Robert Kikuchi-Yngojo took to India in 2008. LY wasn’t on the official schedule, but they found room for it and every morning a small group of us met at 6:30 AM at Mariner Park beach in Chennai.” Liz notes that she certified laughter yoga leader, but not a certified teacher.



Lynette (Lyn) Ford

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<https://artslearning.ohioartscouncil.org/directory/name/lynette-ford>

<https://oac.ohio.gov/programs-and-services/ohio-teaching-artist-roster/>



Norm Brecke

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Stories and Songs for a Better Day



Liz Nichols

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What has been the effect of LY on your own lives?

Ford: “Laughter yoga has helped me to reduce my blood pressure and increase my lung capacity as I return to exercising daily. It has helped me to sleep better and rise happy. It is a great stretch when I'm working on my laptop, and helps my mind stay clear and focused when I'm prepping stories and programs. I created gratitude goggles as an exercise to encourage a willingness to assess one's point of view, be grateful for what is going well, and see life in a different light. I've often used this exercise to give myself a moment of gratitude when I've had a rough situation and still have a program or other work to do, or at the end of a tough day. I also appreciated the way exercises helped me relax into stage presentations.”

Brecke: Laughter Yoga has been a joyful addition to my regular meditation and yoga practice. It is a dynamic, interactive meditation, which frees the mind from dwelling on the past or anticipating the future. It is easy to be present in the moment with Laughter Yoga.”

Brecke added, “Studies have shown for laughter to make a change in your life you need ten to twenty minutes of hearty belly laughs. Each laugh should be at least ten seconds. If you wait for outside factors to make you laugh you won't change your outlook or health. Laughter Yoga is initiated as an exercise program that uses intentional laughter combined with looking at other people and childlike playfulness. The result is that the laughter turns into real, contagious laughter. I see this happen over and over again when I lead Laughter Yoga — although sometimes I can't help but crack a joke! And the camaraderie — Laughter Yogis are even more supportive than storytellers!”

Nichols: “I find LY helps me feel more content and relax and reduce stress before a performance. Laughter can be added just like other warm-ups you do before going on stage and reduces cortisol and stress.”

How do you apply LY to storytelling performance?

Ford: “I love the interactive community of joy the exercises offer story participants, as openers and, occasionally, transitions between stories. I created an exercise called ‘gratitude goggles’ as an exercise to encourage a willingness to assess one's point of view, be grateful for what is going well, and see life in a different light. I've often used this for myself to give myself a moment of gratitude.” Lyn also uses it with groups to enable audiences to relax and change their view on things. She adds, “I developed ‘I'm wearing my gratitude glasses’ for audiences too as I recognize the importance of sharing the communication and community of laughter and stories. We all laugh in the same language! I also offer play dates, keynotes, workshops and trainings where I teach interested folks how to lead laughter yoga. And I now also share what I call ‘Heartworks’ in several different workshops or play dates (occasional short sessions). The five fingers exercise I use is an adaptation of a breathing technique, adding a laughter syllable/sigh.” She adds, “I also use it to relax, as a break from typing or watching the screen at my desk, when I'm preparing to change activities, when I'm uncomfortable in a group setting or getting to an unfamiliar stage.”

Contributor to be contacted regarding permission to tell this work

Brecke: “Storytelling had started to feel like a chore — Laughter Yoga helped me approach it with a child’s mind again. I am still experimenting with using Laughter Yoga in performance. I am developing a formula for Senior Shows that would incorporate the four elements of joy: singing, dancing, laughter, and play. My wife, Anne Rutherford, and I have been using a “variety show” format for quite a while — we sing songs, encourage clapping and singing along, and tell folktales and funny or meaningful personal stories that revive the listener’s memories. Incorporating Laughter Yoga into our shows may mean facilities bring us in more regularly, because of its many documented health benefits. I am also working on using it when emceeing live shows, and I like the idea of using it as a break in a workshop. Creating new laughter exercises is a fun way to keep my mind enthusiastic for life activities.”

Nichols: “I work often with elders with memory loss — one on one and in groups. I’m also trained in Time Slips TM a program that works to develop creative verbal expressions for people with dementia.” LY is something Liz often combines with the Time Slips techniques. Copying the leader’s movements brings laughter to these groups. Liz adds she has found it is not true that we humans laugh because something is funny — the deeper reasons are elsewhere. She says, “We especially laugh when we are with others we like and who like us and we laugh because they are laughing! Laughter can be added to any of the typical physical and vocal warmups you do alone or in a group.”

What else would you like to say about LY?

Ford: “I hope people will look for laughter clubs near them or join in some online sessions on YouTube, zoom at health and wellness, storytelling, creative play, and educational events.”

Brecke: “Leading and teaching LY is a wonderful tool for facilitating joy for others and supporting my own health and well-being.”

Nichols: “With LY we can laugh and experience benefits even if and perhaps especially when we don’t feel any reason to laugh.”

Attendee Comments.

Sheila Arnold: “I had to be off camera a lot but was listening and participating as I could. It was wonderful, Such a delight, I am taking home lessons (from the November presentation) for my day-to-day life.”

Jim Kissane: “I was not familiar with Laughter Yoga prior to this Gathering but wholeheartedly agree that whatever we can do to lift our spirits in the years ahead will be essential to our emotional, spiritual, and physical well-being.”

Joan Leotta: “I especially liked the gratitude goggle exercise, a reminder that we are in charge of our thoughts — a change of attitude can make a difference in our own well being and I was struck by the truth of the benefits of laughter — even when we start out not ‘feeling’ it. Dr. Kataria’s email signature proclaims: ‘When you laugh, you change. And when you change the whole world changes.’ LY is a tool that can energize tellers, our stories, and our audiences.”

Sidebar: Interview With Dr. Kataria

History and Development of Laughter Yoga (LY) and How it Relates to Storytelling—January 2025 Interview with Dr. M Kataria on Laughter Yoga (LY)

In March of 1995, Dr. Madan Kataria was balancing a personal life, a physician practice, and managing a magazine in the busy swirl of Mumbai, India. He began research to prepare an article on the topic of Laughter as the Best medicine to help himself relax and help others do the same. In the course of his research he began the project now known as Laughter Yoga. “I started by asking five friends to meet me in a local park for a short daily meeting. We shared jokes. The meeting grew to sixteen, then fifty. But after ten days we ran out of good jokes.”

He decided to try to get people to laugh without jokes, encouraged by research showing that when people laugh, even artificially, they also reap the benefits of laughter. He learned that the body cannot tell the difference between “real” laughs and simulated. Furthermore, he noted that in groups, starting with a leader-induced ha, ha, ha, often led to real laughter and a sense of community.

A practitioner of yoga, Dr. Kataria realized laughter, which offers an exhalation of bad or stale breath often longer than the assumption of new air, could be combined well with laughter to increase the benefits. So the laughter and yoga together brought forth what we now call Laughter Yoga (LY). LY has spread to 120 countries and helped thousands of people improve their mood, feel good about themselves, and pass that positivity on to others.

Dr. Kataria notes, “Healing takes place when you have more oxygen in the system — as laughing offers. Laughter raises serotonin levels in the body.” Over time, he has observed laughter improves immunity, eases chronic illnesses, and that people who laugh are better able to face life’s many challenges. Their attitude about themselves and what they can do improves. LY exercises help participants move from formulated laughter to real laughter.

“The world’s laughter experts are children. Observing children at play one can see how easily they laugh,” says Dr. Kataria, noting that laughter’s positive energy increases emotional intelligence and empathy as people laugh together.

Dr. Kataria sees LY as especially helpful for story performers to put themselves in a positive frame of mind as they go on stage, and to help them build a closer bond with the stories they tell and with audiences. Furthermore, positive energy emanating from the teller builds community in audience members with each other and with the teller.



Dr. Madan Kataria

Founder Laughter Yoga Movement

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<https://www.laughteryoga.org>

<https://www.youtube.com/laughterguru>

Download laughter guru App

<https://laughterguru.page.link/app>

Resources

Curious about Laughter Yoga? You can learn a lot by simply attending one of the many free Laughter Yoga clubs all around the world and by visiting the Laughter Yoga website, www.laughteryoga.org. The website www.laughteryoga.org will give you a good general introduction, an overview of training options, and more. Simply typing “laughter yoga clubs near me” into your browser will offer a list of free Laughter Yoga clubs closest to you. Many have Facebook pages or are also on other social media.

The website also offers links to courses to train to be a group leader and even a teacher of others. These for-pay courses are available in-person and on Zoom, with group classes and at-your-own-pace options available. Dr. Kataria’s book *Laughter Yoga: Daily Laughter Practices for Health and Happiness* is available on Amazon.

These three are some of the Free You Tube Videos that offer a virtual “meeting” with Dr, Kataria, and other LY teachers.

Videos

Join Free 🖱 International Laughter Club on Zoom
YouTube · [Laughter Yoga](#)

Laugh with Laughter Guru Dr. Madan Kataria
YouTube · [Laughter Guru](#)

FREE International Laughter Club on Zoom
YouTube · [Laughter Yoga](#)

Radiolab podcast for more on laughter
<http://www.wnycstudios.org/story/91588-laughter/>

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Joan Leotta

Encouraging words through pen and performance
Folktale and one woman shows, now featuring
Louisa May Alcott, Civil War Nurse, and Writer
joanleotta@gmail.com



-THE HALL *of the* BARD-

Turning Wrenches, Changing Lives: The Cora Paine Story

By Jim Kissane

One of my delights is foraging through secondhand book stores anywhere I travel.

In one, I found myself examining a small dust-covered journal with an inscription inside the front cover that bore the name "Cora Paine." I was unprepared for the love story that it held.

I sat down to read its contents and found myself drawn back into the last century....

"From the moment I could walk, I was drawn to the mechanical marvels that roamed our dusty Kansas roads. While other girls my age were content with dolls and tea parties, I found solace in the hum of engines and the smell of motor oil. My father, Thomas Paine, recognized this passion early on and nurtured it, despite the critical glances from some neighbors.

"I remember the first time I fixed something on my own. It was a balmy summer day, and our old plow had broken down in the middle of the field. As my father scratched his head in frustration, I crawled underneath, my small hands exploring the intricate parts. Within an hour, I had identified the problem and helped Pa fix it. The pride in his eyes that day fueled my determination to learn everything I could about machines.

"As I grew older, my reputation as the "girl mechanic" spread throughout our small farming community. Neighbors would bring their broken equipment to our farm, seeking my expertise. I relished each challenge, seeing it as an opportunity to expand my knowledge and skills. It was during one of these repair jobs that I met James Hawkins, the man who would become my husband and partner in both life and business.

"James understood and supported my passion for mechanics like no one else. Together, we dreamed of a future where we could turn my skills into a thriving business. When automobiles began appearing more frequently on Kansas roads, we saw our opportunity. We spent countless evenings poring over manuals and tinkering with engines, preparing for the day we could open our own service station.

"Life, however, had other plans. James' untimely death left me a widow at 35 with two young children to support. In my grief, I found strength in the very thing that had always been my solace -- mechanics. I decided to forge ahead with our dream, opening Paine's Service Station in 1922.

"The early days were challenging. I faced skepticism from suppliers, rejection from banks, and prejudice from customers who couldn't fathom a woman running a service station. But I persevered, drawing on the determination that had driven me since childhood. I worked tirelessly, often from dawn to dusk, balancing the demands of my business with raising Emma and Robert.

"As word spread about the 'honest woman mechanic,' business grew. I expanded my services and even added a small convenience store. But my proudest achievement was the free workshops I began offering, specifically targeting women drivers. Standing before a group of attentive women, I would say, 'Ladies, knowing your car is like knowing your own body. It tells you when something's wrong, and with a little knowledge, you can often fix it yourself.'

“These workshops not only saved my business during tough times but also empowered countless women. I saw the spark of understanding in their eyes, the same spark I had felt as a young girl tinkering with farm equipment. It was then that I realized my true calling wasn't just fixing cars, but fixing people's perceptions of what women could achieve.”

The journal continued to show the passion Cora had for empowering others, a sentiment she expressed in the final pages.

“Throughout my career, I mentored numerous young women interested in mechanics. Each time I saw one of my protégés succeed, I was reminded of that little girl on the Kansas farm who dared to dream beyond societal constraints.

“As I look back on my life, I'm filled with gratitude for my father's unwavering support, James's love and partnership, and the loyalty of my customers who believed in me when others didn't. My journey from a farm girl fascinated by engines to the owner of a successful service station wasn't just about my love for cars. It was about breaking barriers, challenging norms, and paving the way for future generations of women to pursue their passions, no matter how unconventional.

“I feel my legacy lives on not just in the business I built, but in the minds and hearts of every woman who found empowerment through knowledge, and every person who learned that determination knows no gender. As I often told my granddaughter, Emily, ‘In life, as in mechanics, the key is never to stop learning, never stop improving, and never let anyone tell you what you can't do.’”

With deep respect and a tear in my eye, I closed the journal and returned it to its previous bookshelf location. This was a gift too precious to keep. Others needed an opportunity to discover this amazing woman.



About the Author

Imagine stepping back into a “time machine” transporting you to a bygone industrial era. That’s what Jim is best known for. A historic storyteller and published author, he breathes new life into forgotten accounts, and obscure individuals of Industrial America [1850s-1950s], painting vivid portraits of a colorful bygone America. **Website:** JimKissane.com

-HEALING SPRINGS-





REMEMBERING ANGELA L. LLOYD



There is another empty seat at our storytelling table. Angela Louise Lloyd is gone and the world has lost a vibrant color. She passed away on January 4, 2025, in Apple Valley, CA, following a sudden and brief illness. She touched the lives of so many and will be truly missed.

We realize that many people in our community have recently passed. We honor all who have touched our lives. We invite those who may have known them well to send in their own remembrances of these special storytellers, no matter how known they may have been across the county, country, or world. If they were special to you, we would like to honor them.

At the announcement of Angela's passing, there was a huge outpouring from the storytelling community. The unexpected news left many stunned, heartbroken, and bewildered. The community had lost a bright light.

In the eyes of those who knew her best, Angela was the personification of childlike wonder. She could find beauty and joy in just about anything and had a sunshine way of viewing the world. She was beautiful and brilliant, a joyful genius with a kaleidoscopic mind, prone to bursts of wild enthusiasm and whimsy. She was a bundle of unrestrained joy and happy wildness.

She was known for quoting e.e. cummings' poetry, playing her washboard, and for her brightly colored sunbrella--an empty umbrella frame decorated with ribbons tied to the tips of the ribs. When she twirled it, the ribbons would float and flow effortlessly through the air.

She was a beloved teller of truth, a fearless activist for kindness, unconventional, yet always coming from a place of generosity and love. She was always her authentic, true self and shared her large, open heart with others both on and off stage. She was a font of knowledge, an important positive force, committed to compassionate action, and teaching, sharing what she had learned to future generations of tellers.

Her feedback, to those lucky enough to be mentored by her, was loving and kind. She could make you feel OK about what you were working on even though it was still in the process of becoming. She could make you see things from a different perspective. She reminded those around her not to take things too seriously and that you could be silly and deep at the same time. She had the ability to see the grief in the center of joy and the joy in the center of grief. She was highly observant, completely present, and never ran out of stories.

Although very positive, whimsical, and loving, she could be determined, resolute, and forceful with a will of iron. She could make you feel uncomfortable in a good way. “It doesn’t matter what your voice is like, just sing!” “Come on, you have time to be on this committee!”

She was interested in so many things and had her fingers in so many pies. And she kept bringing new people into the circle. Resistance was futile.

Angela was like the mischievous sprite, Puck, from Shakespeare’s *Midsummer Night’s Dream*. She took impish delight in everything and like a bright candle, could entice you in and hold you close. She was also like Tinkerbell from *Peter Pan*, spreading joy and a bit of fairy-dust magic wherever she went. She touched our hearts, blessing us in ways we barely noticed at the time and often did not realize its full impact until much later.

Angela often told the story of *The Ragged Peddler* in which a peddler asks folks to give him their most annoying troubles and pet peeves. He then displays them all on a line and told the villagers to take the smallest trouble from the line as a gift for free. When everyone had made their selection, the peddler departs, and everyone realizes that they have selected their own original problems. The villagers begin talking to each other, helping each other, but the people do not live happily ever after. They live happier than they ever had before.

To many, Angela was that magic peddler. She brought us to a place of easy happiness and profound joy. She cared about stories, music, love, and all of us. Like Mary Poppins, who could pull amazing things from her carpet bag, Angela pulled out the gift of community from her magic bag.

Angela’s gift to us is community. In many ways, she helped bring us together, to be with each other, and to grow. How much richer are we all to have had Angela touch our lives? Her gift of community is opened whenever we gather. You never know when you might be looking at someone for the last time, but it stands to reason that Angela has her wings, is smiling down on us, and playing her washboard, instead of a harp.

Thank you, Angela, for creating a warm and welcoming circle of love, for sharing your stories, your light, and your compassion.

May The Circle Be Unbroken.



-THAT'S AMAZING!-

Behind the scenes of great performers.

The Women's Storytelling Festival

by Jessica Piscitelli Robinson



Aimee Snow, Claire Hennessy, Roopa Mohan, Sheila Arnold,
Megan Hicks, and Bonnie Gardner

The Women's Storytelling Festival (WSF) will take place March 20 – 23, 2025 at the Sherwood Community Center in Fairfax, VA, as well as streaming online. This will be the sixth annual WSF.

<https://bettersaidthandone.org/womens-festival/>

For those who haven't been, the WSF is like any other storytelling festival except that the entire cast is women. Although maybe the festival is different in other ways as well. The performers are all storytellers – sharing personal, historic, folk, and original fiction stories – but the fact of all the stories being created and performed by women does change the atmosphere. In a way, it's as if the women storytellers have been given permission to spread their wings and try stories they wouldn't share at other events. Partly, this is because the WSF is intended for a mature audience. We are not family friendly and so there are no holds barred. But I think it is also because the audience is really there for the women's stories. We get men in the audience, but the men who come are the kind of men who aren't made uncomfortable by women being real. So, there is a sense of being safe to let the hair down, take the bras off, shed our skins and let our true selkie selves shine.

When I started the festival – the idea came to me seven years ago – I really just wanted to make a space for more women to be able to share their stories. I didn't think much beyond that. I am a true believer in the power of story and I felt that women needed to be heard – our stories told – more than they already were.

That atmosphere of letting our true selves shine is what gives us the loyal following that we have. When you are someone who wants to come to a women's storytelling festival, you will be someone who comes back. It exceeds expectation. On the flip side, we were and have remained a microscopic festival, comparatively speaking. Even combining the virtual ticket sales with in-person sales, we've never broken 800 attendees in one year. I think the idea of women-only tellers makes some people uncomfortable.



Jessica Piscitelli Robinson

And I am not just talking about men. We have a reputation for being a great festival. I'm repeating what I have heard from storytellers who know. But we still struggle with trying to get people to come to the festival, or even to watch virtually, because, I assume, they have some preconceived notion of what a women's festival might be. That is our biggest challenge – growing our audience to become sustainable.

In other words, running the WSF is a lot of work with very little to no financial reward. We pretty much break even. But we – it's not just me but a very committed committee – are awarded each year by getting to watch this incredible festival unfold. I am also motivated to keep producing the festival by the audience members who write to tell me "This is the most amazing storytelling festival I have ever listened to in 35 years," or "Thanks so much for the gift of the festival, for the gift of holding space for women." I am motivated by the volunteers who come back year after year, the emcees, most of them incredible storytellers themselves, who give their time and their support by appearing in the festival. And I am motivated by the fact that some of the most successful, highly qualified, and talented storytellers in the country apply for this festival despite the fact that it doesn't have a huge audience and doesn't pay well, because they want to be a part of it, because it is special. You can read about this year's storytellers here:

<https://betersaidthandone.org/womens-festival/2025-festival-storytellers/>

I have had people ask for advice on starting or growing a festival. It's strange to me because we are still, hopefully, growing, and are not very large. But I think the WSF has a reputation for being successful and that is probably because of the quality of storytellers we are able to attract and, I like to think, of the quality of the programs we produce. We are small but mighty.



Andrea Kamens

I don't know what I would have done differently in starting this festival. I jumped in headfirst, on a mission, to fill what I thought of as a gap. I wanted more women's stories and suspected other people might as well. It turned out that I was both right and wrong. We have a loyal following of people who did and do want more women's storytelling, and yet we still can't seem to reach that wider audience of people, the many more who have never watched or attended our little festival. So, before starting your own festival, or growing an existing one, I would suggest looking inside yourself and thinking about what it is you want to achieve. Do you want to have 5,000 people attend, or do you want to produce something incredible? Those two things are not mutually exclusive, but neither does quality lead to quantity. If your preference is for producing something that you love and can be proud of, realize that that does not necessarily equal huge crowds or financial rewards. If you build it, they might not come. If you are okay with that reality, then build away. I think the world needs more women's stories, but I also think the world needs more stories, more passion, more art, and more incredible festivals built and grown by people who will be proud of what they've created.

I believe in the power of stories. I believe women's stories need a space to be shared. I believe we have built a festival to be proud of in the Women's Storytelling Festival. I hope one day everyone will come and listen to the stories we share. We are women. Hear us tell.



Jessica Piscitelli Robinson, Donna Washington, Gwendolyn Napier, Nick Baskerville



About the Author

Jessica Piscitelli Robinson is the Executive Director of Better Said Than Done. In addition to producing storytelling shows since 2011, Jessica has performed at Exchange Place at the National Storytelling Festival, on WGBH's "Stories from the Stage," and was featured at the Stone Soup, the Washington Folk, the Florida, and the Hampton Storytelling Festivals. Jessica is a 2023 ORACLE Award recipient from the National Storytelling Network. Jessica's "Guide to Personal Storytelling" (published October 2024) is available through Story Crossroads. Jessica is the author of the urban fantasy novel *Caged* (2019), as well as the memoir-in-stories, *Stages: My Life in Stories* (2024).




-PUZZLES and GAMES-

"Curiouser and curiouser!"

A Riddle For You

He has lived for days, and months, and
years
Almost away from air,
And never a leg, nor arm had he,
And never a lock of hair.
But neither crippled or lame was he,
Nor had he a coat to wear.

What is he?

 -SB

Last Issue's Answer: The End.

LOST WORD SOCIETY

by Carmen Agra Deedy

Spring has sprung, the days are getting longer, and shamrocks are everywhere. With St. Patrick's Day near, stories of leprechauns, the Sidhe (pronounced Shee), the "wee folk," the faeries come to mind. The little people are magical, mysterious, and are often used to make sense of the indescribable or incomprehensible. They can be good, bad, mischievous, and are respected. Many cultures have stories of beings of the unseen world. These stories can entertain and teach what to value and respect in the culture. They can also illustrate proper behavior, which can help hold the society together. Myths, legends, and stories of heroes and heroines can serve as guides to best outcomes, when folks are faced with new and unusual situations. Can this also be true when faced with unusual and "lost" words?

In each issue we will give you an archaic, obsolete, or otherwise "lost" word. We will make up three silly definitions for the word, mostly incorrect, to amuse ourselves and hopefully you, dear reader. Your job is to make up your own definition, sonnet, a myth, or even a one act play about the lost word, just for fun. Next month we will publish the true definition of the "lost" word and provide you with another one. Enjoy!

BAJULATE (v.) Archaic. (BAA-joo-late)

- 1) To travel in a wagon pulled by a team of highly unskilled and incontinent sheep.
- 2) To forecasting future events by posing questions to sheep and examining the pattern of their hoof prints and droppings on a proscribed area of muddy ground.
- 3) To regulate the heat of a home by adjusting the feed and number of sheep held in the basement.

Last Month's Lost Word:

AFFUAGE (n.) Archaic & obsolete.-the right to cut wood in a forest for firewood.

*Yes, this was a thing—and this is a word. In fact, this right existed until 1850 in England.
Aren't words grand—?!



For more fun explore:
Carmen Agra Deedy's LOST WORD SOCIETY
at facebook.com/carmenagradeedy
for new words every weekend!



-STORY SIGHTINGS-

**What's going on?
Organizations, Events, People and Much More**



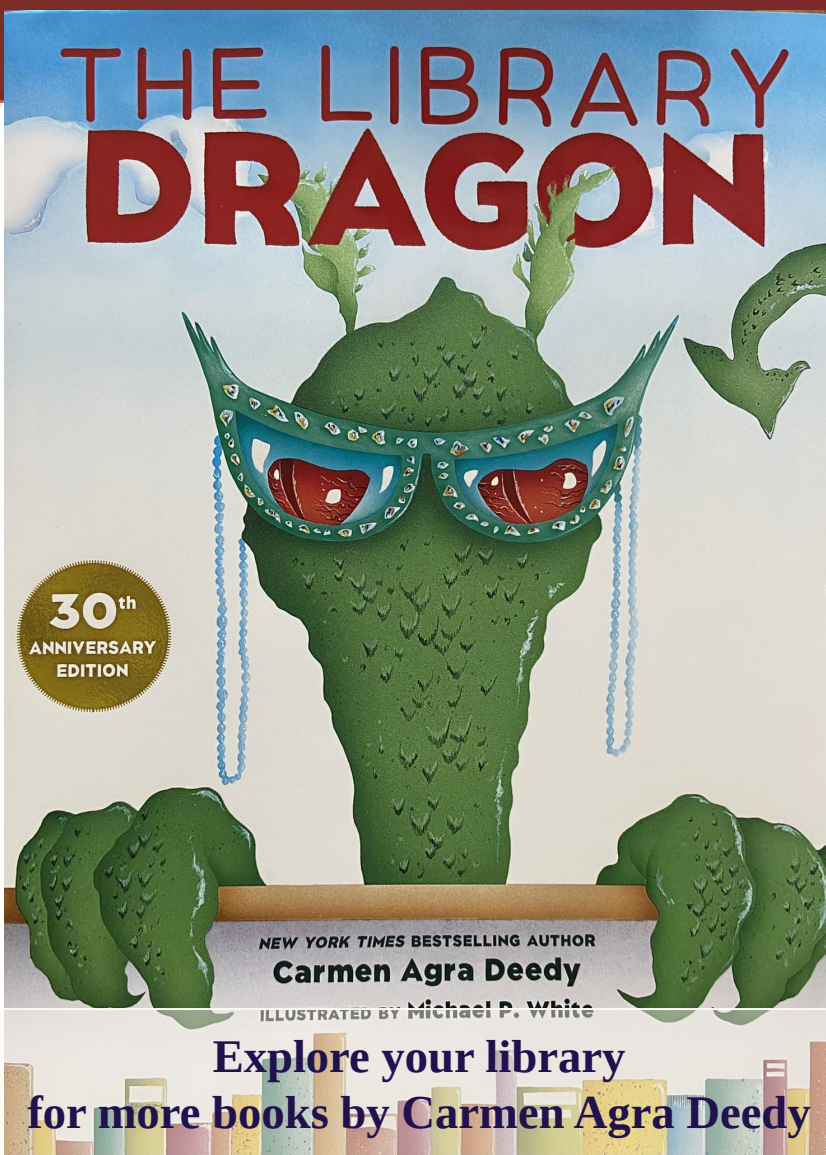
THE NATIONAL STORYTELLING NETWORK
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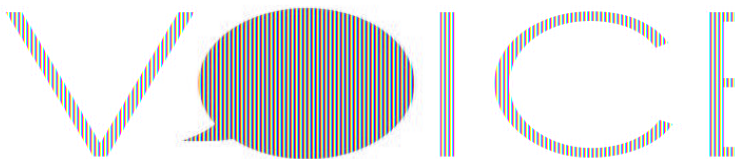
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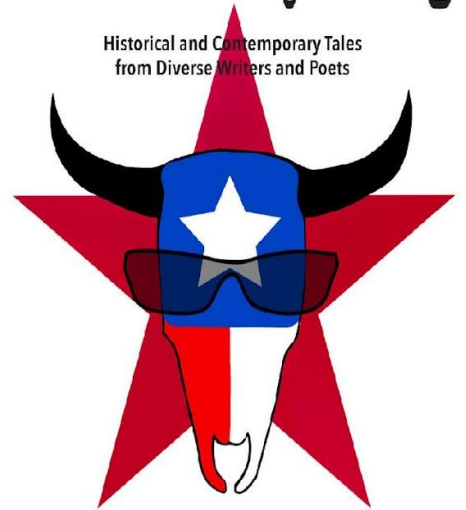
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The TSA Fortieth Anniversary Book Committee of Jaye McLaughlin, Hank Roubicek, Peggy Helmick-Richardson, and Chester Weems would like to make a special tribute to Parkhurst Brothers Publishers, for its part in development of *Forty Years of Texas Storytelling*. To them, this was more than a business project.

Ted Parkhurst has been a longtime supporter of the Tejas Storytelling Association. He has provided exhibits, moderated sessions, and given overall support for many years, and not just to Tejas, but storytelling across the nation. Ted and his wife, Linda, the lead graphic designer on this project, have gone an extra mile to see this book through to completion. We appreciate them.



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