

THE STORY BEAST

For Story Artists, Listeners, and Dreamers

CASCADING COLORS



About the Cover art and Artist

Autumn Scattering Leaves

By John La Farge American
ca. 1900

“With Louis Comfort Tiffany, John La Farge was a pioneer of stained-glass design in the United States. Watercolor was especially well suited for developing the designs because the transparency of the medium could suggest the glowing gemlike tones of the glass. Autumn Scattering Leaves, an allegorical representation of the season, was originally created as a stained-glass window proposal for a private home on Long Island. Although the patrons selected a different La Farge design of a figure in classical garb, the artist exhibited the lyrical watercolor as an independent work.”

Information and art found through [The Met](#)

*Submit your art to
storybeasteditor@gmail.com to be
featured in the next issue.*

The Story Beast 2026-2027 Themes

Winter - Merry Musings - Due Nov 15

Spring - Waking Whimsy - Due Feb 15

Summer - Sandy Daydreams - Due May 15

Fall - Squirrel Snuggles - Due August 15





“After nourishment, shelter and companionship, stories are the thing we need most in the world.”

— **Philip Pullman**, *The Essential Difference*



THE STORY BEAST

Cascading Colors

Vol. 5 ♦ Issue 3

Fall 2026



The Story Beast
Vol. 5 ♦ Issue 3 ♦ Cascading Colors
Fall 2026

Publisher

The Story Beast
storybeast.org

Editor-in-Chief

Alton Takiyama-Chung

Managing Editors

Sara Armstrong, Rachel Hedman,
Asia Starr, Bowen Lee

Art Department

Head Design & Layout - Asia Starr
Design Assistant - Alex Randall
Cover Art - Asia Starr

Staff Writers

Karen Chace,
Jo Radner

Proofreaders

Sara Armstrong, Ashton C. Clarke,
Via Goode, Maria LoBiondo

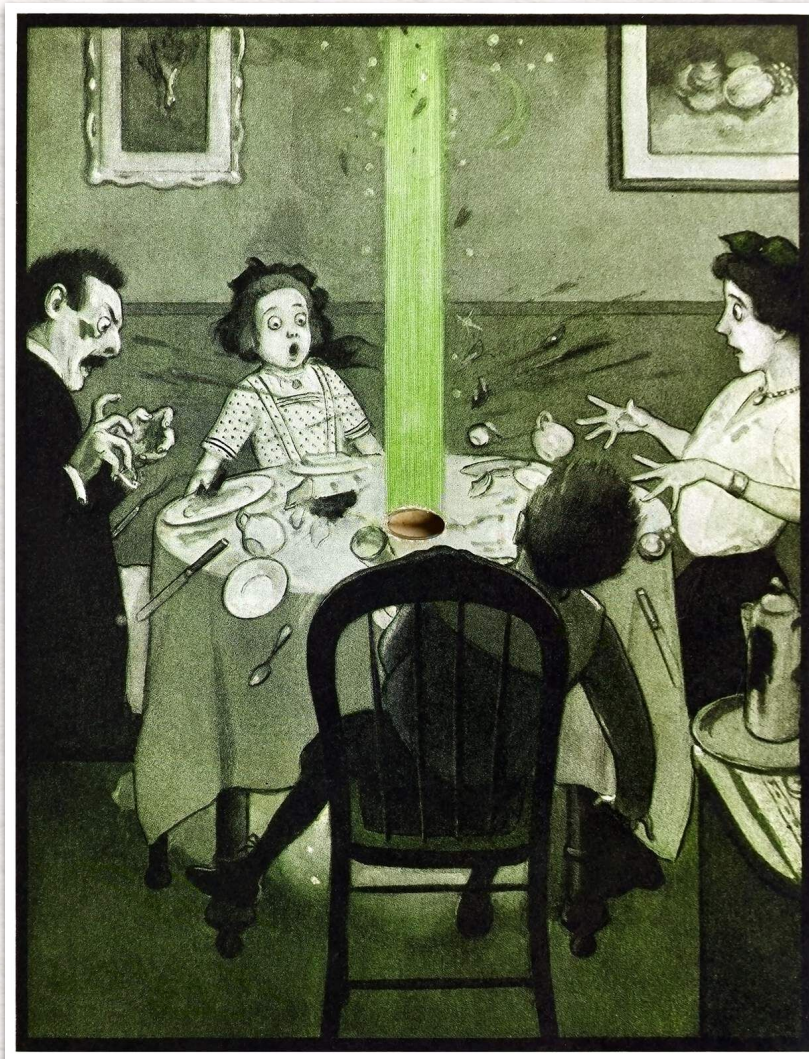
Contact Information

The Story Beast

Website: storybeast.org

Email: storybeasteditor@gmail.com

Send all queries related to
publication and advertising to:
storybeasteditor@gmail.com



*The opinions expressed in articles,
columns, and editorial cartoons are those
of the authors, and do not reflect the views
or policies of The Story Beast.*

*No portion of this e-Publication may be
reproduced in whole or in part without
written consent.*

The Story Beast is produced with the support of Artists Standing Strong Together (ASST).



Table of Contents



Letters

- *Welcome Letter*.....10
- *Dearest Crone*.....11-13



Spooktacular

- *Three Scary Poems* by Sara deBeer.....16-17
 - “Listen”
 - “Treasure Map”
 - “Tricks or Treat”
- *Sleepwalker* by Roger Rose.....18
- *All Hallow’s Eve* by Judith Heineman.....19
- *Exorcism* (1985 poem; rev 2026) by Judith Heineman.....19
- *Exorcism* (story) by Judith Heineman.....20
- *The Headless Horseman* (based on *The Legend of Sleepy Hollow*) by Roger Rose.....21-22



Taming the Beast

- *The Art of Leading a Workshop* by Jo Radner.....24-30
- *Learning from Rejection* by Carol McCormick.....31-33
- *Announcing the NSN Book & Media Awards* by Dr. Margaret Read MacDonald.....34



Storycology with Bowen Lee

- *Tree Huggers* by Bowen Lee.....36



Teacher Tales & Tentacles

- *School Administrations: When to Adapt–& When to Walk Away* by Rachel Hedman, MA...38-39



Story Feast with Karen Chace

- *Story Feast* by Karen Chace.....41-43



Journeys

- *The Countryside of Age is Made of Wrinkles* by Jo Radner.....45

❖ Hall of the Bard

- *Dare of Tunnel 19* by Jim Kissane.....47
- *Three Cascading Color Poems* by Sara deBeer.....48-49
 - “Escape into Purple”
 - “Off Color”
 - “Orange You”

❖ Healing Springs

- *Remembering Diane Ferlatte* by Erik Pearson.....51-53
- *Remembering Diane Ferlatte* by Sheila Arnold.....54-55
- *Remembering Jane Yolen* by Nancy Donoval.....56-59
- *The Heart’s Inhabitant: A Tribute to Jane Yolen* by Milbre Burch.....60-61

❖ That’s Amazing!

- *The Joys (& Challenges) of Planning a National Storytelling Conference* by Caleb George Hubbard & Trudy Hanson.....63-67
- *The Ballyeamon Sessions* by Liz Weir.....68-70

❖ Puzzles and Games

- *Answer for Riddle from June 2026*.....71
- *Lost Word Society* with Carmen Agra Deedy & the Spirits of the Beast.....72
- *Mama, I Can Spell!!!* (inspired by a *Bound & Gagged* cartoon) by Wynn Montgomery...73

❖ Story Sightings

- *Stories Everywhere*.....74-82

❖ Credits

- *Bibliography*.....83



-LETTERS-

September 2026 WELCOME

The turning leaves remind us that the time of Halloween approaches when the veil between the worlds is the thinnest. We thought that you all might be amused by some spooky tales and poems to help you get into the proper mood. Enjoy!

And now for something completely different. I recently attended the premiere of a new documentary called SEEDS OF ALOHA, about the 100th Battalion, the first all Japanese American unit that fought on the battlefields of Italy and France in WWII. Some of the snippets of conversations I overheard afterwards was that a person didn't know that their grandfather or great grandfather was involved, they never talked about it, and they wished they had asked them. Most of the WWII veterans are gone and they have taken their stories with them. That is sad.

Most of us carry amazing video recording devices wherever we go. Get your elder's permission, set up your phone, hit record, ask your question, and then let them talk. Take notes about things about which you are curious, or for which you want more clarity. Let them finish before asking your next question. The hardest thing to do is to keep quiet and let the elder speak. Sessions don't have to be long, and it is usually better to let them know ahead of time what you are curious about to allow the elder to collect their thoughts. Once you have the recordings, back them up in multiple places. Future generations will appreciate you taking the time today.

The Story Beast is your quarterly e-Publication forum, and it is your place of community. Please share your creative works -- poems, stories, artwork, or articles -- with us and let your friends know about The Beast. 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 November 15 for the Winter 2026 issue. The Winter issue's theme is Merry Musings. Thanks for reading.

**Spooktacular Tidings and Blessings,
The Spirits of the Beast
storybeasteditor@gmail.com**



Dearest Crone:

How do I turn ordinary things I
notice along the road into stories
people actually want to hear?

Tales from the Tolling Road

Dear Tales from the Tolling Road:

So you have discovered the delights of the roadside, have you?

Storytellers have the unfortunate habit of noticing everything along the way: a crooked mailbox, a faded sign, a woman sitting alone on a bench, a hand-painted sign announcing fresh apples, or a scarecrow standing guard over a field as though expecting an army of crows by sundown. A black cat sits on a fence post, looking suspiciously like a sorcerer waiting for instructions.

Let us make one thing clear: an interesting thing is not automatically an interesting story. If you return from a journey and announce, “I saw a strange barn, a man wearing a purple hat, and a chicken beside a stop sign,” your listeners may admire your powers of observation while secretly wondering whether they should have stayed home. But tell me about the barn with windows boarded from the inside. Tell me about the man in the purple hat who stood beside the same mailbox every Thursday. Tell me about the chicken that seemed to be waiting for someone to cross the road. Ah. Now we have something.

The storyteller's work begins after the noticing. You see the purple hat and ask, *Why purple?* You see the chicken and wonder, *Why is that chicken there?* You see the barn and ask, *Who built it? Who lived there? What happened inside?* And if you happen to have a little Crone in your imagination, you might ask a few more: *What does the barn remember? Does the chicken know something? And why, precisely, is that cat watching me?*

You do not need the answers immediately. Sometimes not knowing is the most useful part.

There is another little secret I have learned after far too many years of wandering: you do not have to use everything you notice. Storytellers are collectors. We gather overheard phrases, peculiar hats, abandoned buildings, funny signs, bits of history, and odd dreams. Soon our pockets are overflowing.

But a story is not a junk drawer — or a bag of holding*, if you catch my reference.

Choose the detail that keeps tugging at your sleeve. A captivating storyteller makes choices. You decide where to begin, which detail deserves attention, and what to leave out. You create a little tension and a little room for the listener to wonder.

You might begin with something as ordinary as: *“Every Tuesday, I passed a man who sat in the same chair beside the road.”*

Well, now. Who is he? Why is he there? What happened on Tuesday?

So carry a notebook. Or one of those magical devices that seems to contain an entire library. I believe it’s called a cell phone. I’ve overheard people speak of “recording a voice memo” once they pull over their horseless carriage — or perhaps a carriage pulled by mice-turned-horses. Bother. Whatever works for you!

Most importantly, record the question the moment raises in you: *Why? Who? What happened here? What would happen if...?*

You need not travel to an enchanted kingdom to find a tale. You need only travel slowly enough to notice that the kingdom may already be hiding along the highway.

Should you wish to wander further into this question, the library roads offer these great books:

- ***The Art of Fiction* by John Gardner** explores how writers turn observations, characters, and possibilities into living narratives.
- ***The Book of Delights* by Ross Gay** offers a wonderful example of how paying close attention to seemingly insignificant moments can become meaningful, engaging writing through poetry.
- ***How They Linger: Stories of Unforgettable Souls* by Donald Davis** is a reminder that the people and moments we might otherwise dismiss as ordinary can become stories worth preserving.

Wonder is often waiting on the shoulder.



***Yours on the Road -
The Crone of All Crones***

* Online definition: "A ‘bag of holding’ is a famous magical item from Dungeons & Dragons that features an interior pocket dimension much larger than its outside appearance."

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:

Winter - December 2026 - Merry Musings- Due November 15

Spring - March 2027 - Waking Whimsy - Due February 15

Summer - June 2027 - Sandy Daydreams - Due May 15

Fall - September 2027 - Squirrel Snuggles - Due August 15

For Submission Guidelines go to storybeast.org/submissions

Submit to storybeasteditor@gmail.com

SPOOKTACULAR

Read these spine-tingling tales... if you dare!



Three Scary Poems

by Sara deBeer

Listen

Do not stumble into the realm
where human bones encircle
a restless house.

When a black knight gallops past,
the dark night wakes
the ever watchful fiery eyes
of the skulls perched on posts.
They warn unwary wanderers:

You will lose your lives,
your meat, your skin,
your skull and your bones.
All will be owned by Baba Yaga.



About the Author

Sara's great love is telling folktales from world cultures. A listener said, "Sara is a captivating storyteller, sensitive to her audience and their interests. Her extensive repertoire enables her to present programs on a wide variety of themes." Sara is a published poet who also teaches poetry-writing classes.

Website: storydebeer.com

Treasure Map

What's in your hand?
A yellowed map?
Can't understand
why you'd want that.

Some child's game –
so crudely made.
We did the same
back when we played.

I'll take it now;
I know the child
who made it, know how
he'll go wild

without it.

You
won't give me it?
Don't make me do
what I will bit-

terly regret. Why
make me kill? You
want to die? Just
give it here.

I've left a clue
here on this plot.
Some blood from you
to mark the spot.

Map in hand,
I feel deep pleasure
knowing soon
I'll have my treasure.



Tricks or Treat

Each year, the neighborhood
boys waited impatiently
for Halloween.

They'd go door to door
wearing torn, over-sized shirts.
Their white pillowcases bulged.
"Trick or treat," they'd say
but they'd grin when they said it.
What they really meant was no treat
could stop them from throwing eggs
on your car windshield,
tossing toilet paper
over the branches of your trees.

Then one year, treats
became dangerous.
Headlines warned
of razor blades
hiding in apples;
needles lurking
in candy bars.
Parents set curfews
threw out apples,
cut candy bars
into quarters.

These days, adults play the tricks.
Shadowy lawns display twitching rats,
skulls with red glowing eye sockets,
a stump of an arm whose grasping hand
emerges from blood-stained ground.
A door opens. Candy is offered.
Small children snatch,
run back to the street
where their parents
wait for their safe return.

*b) To be told (read) in educational and professional settings
with attribution*

Sleepwalker

by Roger Rose

I awoke suddenly, to find myself in my garden. I am often in my garden, but not usually in the middle of the night, with a nightshirt flapping about my legs! “Sleepwalking!” I thought, “at my age! Won't Margaret laugh if I have to wake her to get back inside.”

I knew perfectly well where I was, of course. I have spent much of my time in my garden since I retired. I shall be buried there when the time comes for that. My privet hedge was just over there, its neatly planed sides and squared corners shapeless in the darkness. My rose bushes were right here, pruned back now to bare stems for the winter. My flower beds, there along the path, so recently brilliant with color, were raked and mulched.

I saw all this only with the mind's eye, you understand. All that was truly visible was the faint whiteness of the gravel path leading toward the dark bulk of the house. I followed the path and tried the garden door. It was locked, as I had expected. I walked on around the house, feeling the wet grass under my bare feet. The front door was locked also.

What now? Should I ring the doorbell? Of my own house? Perhaps I could find a window open. I walked on around the next corner. There was a welcome beam of light from Margaret's bedroom window. She often sits up late, reading. I looked in. Margaret had fallen asleep over her book, with the bedside lamp still burning. “How old she looks, lying there like that,” I thought. Had I never noticed how gray her hair had become, how hollow her cheeks? Well, neither of us is getting any younger.

I called out to her. Oh, not aloud. I only concentrated my mind toward her. That's a little game Margaret and I have played for years, when one of us wants the other's attention. It always works. There is that kind of bond between us. Margaret stirred, then looked around to see what had awakened her. I stepped closer to the window so she could see me in the light.

I don't know what I expected. Surprise, amusement perhaps. Certainly not what happened. Margaret's eyes grew wide, her throat worked, her mouth opened, but no sound came out. Then she screamed, a high terrified scream that went on and on!

“Margaret! It's all right! It's just me, Edward! I'm locked out of the house. Margaret! Margaret, for God's sake ...”

She kept on screaming, and in her eyes I could see no sign of recognition, no intelligence, only, that insane terror. I lifted my hand to rap sharply on the window. And stopped.

I saw my hand and arm in the lamp light. Every bone and joint was visible, gleaming whitely. Startled, I stepped back, and glimpsed my reflection in a darkened part of the window pane. The vacant eye sockets of a skull stared back at me. And what I had thought was a nightshirt was a mouldering burial shroud.

Now nearly as frightened as Margaret, I turned and fled from that lighted window, back to the darkness, back to the garden, back – I remembered suddenly – to the grave in which I had lain for the last fifteen years.

I'm sorry, Margaret. I didn't know.



About the Author

Roger Rose, the Walking-Stick Man, has been telling stories in the St. Louis area for many years.. He tells from a broad repertoire, from literary stories to folklore, to his own original stories. The walking stick, his personal trademark, was hand-crafted from the woody stem of a saguaro cactus.

To be retold in the reteller's own words in educational or professional settings with attribution.

All Hallow's Eve

By Judith Heineman

I was awakened by heavy
footfalls on the stair
When I arrived
No one was there
Save a swirling mist
Smelling like acrid air
A crystalline breath
grazed my ear
I heard slurping gulping
A heart started
Pumping
Organs appeared
Blood oozing through arteries
Disembodied In the air
No one was there
Slowly, a transparent
Elderly woman appeared
Half mist
A wispy beard
Yellow eyes
Hungrily coveting a bowl
Of glistening food
Entrails and larvae clung
To her blackened lips
She invited me
to take some sips
Politely, I
Turned her down
Her face contorted
Into a menacing frown
Wanting to run
My legs turned to glue
I sensed this night
Was mine to rue
Scared
I barely spoke
Croaked:
Who are you!
It replied
What's the matter, my dear?
When I looked at myself
No one was there

Exorcism

By Judith Heineman
1985; rev 2026

We make a sounding
to help her
spit out the demon
that is lodged
beneath her left rib cage
he is furry
with black beady eyes
ferret-like, a mole?
A gremlin!

It is hard work pushing him out
she opens her mouth
she arches her body
it convulses orgasmically
It is hard work pushing him out

We coax the energy
to even itself out now
to fill in the dark spots
to restore her health
to reopen the pathways
that have closed her left side
locked her elbow
blocked her knee
clogged her kidney
closed her throat
and stopped her heart

She is ready to begin



About the Author

Judith Heineman is an international award winning storyteller, Chicago Moth winner, 20-year producer of Chicago's Tellabration!, co-chair of the National Storytelling Conference in Chicago in 2003, and presenter of numerous workshops at regional and national conferences. Judith is a co-founder of the Los Angeles Women's Theatre Festival and toured with the NY Poetry Performance Ensemble for years.

Juhestories@aol.com
judithheineman.crotonarts.org
g

Exorcism

By Judith Heineman

Years ago, I was in a theatre company in New York City called Actors' Alliance. We were a consortium of actors, directors, playwrights, designers, producers, musicians, etc. We met once a week at The Musical Theater Works, opposite Joe Papp's Public Theater in the East Village, to create new works. We also studied a particular skill for a month such as improv or character development.

One month we studied Psychic Healing. Our director, Melanie, was into psychic phenomena. So she arranged for us to study with Gail, a psychic. Once a week we went to her loft in the West Village, long before it became chic. It was atmospherically replete with candles, lamps draped with sheer colorful scarves, and soft dark velvet cushions.

One of our actors complained of being stuck -- emotionally and physically. She believed something was blocking her creativity and ability to have a successful relationship. She felt a pressure in her chest specifically, in her rib cage.

Gail suggested we do an exorcism.

Perhaps as a kid, you and others surrounded a prone body on the floor and put the tips of two fingers under the person. You incanted "You are feeling lighter, lighter, lighter." Then, miraculously you lifted the body high up with almost no effort. Well, this experience evoked those events.

We did a laying on of hands: six pairs of hands gently slid energy up and down Amy's body, from head to toe, and we chanted -- all under Gail's guidance -- trying to rid the body of poisonous elements.

Suddenly, Amy started to moan and arch her back. Strange guttural sounds escaped her throat. This went on for a few minutes, and then she collapsed back onto the rug. After a few more minutes she recovered. She opened her eyes and smiled. She said she felt lighter, at peace. Freed of the demon.

We weren't done. A few of us met separately to play with a Ouija Board that I owned. We asked it questions and it revealed stories of our past lives. I always had a crick in my neck. I attributed it to the fact I wore heavy purses across my chest pulling on my shoulder and neck. The little wooden triangle moved around the board spelling out words that said I had lived centuries ago and was very poor. I was despondent -- over what wasn't made clear -- but that I had hanged myself! Well, that explained the chronic pain in my neck!

When Melanie found out we were playing with the Ouija Board, she became very upset. She told us never to play with it again because it unleashes mischievous evil teenage spirits seeking to do harm. She said they were like poltergeists.

I put it away high up in a wall system, but didn't get rid of it. I never played with it again. However, it moved with me to Los Angeles.

When I was packing to move to Chicago, I was wrapping pictures I had just taken off the wall in our dining room. I had carefully laid them flat on the top of the credenza. As I was reaching for one, it fell off as though it jumped but it didn't break. I picked it up and put it back on the countertop. It "jumped" off again. There was no earthquake! Even though there was a carpet, I was surprised the glass in the frame did not break. It happened that the Ouija Board was in a cabinet in the same room.

I thought perhaps it was a poltergeist who was upset with me because I was moving. I was alone, so I said out loud, specifically addressing the cabinet where the board game was stored, "I don't want to leave either. I am sad too. But you have to let me get on with the packing." And the pictures remained where they were.



About the Author

Judith Heineman is an international award winning storyteller, Chicago Moth winner, 20-year producer of Chicago's Tellabration!, co-chair of the National Storytelling Conference in Chicago in 2003, and presenter of numerous workshops at regional and national conferences. Judith is a co-founder of the Los Angeles Women's Theatre Festival and toured with the NY Poetry Performance Ensemble for years. Juhestories@aol.com
judithheineman.crotonarts.org

The Headless Horseman

based on *The Legend of Sleepy Hollow* by Washington Irving

by Roger Rose

I was a soldier once, a Hessian mercenary hired to help put down a revolt in the American colonies. My military career was "cut short" when I had a head-on collision with a cannonball. It was no contest -- cannonball one, head zero. My fellow soldiers laid my body to rest in a battlefield grave. Just my body. They couldn't find my head.

And "laid to rest" hasn't worked out so great, either. When the moon is dim and the mist rises in Sleepy Hollow, I find myself riding madly across the countryside on a ghost horse, with a pumpkin in the crook of my arm in place of the head I haven't got. Don't ask me why. It just happens. I have no control over it.

And when people gather around bonfires and try to scare each other by telling ghost stories -- and especially when someone tells my story, I am there, listening, in the shadows outside the firelight.

I was lurking beyond the firelight at the Van Tassel farm in Sleepy Hollow, after the harvest festival, when the Dutch country folk gathered around the bonfire to tell their stories of strange and uncanny things that had happened, not long ago or far away, but in their own valley, in places they all knew and to people they knew or knew about.

Then Brom van Brunt, stepped up and began telling my story. I was drawn even closer to the firelight, until I was standing right behind those on the edge of the crowd. Brom was a fine storyteller, ever so much better than that tedious fellow, Washington Irving.

According to Brom, I was a fierce, red-coated saber-wielding captain, leading a troop of blood-thirsty Hessians in a charge against a valiant band of American patriots defending the bridge at Tarrytown. When the patriots fired their one and only cannon the cannonball took off the captain's head. The enemy retreated, leaving the Americans victorious.

Actually, I was a lowly trooper with a musket. We were milling around out of musket range, waiting for orders when the colonials fired that cannon, probably by accident.

Brom went on to tell how the Headless Horseman rides through the valley on misty moonless nights, looking for his lost head, hastening to get back to the graveyard before sunup.

Then Brom claimed that he had encountered the Headless Horseman late one night and challenged him to a race to the tavern in Tarrytown, the loser to pay for the ale. He would have beat him, too, if the ghost had not vanished in a flash of fire at the Tarrytown bridge. The country folk all nodded; it was well known that spirits cannot cross flowing water.

Among the crowd around the bonfire, no one was more enthralled -- or more terrified -- than the Connecticut Yankee schoolmaster, Ichabod Crane. You might think that as an educated man, he would have known better, but no, Ichabod was even more credulous and superstitious than the Dutch farmers. They had heard those stories before, told over and over. But for Ichabod, it was new and strange and all the more frightening because of that.

As Ichabod saddled his horse for the long, lonely ride back to Tarrytown, he could not forget the terrifying stories he had been listening to. He would have to pass some of those places on his way home! And the headless horseman was said to ride on just such moonless, misty nights as this. Ichabod peered about fearfully as he rode into the dark.



It was Ichabod's fear that drew me to follow him. I was riding my ghost horse, following behind Ichabod, closely enough that he could hear the sounds of another rider on the road. Ichabod stopped for a moment -- perhaps hoping for company on his ride home. I stopped, too, and made no sound. Ichabod continued on, at a somewhat faster pace.

The road passed through a swampy clearing and up over a low ridge, As he rode over the ridge, I could see Ichabod, silhouetted against the starry sky. He was a comical sight -

- his thin, bony body upright in the saddle, stirrups shortened until his knees were almost shoulder-level, his long arms holding the reins high, bent at the elbows, and flapping like wings as he trotted along.

When I reached the ridge top, I paused and willed him to look back. I knew what he would see looming against the sky: the shape of a large horse carrying a tall rider with broad shoulders, and stars shining through the place above those shoulders, where the head should be.

Ichabod looked back, then turned and kicked his heels into the ribs of his astonished horse, driving the poor beast into such a gallop as it had not attempted since it was a colt. My horse leaped to follow. The race was on, uphill and down valley, through the dark hollow. Little by little, I was gaining on him. I felt the fury rising within me, outrage at this --- this American -- and his damned cannon! When I caught him, I would take his head to lie with my body! Let him find out

what it's like to be without a head!

I was almost alongside Ichabod's horse. Ichabod had given up all effort at controlling the horse. His long arms wrapped around the horse's neck, holding on for dear life. I reached for him, almost had him -- when suddenly my ghost horse balked and shied aside, just as Ichabod's horse thundered over the Tarrytown bridge to safety!

Foiled again by flowing water! In my rage, I rose up in my stirrups and, taking the head I haven't got from the crook of my arm, I hurled it after the fleeing schoolmaster.



About the Author

Roger Rose, the Walking-Stick Man, has been telling stories in the St. Louis area for many years.. He tells from a broad repertoire, from literary stories to folklore, to his own original stories. The walking stick, his personal trademark, was hand-crafted from the woody stem of a saguaro cactus.

To be retold in the reteller's own words in educational or professional settings with attribution.

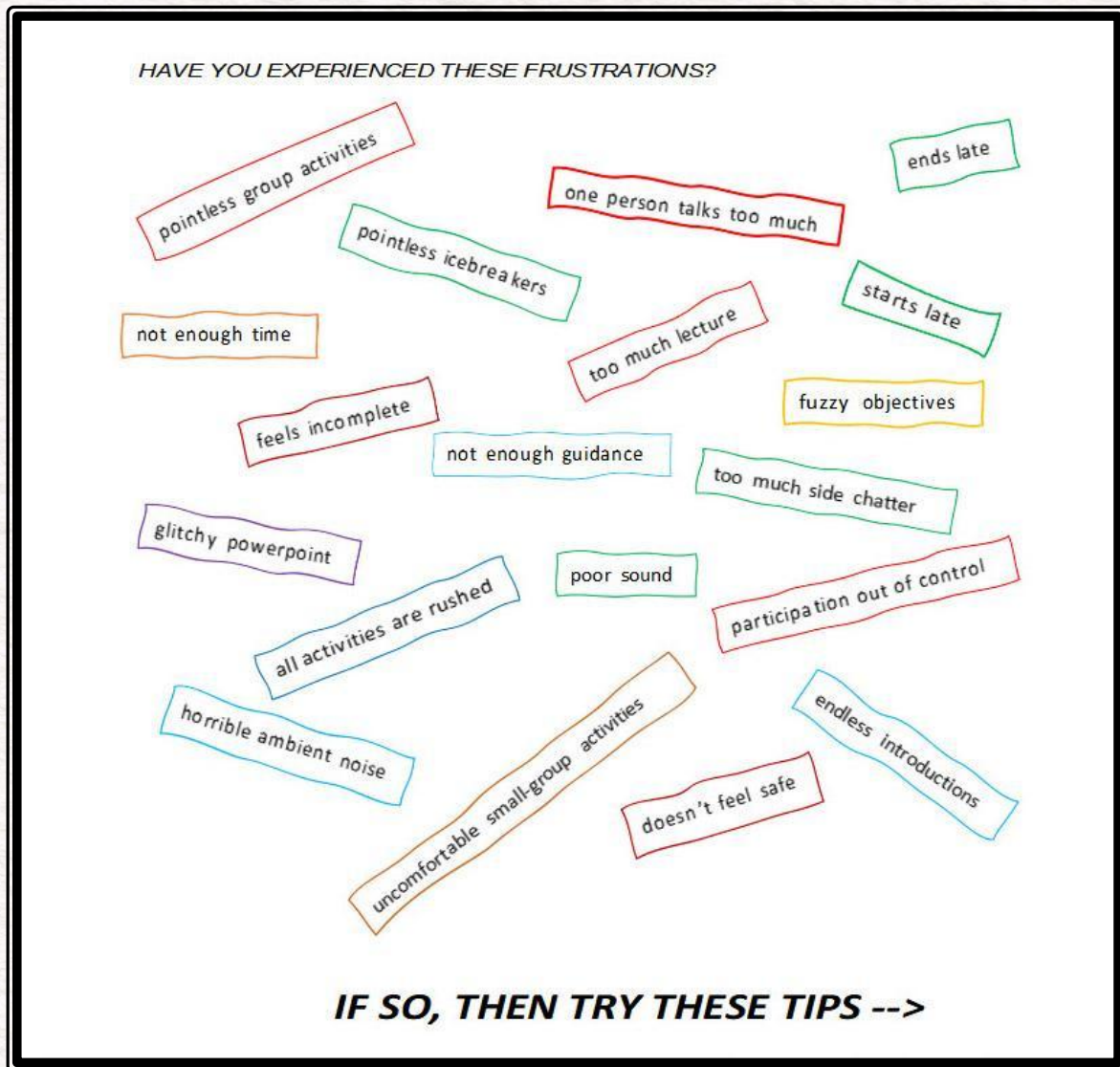


-TAMING *the* BEAST-

The Art of Crafting Stories

The Art of Leading a Workshop

by Jo Radner



At a workshop (!) on March 26, 2023, at Sharing the Fire (the annual NEST conference) in Portsmouth, New Hampshire, fifteen storytellers combined their wisdom and experience to offer their best tips about the art of leading a workshop. By definition, the workshop was too short to cover the topic. But we offer our colleagues these bits and pieces.

A workshop is a gathering in which too much information must be presented in too little time.

Jo Radner
Janel Behm
Michele Carlo
Adam Booth
Michelle Trieste

Fran Stallings
Elinor Benjamin
Bruce Marcus
Kerrie Wieners
Maria LoBiondo

Wendy Marans
Meghann Perry
Theresa Chamberland
Elizabeth Rowe
Jeff Doyle

Important! This is a random collection of tips! Don't think of it as a recipe for a single successful workshop – it's more like ingredients stored in a pantry for different kinds of meals. Look over the collection with an eye to your own preferences and the nature of your prospective workshop, and we hope you will find ideas that will come in handy for you.

We offer tips in eight categories:

- 1. Planning the workshop in advance*
- 2. Integrating participants at the beginning*
- 3. Introducing the workshop to participants*
- 4. Conducting discussion to encourage general participation*
- 5. Using small-group discussions successfully*
- 6. Managing time*
- 7. Bringing the workshop to an end*
- 8. Adapting techniques for online workshops*

1. PLANNING THE WORKSHOP IN ADVANCE

Success starts with planning ahead. We all do this on our unique schedules and in our own ways, but here are a few tips that various among us have found helpful.

- ❖ Find out all you can, in advance, about your audience. (How many will be there? What is their relationship to your topic?)
- ❖ Test exercises and activities in advance to see if they work and how much time they require.
- ❖ As you write your notes for the workshop, mark each segment with the time when you intend it to begin, so that you will know how close you are to meeting your time plan. (e.g. “10:15,” “10:25,” “10:55,” etc.).
- ❖ As you plan your workshop, assume that you will begin 5 minutes after the stated opening time and end 5 minutes before the stated end. (This gives you a cushion that allows for late-comers straggling in, lengthy introductions and public announcements, and, at the end, evaluations (if any) and private questions to you.)
- ❖ Test all electronics in advance -- and make sure you'll have internet in the workshop space if you hope to use it.
- ❖ Make a checklist of items you need to bring!
- ❖ If you're flying to the workshop site, don't check your workshop materials in your luggage; pack them in a carry-on.
- ❖ Identify in advance the support person for the event/facility in case of a problem with the space or the tech.
- ❖ Visit the workshop space in advance to walk the room, note/plan chair arrangement for different activities, check ambient sound and light, learn how to adjust temperature, make sure necessary equipment is present.

2. INTEGRATING PARTICIPANTS AT THE BEGINNING

How do you weld a group into a purposeful community at the beginning of a workshop? What are some efficient ways to draw together the participants at the beginning and bring them and their diverse experience into relationship with the workshop topic?

Get to the site early; as people arrive, greet them individually and chat till opening time.
Whatever opening activity you choose, make sure you state clear boundaries of time/topic.

- ❖ If you want to devote no more than a couple of minutes to this segment of the workshop:
 - Pass around name-tags and markers.
 - If you want to have participants introduce themselves, instruct them to limit themselves to their name and a single phrase or word (e.g. where they live; or something that connects them to the topic of the workshop). Model what you want them to do – and emphasize brevity – by demonstrating it yourself.
 - In order to find out the range of interests or backgrounds among your participants, use an oral questionnaire they can respond to by raising their hands. (“How many of you are ___ / are involved in ___ / are interested especially in ___”)
- ❖ If you are willing to spend more time on this introductory process, try any of the following depending on how much time you have:
 - Invite participants to introduce themselves to the group with fuller statements about their connection to the workshop topic.
 - Invite participants to introduce themselves to each other in pairs, and then to introduce their partner to the whole group. (Must specify that they will be introducing their *partner*, otherwise folks tend not to listen but wait for their turn to talk.) Be sure to limit the time for this!
 - Create an icebreaker activity for the whole group. Make sure that it is relevant to the workshop topic and advances the group toward its purpose.
- ❖ Dealing with latecomers:
 - Ask your room host (if you have one) to take latecomers aside and brief them on what they have missed.
 - If the workshop activities are sequenced to build on each other so that latecomers will not be able to participate well or will disturb others’ progress, set a cutoff time for late arrivals and stick to it. Notify participants of this in advance.
 - When latecomers arrive, don’t stop and repeat much that you have already said.

3. INTRODUCING THE WORKSHOP TO PARTICIPANTS AT THE BEGINNING

This is the moment to set up the workshop for success – by introducing yourself and your relationship to the topic, by making sure participants know what’s coming, and by presenting necessary information about procedures.

- ❖ Introducing yourself and your relationship to the topic:
 - If this has not already occurred in a host’s introduction of you, introduce yourself to the group by telling them only what is truly important for them to know about you and the present topic.
 - If you have time and if it’s relevant, you can create a closer relationship to the group by telling a very brief personal story about your own experience with the topic. (Do this *after* the group introductions, or everyone will want to tell their life story.)
 - Set the tone and energy level intentionally at the beginning.

- ❖ Orienting participants to what's coming:
 - Say something about why you feel the workshop's topic is important.
 - Stress the objectives ("by the end, we will have ...").
 - Present an agenda for the workshop in writing, either as a handout or on a flip chart; go over it briefly, mentioning different techniques or activities participants will experience. Check in: "Okay? Any questions?"
 - If you will be giving out handouts later in the workshop or at the end, let the participants know this.
 - If it fits with what you are planning and you will be able to use the results later in the workshop, hand out cards and ask participants to write anonymous answers to a question.
- ❖ Giving necessary information, "housekeeping rules":
 - Make sure participants have any equipment they'll need (pens, paper, anything you've asked them in advance to bring).
 - Notice and welcome any participants who may have accessibility needs and make sure these are accommodated.
 - Make clear whether or not recording will be permitted.
 - Introduce a signal by which you will get the group's attention (ringing a bell, flashing lights, drumming, etc.).
 - Mention other useful information (e.g. where the restrooms are, how/when to take notes, if/when there will be a break, where to put gear if furniture will be moved).
 - Make a safe space: Ask participants to make a confidentiality agreement if personal stories are to be told; this can be oral, not written.

4. CONDUCTING DISCUSSION TO ENCOURAGE GENERAL PARTICIPATION

How can we engage all members of the group in our presentations? How can we make sure that all will have opportunities to join in the discussions? How can we foster a group culture of respectful, thoughtful collaboration?

- ❖ If you ask a probing question, pause to give time for thought; be comfortable with the silence.
- ❖ Acknowledge multiple respondents by naming the order in which you'll call on them ("one, two, three...", or their names if you know them).
- ❖ If someone is volunteering so readily that others' comments are squeezed out, announce that you're going to pause for a moment after the next question, so that some people who want a little more time to think can take part.
- ❖ If the above tactic doesn't work, find the opportunity to take the persistent talker aside and ask her/him to collaborate with you in encouraging/making room for other participants to speak.
- ❖ If some members of the group haven't joined the general discussion, encourage them. "I'd love to hear from some who haven't had a chance to speak yet..."
- ❖ If participants are reluctant to enter the discussion, give them 2-4 minutes to discuss a question with their neighbors in pairs; then debrief with the whole group.
- ❖ If you are calling on participants one after the other around the room, don't put anyone on the spot: make it possible for people to "pass," or pass and respond later.
- ❖ Be vulnerable yourself, by offering an example, to encourage others to take risks and be vulnerable.
- ❖ If the discussion is getting repetitious, ask for new feedback and request people not to repeat what others have said
- ❖ Make the space feel safe. "This is a no-judgment zone!" "We're not looking for right answers; we're exploring ideas"

5. USING SMALL-GROUP DISCUSSIONS

Often the best way to show participants how things work is to give them a chance to try out techniques with one another. Sometimes the best way to make sure that everyone has a chance to engage in the discussion is to create smaller groups – but only if those groups are focused and set up effectively.

- ❖ If you will be dividing participants into small groups, you might give each person a colored sticker at the beginning of the workshop that will mark them for particular groups later on.
- ❖ Make sure the small-group task fits the time.
- ❖ If participants are going to be moving their chairs to form small groups, have them do this before you explain their task. Once the groups are settled and quiet, then give instructions. (They'll remember them better.)
- ❖ You might put instructions on a flip chart or white board, for reference during the activity.
- ❖ Consider accessibility: some people may need extra time to move physically to their group.
- ❖ Tell the groups clearly what their goal is and how they are to go about it. Ask: "Does everyone understand what I want you to do?"
- ❖ If the groups are to report back to the whole after the exercise, have each group pick a note-taker and a reporter (who may be, but need not be, the same person as the note-taker).
- ❖ Tell them how long they will be working together; have each group choose a time-keeper. If group members are to take turns, ask the time-keeper to make sure each person has equal time.
- ❖ When they are applicable to all groups (or pairs) simultaneously, give time cues yourself. "Time to move on to part B..." "Time to switch roles!"
- ❖ As the presenter, visit each group to make sure they're on task.
- ❖ If there's a chance that groups will not have finished all possible details of their tasks when time is up, reassure them. "What you have now is good enough."
- ❖ At the end of the small-group exercise, when the large group comes back together, be sure to comment on the exercise and connect it to the overall goals of the workshop, whether or not each group reports to the whole gathering.

6. A FEW TIPS ABOUT MANAGING TIME

Of course – practically by definition – all workshops on a worthwhile topic don't have enough time. How do we conduct them, then, so that at the end, participants feel fulfilled more than frustrated?

- ❖ Before the workshop:
 - As you plan the workshop, seed your notes with time markers to tell you when you need to move on to the next step.
 - Plan for transition times between activities (especially, plan time to allow small groups to return to the whole).
 - Test exercises beforehand with a group of volunteers, if you can, to see how long they take.
 - Think in advance about segments of the workshop you can omit if other segments take longer than you anticipated; plan transitions to allow for this adaptation. (Not just... "Oops, no time for X, so we'll go to Y") If you can, prepare longer and shorter versions of some activities to adapt to time constraints.
- When you can (and when it's appropriate), in advance of the workshop send participants handouts or readings. Tell them what is or is not mandatory to prepare or read in advance.

❖ During the workshop:

- Set clear boundary times for exercises and activities.
- Have a clock available (if there isn't one in the room) to keep people aware of time.
- Use a signal (perhaps a bell, a drum, or flashing the lights) to call people together after they have been talking in small groups.
- Keep individuals' contributions time-limited. *"I'm going to stop you there, so others can give feedback/because we need to move on."*
- If a segment takes more or less time during the workshop than you anticipated, jot yourself a note so you'll remember that for the next time.

7. BRINGING THE WORKSHOP TO AN END

How do we end a workshop so that it feels complete?

❖ Activities

- Initiate a culminating activity, if appropriate; e.g.
 - brief presentations using skills from the workshop;
 - asking participants to comment on what they'll take away;
 - encouraging participants to plan their next steps.
- Summarize, briefly, what has been covered.
- Tell a story or read a poem.
- Give a sticker that participants can wear to identify other participants during the conference so that they can keep in contact with each other.
- Is there a way for participants to keep in touch with each other in the future?
 - Announce a possibility of reconvening the group in the future, in person or online.
 - Tell participants where they can continue to learn about the topic: give handouts, provide online links (be sure you've tested the links to make sure they are current!). If participants have recommended links or other sources during the workshop, find a way to share them: in a flip chart, Google Drive, etc.
 - Tell participants whether you will be available for further discussion or consultation, and if so, how. (You might put your contact info on the handout.)
 - If applicable, make sure participants know how and where CEUs will be available.

❖ Evaluations:

- Pass out evaluations or explain online evaluation process (delegate this to an assistant or the room monitor, if there is one).
- Pass out cards for a "3,2,1 evaluation":
 - Something you have learned
 - Something you want to know more about
 - Something you will do this/next week
- Ask one thing they found useful and one suggestion about something that would improve their learning. These questions can be answered anonymously on index cards handed out and collected at the end of the workshop.

8. ADAPTING TECHNIQUES FOR ONLINE WORKSHOPS

The Covid pandemic brought us the (mixed) blessing of conducting workshops online. Even though many people are now familiar with remote meetings and gatherings, it is still often necessary to remind or instruct workshop participants – and ourselves – about effective ways of communicating online.

- ❖ Plan to explain Zoom (or other software) techniques to make sure everyone is able to take part. If possible, announce that those not very familiar with Zoom sign in 30 minutes early for a refresher/tutorial.
- ❖ It's wise to team up with a tech host who can admit participants, troubleshoot issues, and communicate through private chat with participants who need tech assistance.
- ❖ If you have more than 25 participants (including you) in your session, consider that you can change your gallery view in Settings from the normal 5 frames X 5 frames to see 7x7 (49) frames instead on the same screen, provided your computer has the specs to handle this option.
- ❖ Request that participants use the "raise hand" feature if they want to speak (so you can see them readily, since this will move them to the top left of the screen).
- ❖ Request that participants rename themselves on their screens, if necessary, to show their names correctly. You or your tech host can also rename any participant(s) (preferably with their permission!).
- ❖ If you will be asking participants to work in pairs or small groups, study in advance (and practice!) the various ways to set up, fill, end, and time breakout rooms. Allow a couple of extra minutes in the workshop to set these rooms up and to explain them to participants.
- ❖ Put the breakout rooms' instructions in the Chat so they'll be visible during activities.
- ❖ Announce your policy: Do you want participants to leave their video on? Do you want them to mute their mics when they are not talking to the group?
- ❖ Prepare in advance for the possibility that you may have participants who phone in and therefore have no video and cannot see others in the group.
- ❖ If you or participants will be putting useful information into the Chat, be sure to tell participants to save the Chat (and how to save the Chat) at the end of the workshop.



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

Learning From Rejection

by Carol McCormick

Rejection is one of the occupational hazards of being an entrepreneurial storyteller. Even after decades of experience, it can sting—especially when you’re going through a dry spell and staring at an empty work calendar.

The trick is to turn **“They didn’t choose me”** into **“What can this teach me about where, how, and for whom I’m a great fit?”**

As the Arabs say, “Where you stumble, there you find gold.”

“No” Is Information, Not Identity

When you receive a “NO,” **try to find out why**. Was another storyteller hired? Separating the rejection from the reason can make all the difference. Maybe:

- They had already booked someone.
- Their budget was cut.
- They chose a local performer.
- They wanted a different program theme.
- Their director or programming staff changed.
- They have a longstanding relationship with another storyteller.
- Your fee was outside their budget.
- Your proposal didn't communicate your particular magic quickly enough.

Only a small percentage of those reasons have anything to do with your storytelling ability. That's important, because we storytellers can easily translate:

“We went with someone else” into **“They didn't like me.”** Those are emphatically not the same.

Turn Rejection Into Research

After a rejection, ask yourself:

- What was outside my control? (Let it go.)
- What might I improve? (Find the lesson.)
- What can I do differently next time? (Turn the lesson into an action.)
- Was this job actually a good match for my skills and values?
- Might I simply not be ready for this particular work yet—material-wise, psychologically, or in terms of experience?

In other words, if a potential client says, “We aren't booking this program,” instead of thinking, *“My program isn't good enough”*, ask, *“Did I contact them early enough? Did my subject line grab attention? Did I make the program's benefits obvious? Did I make booking with me easy?”*

Those questions turn a rejection into **marketing data**.

Don't Burn the Bridge just because you didn't get across it this time.

Use the power of the follow-up.

A “no” today can become a “yes” six months from now. Organizations have changing budgets, changing staff, changing themes, changing directors, and changing programming needs. A gracious response can keep the door open: “Thanks for letting me know. I completely understand. I'd love to be considered if another opportunity comes up.” Then put them on your future-contact list.

Keep a “Yes File” as an antidote to rejection

When three “no's” arrive in one week, read your Yes File. It reminds you that your career is not measured by your most recent email. This file contains:

- Wonderful audience comments
- Thank-you notes
- Testimonials
- Positive, encouraging emails
- Photos of happy audiences
- Repeat bookings
- Referrals
- Stories about a listener who was deeply affected by your program
- Compliments from other professional storytellers
- Invitations to return

These are reminders that your work matters—even when the phone isn't ringing.

Find Your People

You don't need to be the right storyteller for EVERY audience. You need to find the audiences who say: “Oh! THIS is exactly what we've been looking for.” That's a very different business model.

A rejection can help you become more specific about your niche and mission: literacy programs, character-building stories, adult storytelling, transformational storytelling, social justice programs, ecological stories, historical storytelling—or whatever combination makes your work uniquely yours.

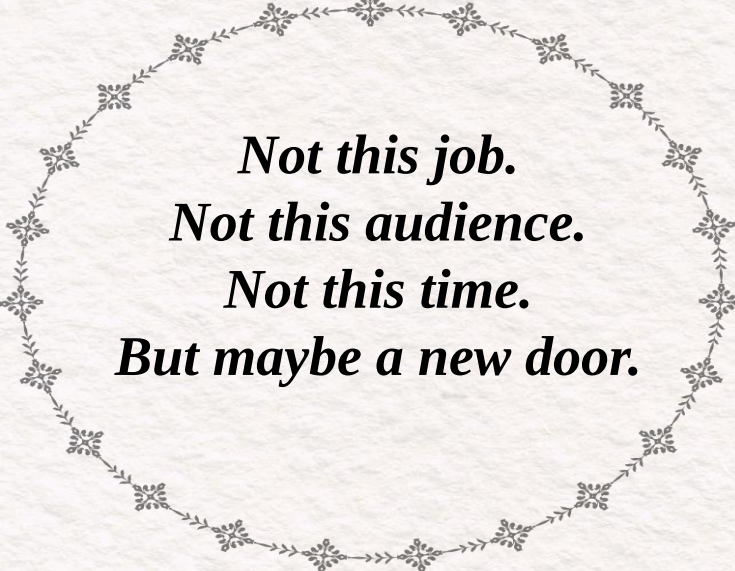
Strive to become more recognizable to the people who need what you do, instead of trying to become more appealing to everyone.

A rejection from one potential job can send you toward another booking, another audience, another story, another connection—and sometimes toward a gig that turns out to be far more satisfying than the one you originally pursued.

As Confucius reminds us: “Our greatest glory is not in never falling, but in rising every time we fall.”

So, when the next rejection arrives, take a breath. Look for the lesson. Add another piece of evidence to your Yes File. Make one small adjustment. Then keep going.

You might want to keep this mantra handy:



***Not this job.
Not this audience.
Not this time.
But maybe a new door.***



While teaching in an impoverished school district, Carol McCormick discovered that storytelling helped students of all abilities learn. As a corporate trainer and interfaith minister, she uses storytelling to introduce change, instill values, build connections between people, inspire action, and keep listeners engaged. She shares a wide variety of storytelling programs and workshops. Carol is the author of *A BRIDGE FOR GRANDMA*, a picture book to help lessen the fear of death. www.carolmccormick.net

Announcing the NSN Book & Media Awards

by Dr. Margaret Read MacDonald

The National Storytelling Network is pleased to announce a new book and media award program. Submissions are due by September 30, 2026.

Items released from September 30, 2023, through September 30, 2026, are eligible. Visit the NSN website to enter your submission. National Storytelling Network Awards: Book & Media - National Storytelling Network You will be sent the addresses of the judging panel and may send materials to them for consideration.

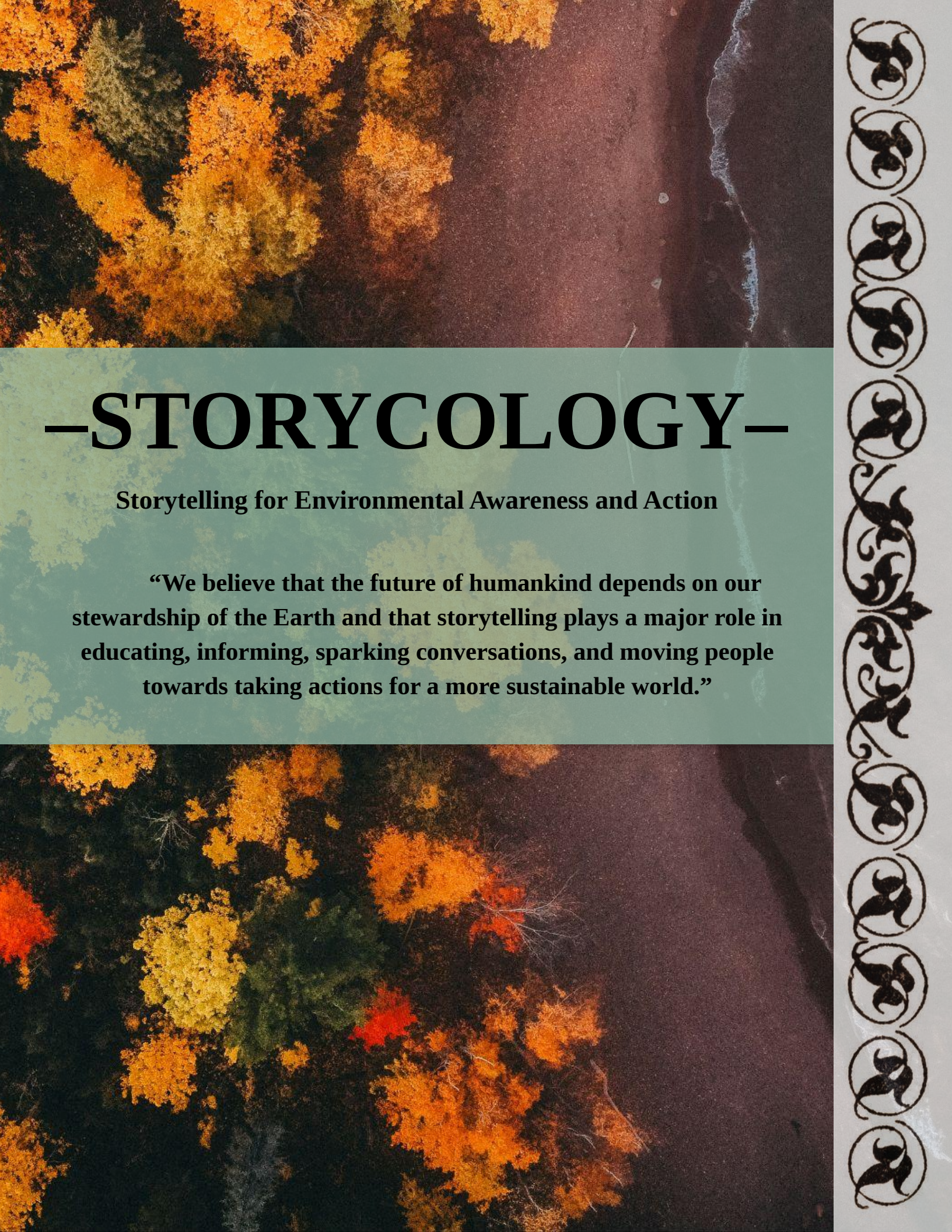
Items need not be submitted to be considered. If you are aware of an especially useful item that you think should be considered, email the info to Co-Chairs Margaret Read MacDonald mrm@margaretreadmacdonald.com (adult material) or Kevin Cordi kctells@gmail.com (youth material).

National Storytelling Network Awards Program
Awards will be given in these categories:

National Storytelling Network Book Award
National Storytelling Network Honor Book
National Storytelling Network Media Award
National Storytelling Network Media Honor
National Storytelling Network Resource Award
National Storytelling Network Resource Honor
National Storytelling Network Youth Book Award
National Storytelling Network Youth Book Honor
National Storytelling Network Picture Book Award
National Storytelling Network Picture Book Honor



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>.



—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.”





Tree Huggers

By Bowen Lee



Ever had someone make a comment about “tree huggers” with a sniff or a sneer? Using the term in a derogatory way is common, and after going to the Tree Huggers Festival in my hometown, where people dance to the music of the trees, sing odes and recite poetry to trees, and yes, literally HUG trees, I sneered more than anyone. How pretentious could one possibly get?

However, my storytelling friend, Roopa Mohan, sent me a link to the original tree huggers of India, and their stories elevate tree hugging to heroism. I am now fully appreciative of tree hugger history.

The story of the Khejarli Massacre is a legend with little documentation but much oral history. True or not, the legend is powerful and inspiring. Amrita Devi, a woman of the Bishnoi religion, tried to protect the sacred Khejri trees from being chopped down to build a maharajah’s palace. When she tried to protect the trees by shielding them with her body, she and her daughters were beheaded. They didn’t take power struggle lightly in 1730. Other Bishnoi then took to the Khejri forest and tried to protect the trees by embracing them with their arms. Three hundred and sixty-three of the Bishnoi were chopped down. It was futile in the 18th century to dissuade men with axes. The Maharajah then learned of the massacre and stopped the cutting of trees in this forest. It was an early conservation victory, at high cost. The village was then named Khejarli, after the trees, and it is now a site of pilgrimage for the Bishnoi faith.

Centuries later, this story became the inspiration for the Chipko Movement in the Himalayas. In 1970, protestors wrapped their arms around trees to prevent deforestation by the government. ‘Chipko’ means ‘to hug’ and it became a successful non-violent conservation movement that was adopted around the world.

Okay. So I have a lot more respect for tree hugging than I did before. There is much more value today to saving trees from being cut down, as researchers are finding out in a recent New York Times article by Alexander Nazaryan, who writes “When it comes to urban trees, old is gold.” According to this article, an increase in tree canopy in a city is a decrease in the mortality of that community. Trees actually improve life for people in a city in multiple ways. But you can’t just plant trees and expect them to flourish. It takes old growth trees to fully function as beneficial to a community’s well-being. That is why planting trees is very important, but preserving trees that are already there is essential, too.



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

Here is the link to Alexander Nazaryan’s original article called [Climate Forward](#)

So feel like showing a tree some gratitude? Give a tree a hug. And do something to keep them around.

To be told in educational and professional settings with attribution.



-TEACHER TALES & TENTACLES-





School Administrations: When to Adapt— & When to Walk Away

by *Rachel Hedman, MA*

Performing for students—no matter the grade level—can fill a storyteller’s soul. There is something powerful about seeing those faces, all focused on the next word you are about to say. But before you can have those moments, you first have to meet the expectations of the school or district.

Every school and district has its own policies, procedures, and personalities. Once you find the rhythm of what they expect, things can run smoothly. For a while.

Then, every so often, a legislature, a school board—or a combination of the two—can change the rules and disrupt the rhythm you have come to rely on.

Don't assume the biggest concerns lie within elementary schools. Secondary schools can be just as tricky to navigate, with their own set of restrictions and expectations.

One school district required us to become an “approved presenter” before anyone connected with our nonprofit could perform as a story artist in its schools. Approval lasted for one year and had to be renewed annually.

The application process went well beyond providing basic contact information. We submitted an assembly presenter application, a volunteer application for the nonprofit’s executive director, promotional materials and an annual report, a video demonstrating the work, the coordinator’s résumé, and a list of schools we served. What might seem like a simple storytelling performance required a substantial packet of documentation before we could even get in the door.

Then came one of the more jarring questions a storyteller can hear: “Where’s the script?” The material needed to be reviewed and approved in advance. I kindly followed up by email to explain that storytelling differs from theater or music, where a script or set list can typically be submitted ahead of time. A storyteller may have a story planned, but the telling itself adapts to the moment and the audience. What is planned can change.

I offered an alternative. Many storytellers have particular specialties, so we could provide their themes along with a video example of their work. I also made clear that the story featured in the video was not necessarily what would be presented to students. Amazingly, the school district accepted the explanation and agreed to the alternative approach. We were approved.

While I remained diplomatic throughout the process, I was certainly grumbling in my heart. I asked myself more than once whether all the paperwork—and the lingering possibility of censorship—was worth it. Ultimately, I chose not to renew our approval the following year because the process felt like it imposed a level of control beyond what was helpful for students or storytellers.

I grieved the lost opportunities for students in that school district. At the same time, I smiled knowing I could continue reaching students through neighborhood libraries, festivals, and other venues where storytellers faced fewer restrictions and had greater freedom to do what they do best.

Sometimes, getting approved isn't the same as deciding to stay. A successful partnership requires more than checking all the administrative boxes; it requires enough trust and flexibility for storytelling to thrive.

For a different school—specifically, a middle school—I met in person with the principal. I had a grant that completely covered the cost of bringing in two story artists. Middle school students can face complex challenges, including drugs, gangs, and other difficult circumstances. These particular storytellers had experience working with at-risk youth and with secondary schools to address those very issues.

Yet despite the needs of the students, the principal did not want the storytellers to delve into that world at all. I felt that restricting those topics would diminish the experience for the students and prevent the artists from bringing their full expertise to the program. In the end, I sent the storytellers to a different school—a high school—that was more open to the possibilities.

Ultimately, you have to decide what your own “red flags” are. Will you take the time to educate administrators and decision-makers? Will you look for a compromise? Or is it better to move on to another school where your storytelling—and the students—will be more welcomed?

Red Flags: Stay or Move On?

Consider staying when:

- Administrators are willing to listen and learn about storytelling.
- Requirements are clear, reasonable, and communicated in advance.
- There is room for conversation, flexibility, and compromise.
- The school respects the storyteller’s professional expertise.
- Questions are meant to ensure a good experience for students—not control the content.

Consider moving on when:

- Approval processes become excessively burdensome or repetitive.
- Administrators insist on treating storytelling like scripted theater.
- Restrictions significantly limit the storyteller’s ability to adapt to the audience.
- You sense ongoing censorship or a lack of trust in the storyteller.
- Multiple conversations and compromises still leave the partnership feeling like a poor fit.
- The time and energy required outweigh the value of the engagement.

Sometimes the best professional decision is simply: “This isn’t the right school for us.” And that’s okay.

There is hope. You can have successful school partnerships. Seek out and celebrate those administrators and legislators who are flexible and willing to learn what storytelling can offer.

The goal isn’t to convince every school to say yes. It’s to find schools where storytelling can thrive—and to build relationships that make that possible.

Sometimes the best professional decision is simply: “This isn’t the right school for us.” And that’s okay.

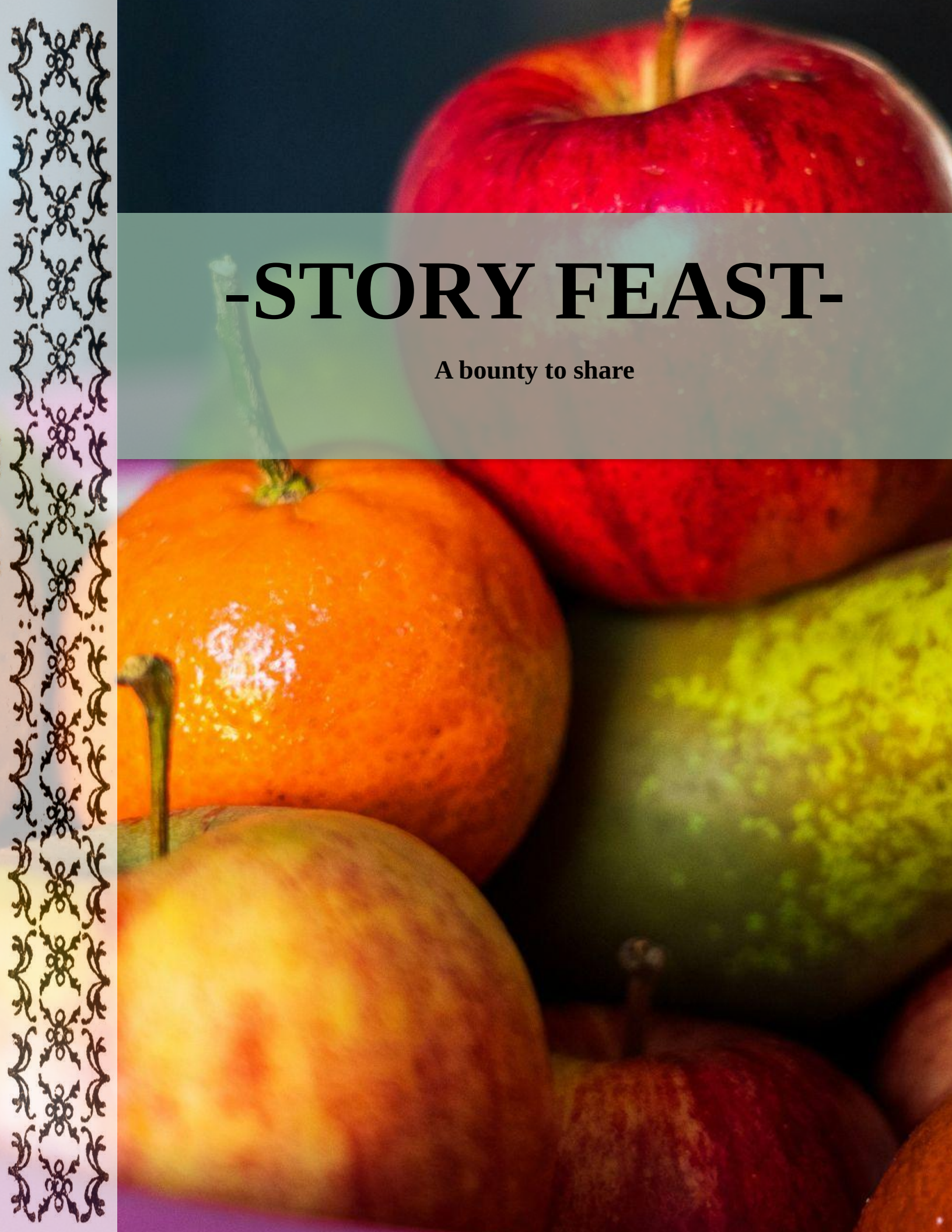
There is hope. You can have successful school partnerships. Seek out and celebrate those administrators and legislators who are flexible and willing to learn what storytelling can offer.

The goal isn’t to convince every school to say yes. It’s to find schools where storytelling can thrive—and to build relationships that make that possible.



About the Author

Rachel Hedman, MA began telling stories in 1994 after a first performance that nearly convinced her to quit. Instead, storytelling became her life’s work. She founded the BYU Storytelling Club, earned the first J.J. Reneaux Mentorship Grant guided by Don Doyle. Rachel founded Story Crossroads in 2016 with an annual festival and year-round programming. Explore <http://storycrossroads.org>.



-STORY FEAST-

A bounty to share



STORY FEAST

by Karen Chace



Niagara Falls, from the American Side
by Frederic Edwin Church (1867)

[The Buggane and the Waterfall - Isle of Man](#)

[The Enchanted Waterfall – Japan](#)

This is the first story in this downloadable, public domain book.

[Fairies of the Waterfalls - Greece](#)

[The Legend of the Koi Dragon - China](#)

[The Legend of Nocalula Falls – Native American/Cherokee](#)



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

October 9 is Leif Erikson Day.

Here are some stories from the north to honor this Viking explorer:

[Popular Tales of the Norse – Fifty nine tales including information on the mythology](#)

[Yule-tide stories: A collection of Scandinavian and North German popular tales and traditions, from the Swedish, Danish and German, 1910.](#)

Halloween is a busy time for storytellers.

Below are three public domain books filled with tales to fright and delight:

[Can Such Things Be? by Ambrose Pierce.](#) Short, spine tingling tales, published in 1910, to add to your storytelling repertoires from 1910.

[Humorous Ghost Stories by Dorothy Scarborough, 1921.](#)

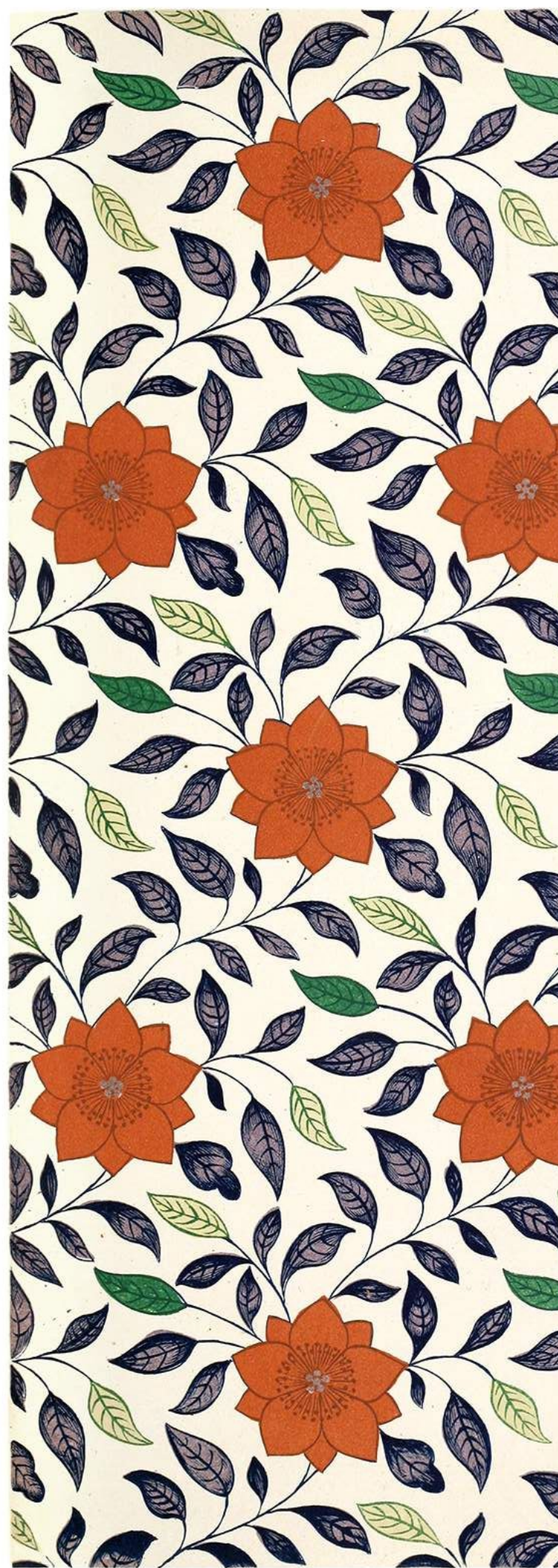
“...a variety of ghost stories that emphasize the humor found in supernatural encounters, moving away from the traditional, somber portrayals of ghosts prevalent in earlier literature...readers can expect to experience a refreshing take on ghostly tales filled with wit and charm.”

[Indian Ghost Stories by S. Mukerji, 1917.](#)

“A collection of supernatural tales, written in the early 20th century. This volume delves into the rich tradition of ghost narratives prevalent in India, highlighting both cultural beliefs and personal encounters with the unexplained.”

[Scottish Ghost Stories by Elliott O'Donnell](#)

“This book compiles various ghostly encounters and phenomena within the haunting backdrop of Scotland, featuring chilling narratives that explore both the spectral and the psychological.”



The holidays will soon be here, so I offer some multicultural sites to add fun, facts, and mirth to your days—and new stories to your repertoire!

Chanukah is on December 4, 2026.

[The Miracle of the Long Candles](#)

[The Vanishing Flame](#)

St. Lucia Day is celebrated on December 13. “According to legend, St. Lucy (or Lucia) secretly brought food to people hiding in Roman catacombs, wearing a wreath of candles on her head to light the way and keep her hands free.” **Below are some stories featuring candles to illuminate your cold winter nights.**

[The Bearded Fool - India](#)

[The Candles of Life – Czechoslovakia](#)

[The Contest and the Candle – Turkey](#)

[Filling the Barn – United Kingdom](#)

[Gaffer Death – Germany](#)

[The Hand of Glory - England](#)

[The Red Candles and the Mermaid - Japan](#)

[The Rose Tree – England](#)

[The Three Princes and the Maiden – Portugal](#)

[Mulla Nasrudin Stories - Turkey](#)

[The Twist Mouth Family – United States/Massachusetts](#)

Christmas is on December 25.

[The Children’s Book of Christmas Stories - Classic tales dating back to 1926.](#)

[Christmas Around the World](#)

Add some interesting facts to your holiday folktales. Learn about their celebrations, food, music and customs.

[How To Say, “Merry Christmas!](#)

Planning on hosting a holiday party? From Afrikaner to Welsh, you will be able to greet your guests in their native tongue.

[Planetpals.com](#)

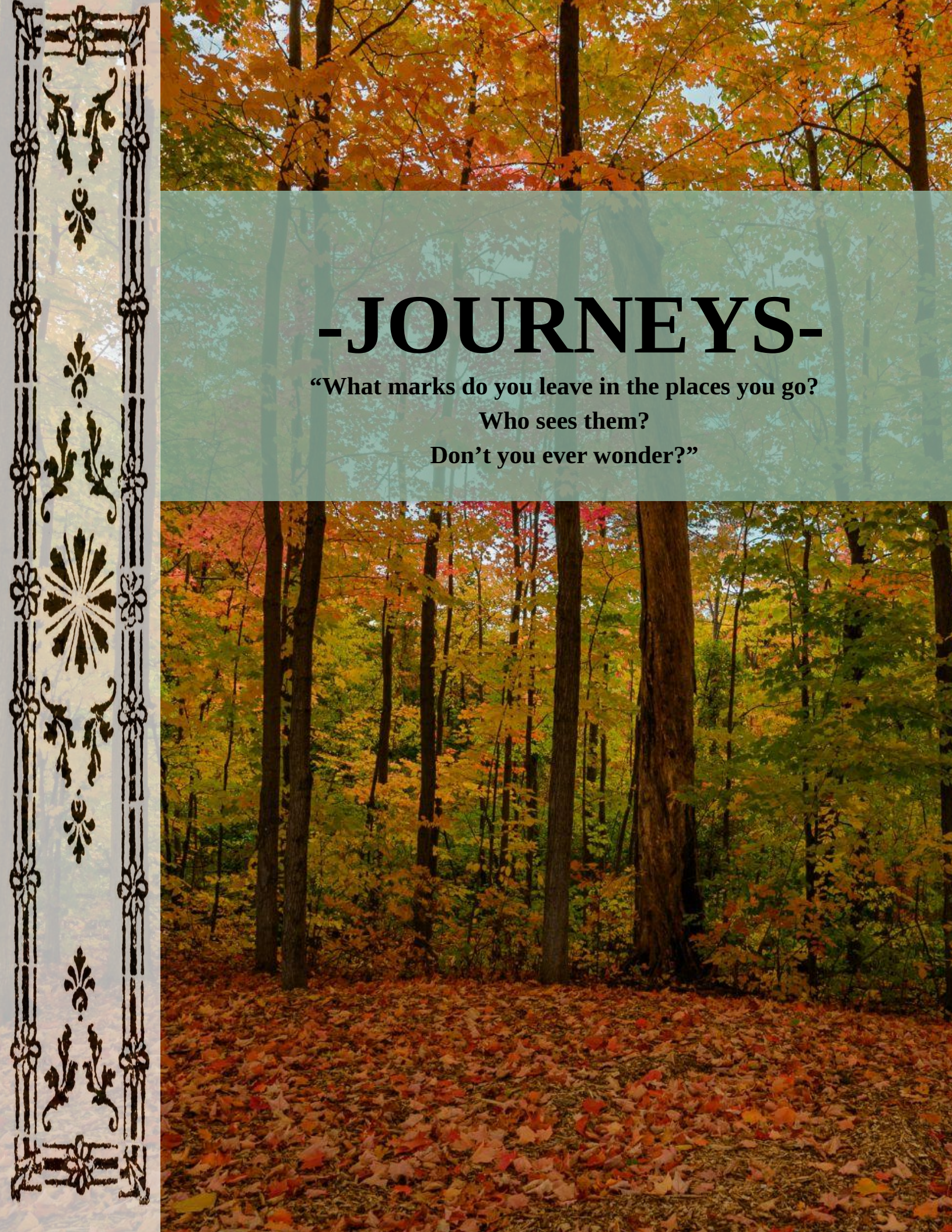
Spice up your holiday stories with two easy to do origami folds; a [star](#) and a [Christmas tree](#).

Kwanzaa takes place December 26, 2026 to January 1, 2027.

[Kwanzaa - The Seven Principles in Folktales](#)

Storyteller Eshu Bumpus generously shares a selection of folktales, high lightening the seven principles of Kwanzaa.





-JOURNEYS-

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

Who sees them?

Don’t you ever wonder?”

The Countryside of Age is Made of Wrinkles

by Jo Radner

The countryside of age is made of wrinkles.

Skin, once supple, taut, elastic,
hangs loose in folds and lines,
topography of a new continent.

Valleys deepen, hillocks sag,
gravity has never been so grave.

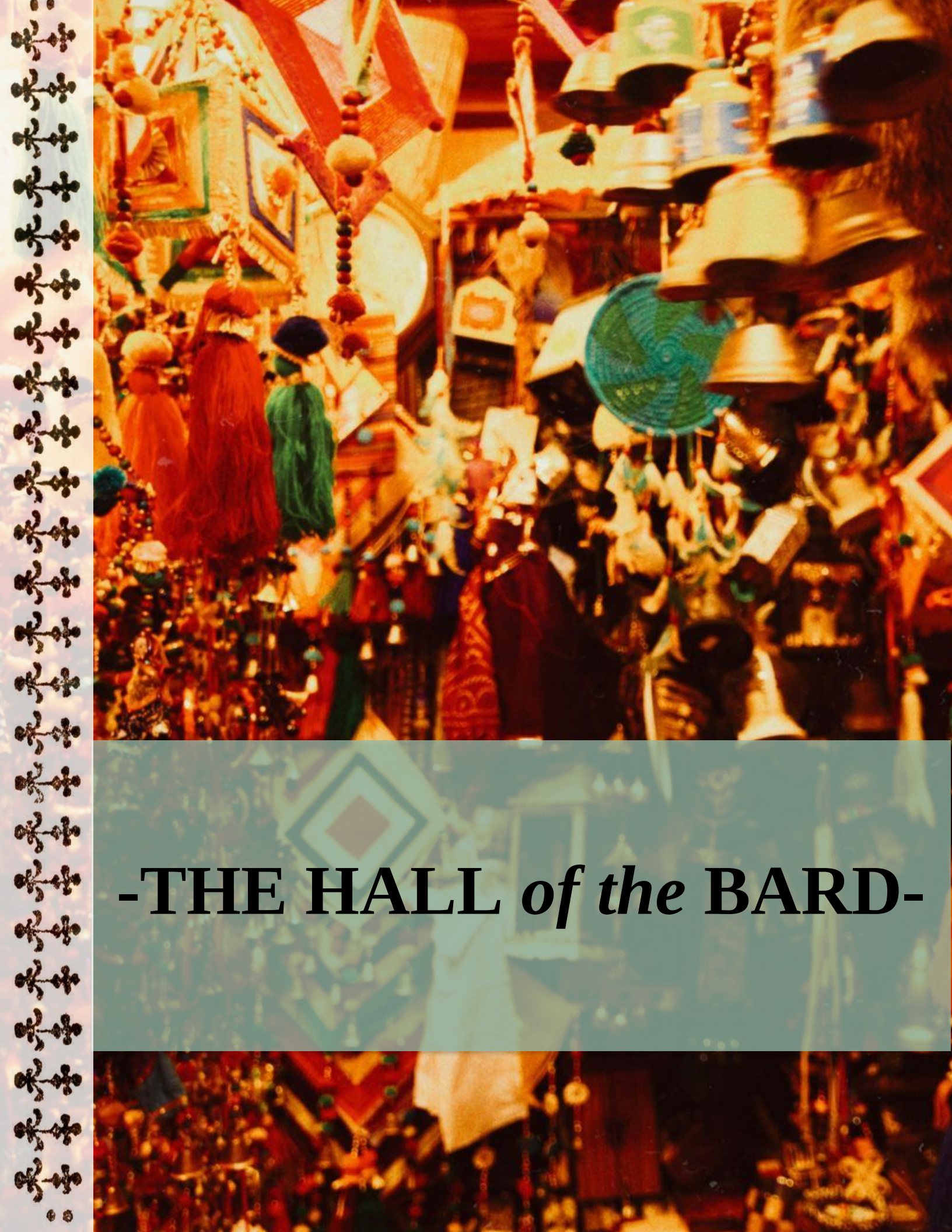
I make the map as I explore
the symmetry of jowls and bags,
the linkages of paths and patterns,
the new routes I must travel.

Dear God, make me a willing trekker
in this landscape, a ready voyager
by bogs and boulders, around blind turns,
curious and spry until the end.

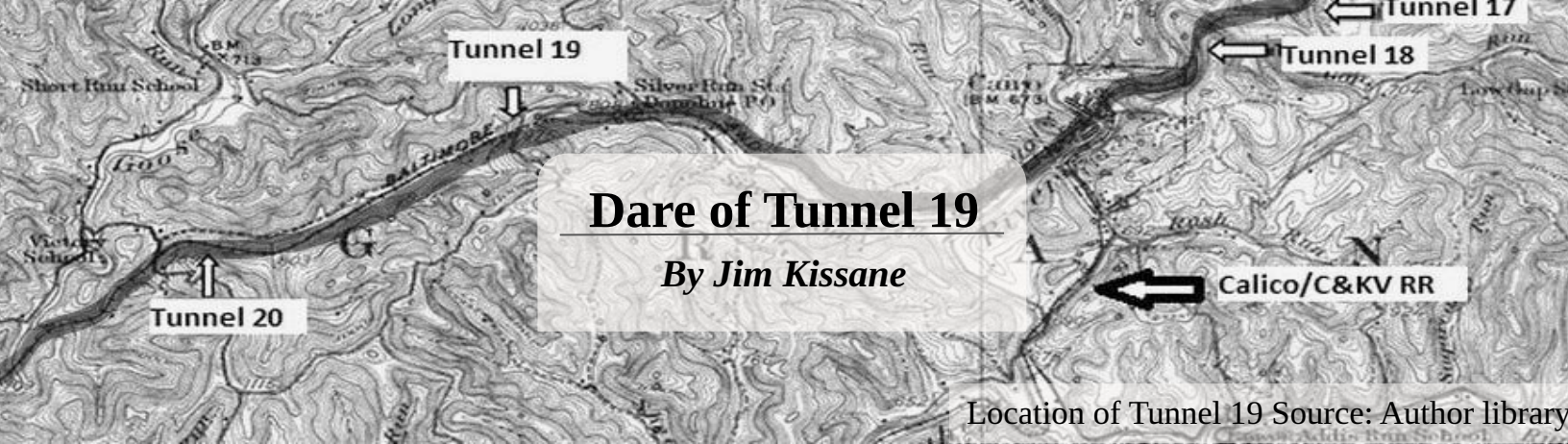


About the Author

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



-THE HALL *of the* BARD-



Location of Tunnel 19 Source: Author library

In the hills of West Virginia, there is an old railroad tunnel the B&O once called Tunnel 19. Locals call it Silver Run. Before you see it, you smell it: wet stone, old creosote, rotting leaves, a cold metallic tang that does not feel like weather.

Around 1910, a B&O freight engineer approached the Silver Run tunnel at dusk, as he had dozens of times, and saw a young woman in a white dress standing at the entrance. She did not move. He yanked the whistle cord and dumped the air. Steel screamed, fog exploded around the headlight, and she vanished. When the crew climbed down with lanterns, there was no body, no cloth, no blood — just fog thinning into dark.

A month later, on the same run, she appeared again, this time facing the engine, as if waiting. The locomotive passed through her. Every man on the footplate heard a drawn-out moan that seemed to form the words “Help me.” In the headlight they caught a white dress, golden slippers, a red-stoned brooch. The company pulled that engineer off the job. Others took the run and came back with their own stories: a woman on the ballast, a voice in the cab, a weight in the air like another person leaning close.

Finally, a young man named O’Flannery swore he would never touch the brake for any ghost. He drove straight in and through the woman’s image. A track gang working at the far end of the tunnel later swore they saw a woman in white sprawled across the locomotive’s cowcatcher as the train burst from the bore. However, at the next station, under a ring of lanterns and staring passengers, no evidence of the woman was found.

The rails are gone. A quiet trail follows the line now. Families walk through at noon, admiring brickwork, laughing at echoes. They go home with nothing more than the smell of damp on their clothes.

This story is not meant for them.

It is meant for the ones who dare to come at dusk with strong flashlights and bravado. Inside the tunnel, your flashlight beam dies faster than it should. Dripping water falls into a rhythm like footsteps too far ahead to see. A patch of mist pushes toward you instead of away. Your own light catches something pale at the edge of vision and, for one heartbeat, you know it is a person. The air tightens. The hairs on your arms rise. Somewhere up-tunnel a low sound starts. It might be water, might be wind, until it stretches itself into words no living throat should make: “Help me.”

You slowly walk forward, then stand still and feel something colder than water brush your sleeve. You can run and swear you hear one more footstep than your own.

You may leave without a mark and still find the tunnel waiting later, in the taste of dust when you wake from a dream you cannot remember, in the sense that someone matched your stride on your own stairs. If some old engineer’s story has tied a knot in your chest and you decide to loosen it at Silver Run, go knowing this: the worst thing that happens there may not be what the tunnel shows you, but what it refuses to give back when you leave.

To be told in educational and professional settings with attribution



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

Three Cascading Color Poems

By Sara deBeer

Escape into Purple

At dawn she drove
her Tyrian Triumph
to Mauve Cove.
Purpureus thistles
peopled the hedgerows.

A Palatinate palace
rose royally before her;
pomp and power
gleamed like a pearl.

She drove home in the twilight,
dreaming of pansies,
violets, lilacs,
lavender, heather;
a sip of claret,
a nibble of fig.



About the Author

Sara's great love is telling folktales from world cultures. A listener said, "Sara is a captivating storyteller, sensitive to her audience and their interests. Her extensive repertoire enables her to present programs on a wide variety of themes." Sara is a published poet who also teaches poetry-writing classes. Website: storydebeer.com

Off Color

Rita's Exotic Boutique
sits defiantly
at the intersection
of Mountain Road
and Quarry Court
catty-corner
to the Cozy Corner Diner
with its feebly flashing
pale pink neon "Open" sign.

Rita's Exotic Boutique
sends a come hither
look to all passersby.
Come hither, look
at this collection
of cheeky peak-a-boos,
sheer shimmering
dream-come-trues.

From the battered booths
of the Cozy Corner Diner,
voices as predictable
as grey day-old meatloaf,
cooking up ways
to drive Rita back
to wherever she and
her satin tassels
came from.

What isn't
said out loud
is the secret delight
the diners derive
from the sight
of the lurid frilly-frilly
gee-gaws that light up
the intersection of
Mountain Road
and Quarry Court.

Orange You?

Knock, knock.

Who's there?

Orange.

Orange who?

Orange me.

Me who?

Me who ate
every carrot
on my plate

Two four six eight,

too many carrots
on my plate.

Eight, six, four, two,
ate every carrot
chew, chew, chew.

One hundred one

one hundred two.

carrots

apricots

kumquats

for you.

No thank you!

Not in a blue moon!





-HEALING SPRINGS-



REMEMBERING Diane Ferlatte



By Erik Pearson



Diane Ferlatte & Erik Pearson

Diane Ferlatte and I met in 1996 when she needed a banjo player to play some intro music for the story “Wiley and the Hairy Man” that she was going to tell at the Hollywood Bowl. “Wow! The Hollywood Bowl!” I said. She came over to my apartment in San Francisco, I guess to see if I could play. We sat down together, and she told me a story about driving back from Oakland to New Orleans in the summers as a kid. I was transfixed. Then I played some banjo for her. A few days later we recorded her intro.

I guess she must have had a good feeling about it because a little while later, in early 1997, she gave me a call to see if I wanted to do a Marin Theater show for 250 preschoolers (yes, 250 pre-schoolers). Sure, “I said.” I went over to her house in Oakland, and we set about creating a show that we called Knick Knack Paddy Whack. The show was successful, and we had such a good time working together that we decided to record it. That became our first CD, Knick Knack Paddy Whack. I saw how filled with music Diane’s stories already were. It was all music I loved; it was there in the background, all I had to do was bring it out in the right way.

One of the characters we both related to was Brer Rabbit. Everybody loves a trickster. I grew up on Bugs Bunny and loved the humor and especially the soundtracks. As a composition major at Oberlin Conservatory, I grew to appreciate their avant-garde musicality, and of course you don’t need a music degree to appreciate how fun and wacky they are. I also loved country blues guitar and old-time music. Putting these elements together gave me a language to start with. How fun!

When we first started working together, I made a rule for myself: only traditional music. So in our early collaborations we would both dig deep into the roots to find music that worked with the stories. My thought at the time was that the old music brings stories along with it. So by using only that, we were weaving together traditions that are already deeply connected, conjuring up a world where the past and present are united. In that process of working together, I learned how to take a given song and bend it to the story: slow it down here, repeat a phrase there, hold something, change keys, loud here, quiet there, groove, no groove, morphing to match the emotions and the speed of the story. Music by itself is not flexible in the same way. I can say this kind of playing came naturally to me, but it was not automatic. Diane and I tried lots of things over the years, and I got to see what worked better and what worked less well. We never set things in stone and always left room for improvisation. My ears were the guide: I had to follow the story and anticipate and change in the moment.

Diane also wrote original songs for some of the stories. “Molly Mouse” from Aesop’s Fables, for example, was a story she’d been doing for a while that had a super cute little mouse song, and all it needed was some banjo! After a while, we got braver about putting more original music into stories. Our whole Aesop, Alive and Well! show was made up of music that we came up with together over the phone. She was traveling so much then that we had no time to put a show together, so we got to the festival in Southern California a day early, sat in a friend’s kitchen, and put all the pieces of little songs we’d talked about on the phone into a show; whew!

“Hey Pearson, I think I’ve got it: ‘Aesop Alive and Well, Aesop Alive and Well, Aesop Alive and Well, the stories he tells are alive and well...’”

“Sounds great, Diane, now if we can only remember it tomorrow!” We were always trying to find the right sounds and moods for each new story. It could be frustrating, but it was SO satisfying when we hit on something that worked.

When I met her, she was traveling all the time, so that’s the world I jumped into. I didn’t always go with her, but increasingly she felt that the stories and the music together were a special combination. I know she sacrificed some to make that happen.



We had a lot of good times together on the road and hardly ever argued, though if you asked her, she would tell you I DID throw my phone once (I didn’t). As many will remember, we played games like Ten Thousand, and Golf, and Phase Ten a million times with old friends and new friends. We worked on stories, drove places, flew places, left early, got home late, ran out of gas one mile from the rental car place in the Louisiana swamps on our way OUT of town! (...“Hey, Hairy Man. What you got in that sack?”...) Ate good food, ate bad food, sent back perfectly good food, and got to know people I never would have met. In our adventures, I learned how to appreciate people and their stories. She was a model for me in how to do that. I still carry many of those stories with me — especially hers.



Diane often spoke of storytelling as her ministry. The more we traveled around, the more I saw my role in it. If nothing else, in every school we performed, at the end of the day there were now 500 kids who had finally seen a banjo! But not just that; I remember as a child hearing adults who were roughly my parents' age talk about having to get on the back of the bus or drink out of a different water fountain back then. It was not ancient history; it was just yesterday. I remember how profoundly affected I was to hear those memories.

Every time Diane and I told one of those true, sometimes personal, stories to young people, I could see lots of young me's there being transformed. Diane's stories in this vein were often serious, but empowering: ones that showed how sometimes one child's thoughtful action could be transformative for the good. The role of the music in this is important, too. Old music brings the ancestors with it. We're all witnesses in that moment. To conjure story, history, folklore, and music to rooms full of people of all sorts has been a deep honor in my life. I'm so thankful that I got to do that with Diane, and I'm pretty sure she liked having me around too, at least most of the time.

Ours has been a special creative partnership that I miss already. I've never seen people combine story and music in the same way Diane and I did. After 30 years of meeting so many wonderful storytellers and traveling in that world, I remain aware that if just about any other person asked me to try some music for their stories, I wouldn't have known what to do — it probably wouldn't have worked. But with Diane, it was like I'd heard the music in there already. Guess it was meant to be, so as she used to say, I'll be glad for it.



About the Author

A graduate of Oberlin Conservatory, Erik Pearson has performed, written and taught music in the San Francisco Bay Area for the last 35 years. Diane Ferlatte and Erik performed together consistently since the mid 90's earning many awards in the storytelling world including a Grammy nomination.

erikpearsonmusic@gmail.com

BandCamp : <https://erikpearson.bandcamp.com/>

Diane Ferlatte: “I love you more...”

by Sheila Arnold



In late fall of 2006, I was leisurely driving home from Northern Virginia to my home in Hampton, VA – 3.5 hours away. I was near exit 163 (Lorton, VA), when my cell phone rang and I answered it. “Hi, Sheila, this is Diane Ferlatte. How are you doing?” I stammered a hello to this incredible performer whom I had only met earlier that fall at the Colonial Williamsburg Storytelling Festival. Then she dove in, “So, I’m doing an upcoming program on bullying for kids. What story would you tell?” I was speechless and decided to turn off on the exit and pull into a gas station and park on the side. Why was Diane Ferlatte, THE Diane Ferlatte, calling to ask a little peon storyteller – only three years of professional experience under my belt – about what story to tell? She prodded again and I finally gave an answer, one which she disagreed with but it opened the door for discussion. So formalized our relationship with Diane as mentor and me a willing mentee, but even more so began our friendship.

Diane is one of the most influential people in my storytelling world. She welcomed me – to her house, to her storytelling programs, to her way of seeing storytelling, and to her life. She pushed me to think outside of the box and to not limit my dreams to just “I want to be at the National Storytelling Festival.” She questioned how I told stories and, as time went by, was pleased when I pushed back on her suggestions and began to back up my thinking critically. She loved me when I was in strange places of my life and career and didn’t let me run away from our relationship when I felt I had messed up. She actively sought me out when I was performing in her area, came to see my performances and then gave wise advice and encouragement. This was the Diane Ferlatte I knew and loved.

Over the last few years, Diane was less of a “mentor” and more a dear friend and a kind of “auntie” in my life. We enjoyed tea and reading books in her home. We talked on the phone when she wasn’t feeling well, and shared stories. I had learned that stories and old gospel and spiritual songs were her balm, so I constantly had ears to listen and voice to share. One of my most precious memories was when I asked Diane, along with Donna Washington, Lyn Ford, and Charlotte Blake Alston to participate in my “final project” for my Monticello Fellowship. Each of these women had helped me as I was working on my project, giving ideas, suggestions, being interested, and asking questions. Then we did an online presentation with all of us – 5 black women of storytelling – and we were honest in our discussion and amazing in the storytelling. We did this program as a zoom webinar and people could come and watch. It was Diane who noted how this time – black women of storytelling together – didn’t happen often, because people felt that one of us met a “quota” at storytelling festivals. She didn’t hold back in her critique about what it meant for us to be together, nor did she fail to encourage as I presented new ideas, thoughts, and stories during the presentation. I will cherish this time together with her and my dear friends more than any experience I could have had, and grieve with the knowledge that I can never have that experience again.

Diane was mentoring until the time when she couldn’t speak any more. She was aware enough of her declining health to start “passing off” her regular shows to local storytellers and giving advice to them along the way. She had been talking with me about re-doing an old story she had told in her early days and I think she wanted to share this story because it talked about getting older and remembering. She encouraged me to listen on YouTube to “The Choir Room” and their songs, and thankfully this was part of her last days.

Then came her last days. Tom, “Tomas,” her amazing husband, shared with us that that story and song were Diane’s lifeline. I wanted to get to California, but knew that was impossible, so I prayed that she’d have what she needed around her....and she did. Tom said she passed from life to death with her friend, Shirley Staten, singing spirituals to her and with her family around her. When I read this, I smiled in between the tears, because that is what I would have been doing while around her – singing her home.

I miss Diane in the flesh, but am so happy that she was telling stories in the digital age. Diane Ferlatte has an amazing number of videos online; I can listen to her sing, bang that stick, and tell stories for days. When I get sad for her, I listen to her voice. However, the legacy she left me was always letting me know how she felt about me – not my work, but me. There was nothing ever left unsaid, and for that I am grateful. We ended every phone call with me saying, “I love you, Diane.” And her responding very quickly, “I love you more...” and she hung up. I always smiled, because she always won that game and thankfully, I live with the knowledge that she still loves me – and so many others – “more.”

Contributor to be contacted regarding permission to tell this work



About the Author

Sheila Arnold has been gifted by God with performance skills; using this talent since she was eight years old. Since 2003 she has been a full-time Storyteller traveling through the United States and sharing a variety of stories, as well as doing Historic Character Presentations, Christian Monologues, Coaching and Workshops. www.mssheila.org sheilaarnold39@aol.com



REMEMBERING Jane Yolen



by Nancy Donoval



Author, editor, and master storyteller, Jane Yolen passed away this summer on June 11 at the age of 87. I was late to the news, finding out at the end of July upon going to Facebook after a long absence. The first post on my feed was the announcement of the livestream of her memorial service on August 2. I was heartbroken at her death, felt guilty somehow that I hadn't known sooner. How could an icon I revered leave this plane and I hadn't registered that the world had changed? I was so grateful that her family had made it possible for Jane's extended network of followers and fans to attend her memorial, experience a last moment of connection to her through her loved ones' memories.

The Story Beast asked me to write my own remembrance of Jane. What I most want to say about her, I summoned up the courage to say directly to her on October 10, 2013, via a post on her personal Facebook account timeline.

Jane, I'm just taking a moment to tell you what a hero and touchstone you are for me. I remember watching you dance to Cats Laughing [a Minneapolis-based band] at the National Storytelling Conference in Minneapolis in 1990 and your wonderful workshop at the one in Connecticut in 1991 (I think I have the years right). Briar Rose is one of my very favorite books. Most importantly, telling some of your stories as a performance storyteller (a few from Dream Weaver and my all-time favorite story to tell at ghost story events the luminous "Mama Gone") has taught me so much about stories and telling, written language vs. spoken language (you write in spoken language which is AMAZING), finding voice and character and rhythm. I could go on and on. And now on Facebook seeing your very authentic, real human-self posts about the ups and downs of writing, publishing and life. You have impacted me as an artist and as a human being in so many ways. Thank you.

I'm going to unpack that post a bit for those who won't understand all the references, and to say more about why Jane Yolen was such a hero and touchstone for me.

I first met Jane Yolen through her work. Her collection, *Favorite Folktales from Around the World*, was a required book for the storytelling course I took in January 1987 at Northwestern University. I'd only just learned that an art form called Storytelling even existed -- from Rives Collins, a new professor at Northwestern. A class on storytelling was definitely *not* one of the required courses for my MFA in Directing/Theater. But Rives was insistent that I already was a storyteller and belonged in that class. And so, Jane Yolen became one of my first storytelling teachers through the folktales she put forth in her collection.

The first folktale I ever told came from that collection, "The Two Pickpockets," with more in the years that followed. I even memorized the Lisel Mueller poem "Why We Tell Stories," with which Jane ended her introduction. It's amazing to me the serendipity of that book being published in 1986, just in time for it to become my first collection of folktales. Now, almost 40 years later, I require it for one of my undergrad courses, Oral Traditional Storytelling, at East Tennessee State University. I am still happily using my original hardcover first edition.

My first time seeing Jane *in person* was a few years later at the 1990 National Storytelling Conference held in Minneapolis, Minnesota. I have a vivid memory of watching her dance with abandon to the live music of Cats Laughing at the Saturday night after dinner party. Here was an icon, willing to embrace her silliness, throwing herself about on the dance floor! Only now do I learn that her son, Adam Stemple, was in that band on guitar and vocals. She was dancing without restraint to her son's music, in a band which also counted several fantasy and sci-fi authors among its members, including Emma Bull, who — when I discovered her writing a few years later — became one of my top favorite fantasy authors. Just saying.

The next year, at the 1991 National Storytelling Conference in Connecticut (Mystic Seaport, I think?) I attended a presentation/workshop given by Jane. I remember vividly exactly where I was sitting (second row, right side), with this tiny powerhouse of a woman standing in front of the room, answering the question we storytellers in the room most wanted answered:

Can we tell your original stories?



Most profoundly, I remember her astonishing generosity as she gave blanket permission for storytellers to perform her original, authored, stories — if we followed four stipulations:

- You don't have to memorize it word for word; you can adapt it so that comes comfortably from your mouth. However...
- Do **NOT** change the ending!!! She was ferocious about that, and she shared a little rant about a storyteller who had come up to her to say how much she (the storyteller) enjoyed telling a particular story of Jane's, only she (the storyteller) thought it ended too sadly and let the grandfather live. Jane made it clear that, even if we needed to change some of the language, we had to stay true to the story she had written, not use it as a jumping off point for one of our own devising.
- Please credit her when you tell one of her stories. And if it makes sense in the setting, hold up or display the book you found it in to encourage others to find that book too.
- If you want to put a story of hers on a recording, you must get express permission from Jane to record it and there might be a fee to do so.

I remember being thrilled and moved that she would be so generous in opening her work up for storytellers to perform. My perception was that she saw herself as one of us, not some high and mighty writer on a mountaintop. She shared a deep affinity with this room of oral storytellers who had come to hear her — we all loved stories.

In the early 1990s, I took full advantage of that generosity and learned a few of her stories. The first was “The Boy Who Sang for Death” from *Dream Weaver*. I remember telling it in the Saturday night concert of stories for adults at the Wild Onion Storytelling Festival, which I'd help found. My mom was chagrined because the story wasn't funny, and funny was what she thought showed me off best. But the reason I loved that story was because it was exquisitely beautiful, lyrical and heartfelt, showing Death in a different light than I had ever seen her, especially having lost my own father when I was 15. Jane's story gave me permission to move beyond being funny to something else. What a gift she gave me, from which I still benefit.

The next story I chose to tell, I found when I was looking for a story to tell at Ghost Story events that would take me somewhere different than the ‘jump’ stories I'd first learned as a newbie storyteller. In a young adult collection of original stories titled simply, *Vampires*, edited by Jane Yolen and Martin H. Greenberg, I discovered Jane's luminous story “Mama Gone” and fell rapturously in love. I've been telling that story for well over 30 years now, most recently at a Jonesborough Storytellers Guild event just a few days after attending the livestream of the memorial for Jane. I won't ruin it with spoilers, but the story is as much about the undying love between a mother and daughter as it is about fangs and blood. I tell it as a love story, not a horror story, and find myself asking people afterward if it was scary enough. I am always assured, with looks that say I'm crazy to ask, that it was, indeed, scary. *Really*. For which I thank Jane Yolen. As I thanked her in 2013 for all the things the process of telling that story taught me about the art of storytelling.

I did contact Jane in 1995 for permission to record “Mama Gone” for a cassette (!) of scary stories I was producing. She was kind and gracious and charged me the whopping sum of \$150 for the rights to do so. I’m pleased I was able to include her story, but I’m also aware that I tell it so much better now after 30 more years of living with it, feeling its language in my mouth, feeling its rhythms and pacing in my body. The story continues to teach me, each time I tell it. For me, that is a tribute to the master storyteller who wrote it, Jane Yolen.

My last “in person” encounter with Jane Yolen was attending via livestream her memorial service on August 2 organized by her daughter and fellow author, Heidi Stemple. We should all have a memorial like this one with vivid, funny, richly honest memories shared by relatives, friends, and colleagues, including relatives she’d collaborated with on books, colleagues who were dear friends. I came away from that service, wishing I’d reached out to Jane more, with questions I had about her stories, her writing, and her practice. The person her loved ones remembered, welcomed contact and inquiry from others in love with stories and storytelling.

I had a little buying spree of Jane Yolen that afternoon, wanting to keep her fresh and alive in my life and work. If this remembrance is your first encounter with Jane, enjoy a little spree of your own, whether at a bookstore or your local library. There are well over 400 Jane Yolen books from which to choose. If you are intrigued by *Sleeping Beauty* being told through the historical frame of the holocaust, try *Briar Rose*.

For me, remembering Jane this week will be embodied by sharing with my Oral Traditional Storytelling students the wisdom in Jane’s introduction to that folktale collection of hers through which I first met her. And, come Halloween, I know just the vampire story to tell.



The Heart's Inhabitant: A Tribute to Jane Yolen

by Milbre Burch



Photo by Luigi Novi

As many of you know, the prolific, award-winning, and well-loved author Jane Yolen died at her home in Hatfield, Massachusetts, on June 11, 2026, at the age of 87. During her career, she inspired writers, readers, and storytellers alike, publishing an entire library's worth of books -- and there's more to come! Her daughter Heidi Stemple reports that she left many full manuscripts behind.

Jane's poems, short stories, and novels have long been beacons on my journey as a writer and storyteller. Perhaps you, too, have followed those long rays of light. Her words and her generous support led me to publishing and performing opportunities, and the creation of several spoken-word recordings.

Our paths first crossed in 1984. As I wandered the stacks of the Providence Public Library, a book fell off a shelf and landed at my feet. If you are a budding professional storyteller and a book jumps off the shelf at you, you stop to read it. I did and found that Jane Yolen's *Sleeping Ugly* was a story I'd been seeking all my life.

That spring Jane was the keynote speaker at the Sharing the Fire conference in Boston, Massachusetts, so I brought my copy of *Sleeping Ugly* along to Simmons College. Early in the conference, I introduced myself, asked her to sign my book, and requested her permission to perform her tale. She graciously signed the book and gave me her blessing. A little later, an informal swap took place on the auditorium stage. Chairs were set up in an oval, meeting on either side of a grand piano too heavy to move offstage. Jane sat down, and I was bold enough to sit down beside her.

As the swap began, she leaned over and whispered, "Why don't you tell my story?" When I obediently rose to do so, she slipped out of her chair to stand behind the piano. That gave her a head start out of the room if she hated my telling. But she loved it, and our friendship blossomed then and there.

In July of that same year, I told *Sleeping Ugly* at another swap at the National Storytelling Conference. The telling garnered me an invitation to the National Storytelling Festival, where I told it still again.

In 1986, when I married Berkley Hudson, she attended the wedding to read a poem she had composed for the occasion. The poem still hangs on our wall as we approach our 40th wedding anniversary.

Across the decades, I met with her whenever I could, usually at Phoenix Farm in Hatfield, Massachusetts, where she lived with her husband, David Stemple. Once she came to my apartment in Providence to offer notes on a spoken-word adaptation of her novella *Dragonfield*. When I left New England for Southern California, she and I rendezvoused at a Society of Children's Book Writers and Illustrators' gathering in San Diego, California. In the summer of 1999, I went on a "Literary Rambles" tour of the United Kingdom led by storyteller Carol Birch. The group stopped to have tea at Jane and David's second home in St. Andrews, Scotland.

For years I subscribed to Jane's online poem-a-day list. I wrote her whenever I particularly loved one, and she'd urge me to tell it. In fact, she sent me several poems and stories to consider adding to my repertoire. With her as my muse, I released five storytelling albums featuring her words.

Jane's advice to writers was "BIC" – put your butt-in-a-chair and write! When that strategy produced new work, I sent it to her. She included my frog-prince sequel, "Metamorphosis," in the anthology *Xanadu 2*. Without telling me, she forwarded two poems I'd sent her to Terri Windling and Ellen Datlow. I learned of it only when they sent me a check to publish both in *Ruby Slippers, Golden Tears*. Then they reprinted my feminist revision of a Jack tale, "Sop Doll," in *The Year's Best Fantasy and Horror: Fifteenth Annual Collection*. I remain grateful for that introduction.

In 2007, during my first year as a late-in-life graduate student, I brought Jane to Columbia, Missouri, for a community residency. She spoke to classes on three college campuses and at the public library, gave talks about original art displayed with her books in two galleries, participated in a public interview by a folklorist, conducted a writing workshop, and offered post-show talkbacks following two storytelling concerts. Plus, we had a weeklong spend-the-night party at my house -- the real blessing of that shared endeavor.

I continued to visit Jane whenever I traveled to New England, finishing the first draft of my novella, *Wolf Chapel*, at her home. While Berkley was teaching in London in the summer of 2012, we spent a few days with her in St. Andrews. She'd been widowed by then, and David's absence was deeply felt.

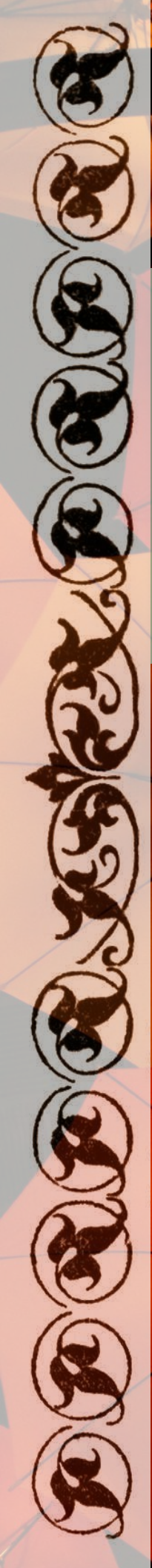
After receiving my doctorate, I returned to my creative writing practice. Hearing this, Jane emailed me: "Don't let your fated audience down because of 'busy-ness.' We need to read what you write. We WANT to read what you write. We can't read it UNLESS you write." I kept that email taped to the top of my laptop for years.

In 2023, Berkley and I visited her in Mystic, Connecticut, to meet her new partner, Peter Tacy. I stayed at Phoenix Farm again on my way to the 2024 Sharing the Fire conference in Portsmouth, New Hampshire. During that visit, Jane and I celebrated our 40th year of friendship. Last year, Berkley and I attended Jane's 86th birthday party at the Silver Unicorn Bookstore in Acton, Massachusetts. Following her birthday this year, I wrote her a love letter. In it, I thanked her for championing me as a writer and storyteller and for the joy of being beloved pals.

Traveling home from a writing retreat in Oregon on June 11th, I learned that Jane had died. When I got home, I went straight to my bookshelf, seeking the last short story collection she'd given me. Being enraptured by her words once more offered great solace. Open one of her books, and you'll discover, too, that her brilliance and great heart still resonate on the page.

Jane was my open-handed mentor and storytelling muse for more than half my life. Now she is one of my heart's inhabitants. At her memorial, I learned from several speakers that her bountiful generosity and endless encouragements to me were magnified a thousandfold in that audience alone. I am grateful to have been one among the multitudes that she nurtured. May her memory be a blessing to you as it is to me.

For those interested in reading about Jane Yolen's amazing career, you can find a lively, first-person biography on her website: <https://www.janeyolen.com/biography/>. A recording of her live-streamed, public memorial at the Eric Carle Museum of Picture Book Art in Amherst, Massachusetts can be found at: <https://www.youtube.com/live/fk71nbYcobQ>. I hope you will treat yourself to both.



-THAT'S AMAZING!-

Behind the scenes of great performers.

The Joys (& Challenges) of Planning a National Storytelling Conference

Caleb George Hubbard & Trudy Hanson



Wake Up and Sing



Caleb Hubbard

It was the tale of two conference planners, one national storytelling conference, and one golf cart. Neither of us had ever planned a national storytelling conference before the 2026 National Storytelling Network (NSN) conference. We had planned academic conferences, but a storytelling conference was a new experience. We quickly learned that planning one came with its own cast of characters, unexpected plot twists, and, occasionally, a need for transportation. As we soon discovered, there are many joys in planning a conference, including watching an idea become a collection of stories and shared experiences.

Caleb was serving as the NSN Vice Chair, one of his responsibilities was to chair the conference committee. Caleb felt that the campus of West Texas A&M University, in Canyon, Texas, would be an ideal location, where he completed his bachelor's and master's degrees, and Trudy had taught for over 30 years. It was a place with history, memories, and opportunities for storytelling. We inquired about availability and costs and presented our proposal to the NSN Board. With the proposal accepted, we entered Phase 2. The conference was no longer an idea. It had a place, a date, and soon, a growing list of tasks.

We divided the responsibilities. Trudy would handle local arrangements and logistics, while Caleb would oversee the call for proposals (and evaluation), correspond with tellers, and organize the conference committee. Our committee members assisted with selecting tellers for the regional and national concert, standard events of our conference. In selecting tellers, we sought diversity in location, storytelling style, genre, and personal background. For the regional concert, we wanted to feature those from our region: New Mexico, Oklahoma, and Texas. It was important to work closely with area storytelling guilds, including the Tejas Storytelling Association, Territory Tellers, and Storytellers of New Mexico, in promoting the conference.

One of the greatest excitements of this year was the welcome tote bags. The tote bags were full of sponsored items, including pens, water bottles, squishy buffaloes, notepads, and more. To stuff the bags, Caleb had his wife and in-laws stand in a line, while his kids and nieces and nephew went down the line with a bag, getting one item at a time. Free labor!

One of the joys was watching the conference take shape through so many different voices. We were working with names on a list and proposals on a screen. Slowly, those names became tellers, presenters, workshop leaders, and people whose stories would become part of the conference experience.

Margaret Read MacDonald and Rishi Nixon had established the groundwork for online proposals during prior conferences, so we only had to refine the evaluation process. Caleb created the conference theme, “Prairie Voices, Honoring Heritage, Inspiring Tomorrow,” to help submitters focus their proposals. He notified all applicants of their acceptance status. NSN Executive Director Dot Cleveland assisted with registering program participants, tracking cancellations, and fine-tuning our budget. Having people who understood the history of the conference and the organization made the process much smoother and reminded us that no conference is really planned by two people alone.

It was also important to us that attendees had a sense of place and history. We did not want people to simply come to Canyon, attend sessions, and leave. We wanted them to experience something of the region. Trudy coordinated the ECO field trip to Palo Duro Canyon, including presentations arranged by regional teller Eldrena Douma from Marla Nauni and Benny Tahmahkera, Quanah Parker’s great-great grandson. The field trip connected storytelling with the land and history surrounding the conference.

Then, as every good story does, the plot thickened...many times.

Our printed program was set to go to the printers when we learned that one of our invited tellers could not attend because of health issues. With Dot’s connections and assistance, we invited another teller, made program changes, and sent the revised program to be printed.



Alicia Dongjoo Bang



Michael Brundy



Adam Mellema



Sunbrella Celebration

We encountered problems with the campus office overseeing our contract, including requirements for a waiver, the use of a golf cart, confusion about assigned spaces, and other logistical questions that seemed to multiply as the conference approached. Fortunately, our knowledge of the venue and connections with campus leaders became useful. Associate Dean Kris Drumheller solved scheduling problems, helped with air-conditioning issues in rooms, provided technical assistance, and helped us navigate some of the challenges that come with using a university campus as a conference venue.

And then came the linens. Overnight stays at the residence halls created another logistical challenge. Trudy's organizational skills and flexibility really came into play, while Caleb's online shopping skills got to have some fun. The linens arrived and boxes of boxes filled Trudy's home. We had to get the boxes set up, organized and get them to attendees' rooms. Using his networking skills, Caleb called on a friend who worked for the university, and soon we had student helpers (and a golf cart!) to assist with delivery. Caleb's wife and family also jumped in to help.

Teamwork, networking, and communication were key in this conference. You make a plan, something unexpected happens, you find someone who can help, and somehow you end up driving linens across campus. Knowing your venue is important, but networking with the people who have connections with the venue is even more important. Looking back, there was joy in these unexpected moments. Conferences are built by people, not spreadsheets.

When planning the conference, we wanted to have a sense of connection with NSN members. We planned events beyond a traditional conference schedule. We featured local highlights, like the cast of the musical *Texas*, singing and dancing. The Texas Campfire socials on Thursday and Friday gave attendees an opportunity to gather, talk, and experience a little of Texas. This event had things like popcorn from local vendors and buffalo cookies, a campus fan favorite. These events were designed specifically for this year's theme, while also helping people connect with one another. Here were the moments when the purpose of all the planning became visible. The schedule was no longer just a schedule. It was people sharing stories, laughing together, learning from one another, and creating memories.



2026 ORACLE Award Winners



2026 ORACLE Award Winners - photo credit Jessica Piscitelli Robinson

Of course, planning would have been pointless without promotion. Trudy wrote monthly articles in NSN's e-newsletter featuring conference information. Caleb attended the Tejas Storytelling Association festival in Denton, Texas, to offer discounts to TSA members. Dot added conference information to the NSN website, while we posted on social media and attended a meeting of Artists Standing Strong Together (ASST). Because both of us are based in Communication, reaching our target audience was extremely important. We wanted people to know not only when and where the conference would happen, but why they should want to be part of it. Communication, networking, and teamwork made the conference. When people came up to us to complement our lineup of tellers, Caleb would say "Trudy and Jaye (McLaughlin) created the line up, I just called everyone." This is a prime example of the teamwork that created the conference.

As we packed up our materials at the conclusion of the conference, we realized that the joys of conference planning were not found in everything going perfectly. In fact, some of the most memorable moments came from the things that did not go according to plan. The joys were found in the people who stepped in when something went wrong, the tellers who shared their stories, the attendees who traveled to Canyon, the campus colleagues who helped us navigate problems, the family members who pitched in, and, yes, even the occasional golf cart ride.

To be told in educational and professional settings with attribution.



About the Authors

Dr. Trudy L. Hanson retired from the position of department head of the Department of Communication at West Texas A&M University in 2021. She has received recognition for outstanding service from the Tejas Storytelling Association, the National Storytelling Network, and the Southern States Communication Association. She directed the WTAMU Storytelling Festival for 28 years. **Contact info:** hansontrudy@outlook.com

Dr. Caleb George Hubbard is the current President and Board Chair of the National Storytelling Network (NSN). He is an Assistant Professor of Communication Studies at Sam Houston State University, where he teaches courses in narrative, popular culture, play, and other areas of communication. His research examines entertainment-education and the ways entertainment narratives influence and impact audiences. He earned his Ph.D. in Communication Studies from the University of Oklahoma.



The Ballyeamon Sessions

by Liz Weir



The Lounge at the Ballyeamon Barn Hostel

In the “before time,” before COVID, I used to hold a weekly session of storytelling and music at my tourist hostel the Ballyeamon Barn, which is located on the northeast coast of Ireland.

Each week, we might have had up to 20 people, both locals and tourists, who would come along in person to listen, to share stories, to play tunes, and sing songs. Everybody was welcome and it being Ireland, we always had a cup of tea or coffee, great conversation, and good fun, or good “craic,” as we call it here.

When COVID struck, all of a sudden, I found myself in splendid isolation at the top of a hill with no visitors. It was just me, a German Shepherd dog named Erik, and a cat named Ginger Baker. As a storyteller used to travelling the world sharing tales at festivals, schools, libraries, and nursing homes, this was a total shock to my system! Then I heard about Zoom and thanks to a grant from the Arts Council of Northern Ireland, I bought myself a big screen TV, a conference camera, and we were all set to communicate with the wider world.

In the years since, our weekly sessions have continued. These days we operate hybrid sessions, as we have tourists staying at the Barn, as well as welcoming our online community, who still turn up every Saturday night. No matter what, a loyal band still turn up to share stories, sing songs, or share poems online.

As a storyteller who has always been interested in building community, it’s been a remarkable thing to see how friendships have formed, relationships deepened through these online meetings.

Storytellers, who could never before have travelled between continents, have been given worldwide profiles. Subsequently, many have developed international careers after restrictions were lifted.



Ballyeamon Barn Session on Zoom

A real support system has developed, with people looking out for each other. We have shared health challenges, happiness, and sadness. It has been difficult to lose some of our older people, like a wonderful, local man, Alex Fyfe, who played his banjo mandolin each week. Also the much-loved Donna Marie Kuczynski from Ohio, who motivated me to keep going when things got very tough. Most recently, we said farewell to Peadar Murphy, who would host the session in my absence. People remember his love for Paul Laurence Dunbar's poetry. Peadar's enthusiasm, his encouragement of people to join us, and his helping them with their technical problems, will not be forgotten. He was a friend to all. His was a great loss, but still we keep going.



Peadar Murphy

People ask me why I keep it going, since it's totally non-commercial. When things were really bad, when people were totally isolated, I received messages telling me how important it was, how special it felt for older people to keep connected.

There is no hierarchy in the sessions. We often have top internationally known storytellers telling alongside brand-new people, who are trying out stories tentatively for the first time. I've always said that storytelling is non-competitive sport and that remains my belief.

In my world, everybody's story should be valued, and I love to see people starting off, perhaps scared, receiving wonderful comments from those listening. That's one thing I find very important about the session -- people are very supportive of each other. They're not judging; they're encouraging. That's part of my whole philosophy of storytelling. I hate any sense of elitism, as ordinary people have extraordinary stories to tell.



Alex Fife

At the Ballyeamon Barn sessions, everyone is welcome. Sometimes things don't always go too well, but as the late John Campbell, one of my favourite storytellers, used to say, it was like the old lady who got stuck in the bath. She didn't mean for it to happen, nobody else meant for it to happen, but once it happened, you made damn sure it wouldn't happen again!

Sometimes we just need a word of encouragement, a bit of mentoring, and we come back again, stronger than ever.

If you'd like to join us at the Ballyeamon Barn Sessions, which takes place at 8:30 PM, UK time every Saturday, just email me at liz@lizweir.net for the link. You'll be welcomed and will soon meet and get to know the regulars.

Contributor to be contacted regarding permission to tell this work



About the Author

Liz Weir is an Irish storyteller and was the first winner of the International Story Bridge Award from NSN. She has told her stories to people of all ages on five continents. Liz owns the Ballyeamon Barn, a tourist hostel and cultural centre located in the beautiful Glens of Antrim in Northern Ireland. She is the director of the Glens Storytelling Festival, a committee member of the Cape Clear International Storytelling Festival, and of Storytellers of Ireland. In 2019, Liz was awarded an MBE (Member of the British Empire) for her services to the arts and to education.

In a time of isolation and fear --- the world opened up in a wonderful way. Liz Weir opened her home and her heart to storytellers all around the world. Every Saturday I zoomed in to join Liz in her barn, where storytellers and story lovers from near and far shared tales and music online. These strangers became dear friends. In fact, when I meet some of them in real life, I often have to stop and think. Have I actually met this person before -- or are we barn friends? Six years later, the gatherings are still happening every Saturday -- a warm community of stories and friendships.

- Marilyn McPhie



About the Author

Storyteller Marilyn McPhie lives in a San Diego, California area called "Little Bluffs" (Penasquitos), and her stories occasionally do include a little bluffing. Her ancestors are from England, Denmark, Germany, Ireland, and Scotland -- where legends from the ancient Clan McPhie feature selkies, warriors, and one (in)famous black dog. www.marilynmcphie.com

-PUZZLES and GAMES-

"Curiouser and curiouser!"

A Riddle For You

Two brothers are we, great burdens
we bear,
By which we are heavily pressed.
We are full all the day to endure
wear and tear,
But empty when able to rest.

■ -SB

Last Issue's Answer: Vowels

LOST WORD SOCIETY

by Carmen Agra Deedy & The Spirits of the Beast

It is fall and nights are getting a little chillier as we all cling tighter to the last vestiges of summer. Just like children, we pass our bed time, we cry out for a little more time, just a moment more.

The words we use are like those moments in time. What we say, how we say it, and our intent behind them have tremendous impact on our life's journey. Folks judge us on these moments of time and decide whether to like, hire, trust, heed, love, forgive, and respect us or to despise, disregard, withdraw, ignore, hate, repudiate, castigate, or just not like us. If, however, we choose to be 100% present, listen for understanding and not to respond, and use our words with care, we can create more of the memories we would like to cling to as we grow older, like the last vestiges of a waning summer.

In each issue we will give you an archaic, obsolete, or otherwise “lost” word. We will make up three silly definitions for the word to amuse ourselves and hopefully you, dear reader. Your job is to make up your own definition for 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!

OPSIMATH (n.) Rare.

- 1) He was drunk, disheveled, and swaggered across the room towards the ladies like a dreadnaught opsimath closing in on its prey.
- 2) The change was immediate and apparent, as the vast array of succulent morsels vanished with amazing rapidity into the gaping maw of the ravenous opsimath.
- 3) Somehow the young dog knew it could trust her and bounded up to her, wagging its tail, sniffing, then rolling onto its back like a happy opsimath, waiting for her to give it a belly rub.

Last Month's Lost Word:

OBRUMPENT (adj.) 17th century.- bursting; exploding.



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

Mama, I Can Spell!!!

Inspired by a *Bound and Gagged* cartoon by Dana Summers

by Wynn Montgomery

One dreary day, not so very long ago, Wilma (the wickedest witch in the West) stood in her kitchen, cackling over her cauldron of witch's brew. She looked up as her daughter Wanda (the most winsome witch in the West) rushed in.

Wanda held out her hand in which she was holding a wiggly, flip-flopping frog.

"Look. Mama," she squealed, "I can spell!!"

"Oh, child," said the old witch. "You should be learning harder words. 'Frog' is just a 4-letter word."

"No, Mama, I meant that I can CAST spells. At last, I can turn things into other things!"

"Well, that IS good news!! I am very proud of you, and your big sister will be, too. Go and tell her."

Wanda pointed at the frog and giggled, "But, this IS my big sister!"



To be told in educational settings with attribution



About the Author

Wynn Montgomery lives in Erie, Colorado and, as a member of two local Spellbinders groups, shares stories in elementary school classrooms. His storyteller name ("Pop") honors his rural Georgia grandfather—the first storyteller he knew. During Covid, Wynn self-published a collection of his "Pop Tales" for friends and family.

YouTube channel is:

https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCLly7Gkc5oln2RkObf_kfFlA.

Contact info: wynnmill@comcast.net

-STORY SIGHTINGS-

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





Please contact us to schedule a booking.



Dr. Hannah Harvey
www.covestory.com
hannah.covestory@gmail.com



Sarah Brady
www.sarahosburnbrady.com
performanceandpen@gmail.com

Story deBeer
Sara deBeer Storyteller

HISTORY COMES ALIVE
DISCOVER REMARKABLE LIVES THROUGH STORYTELLING

OCTOBER - DECEMBER

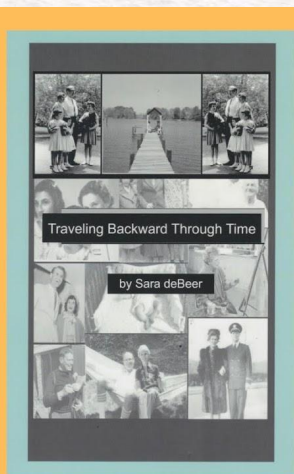
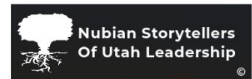
SALT LAKE ART MUSEUM

OR

STORY CROSSROADS
YOUTUBE CHANNEL

FREE!

STORYCROSSROADS.ORG/AMERICA250



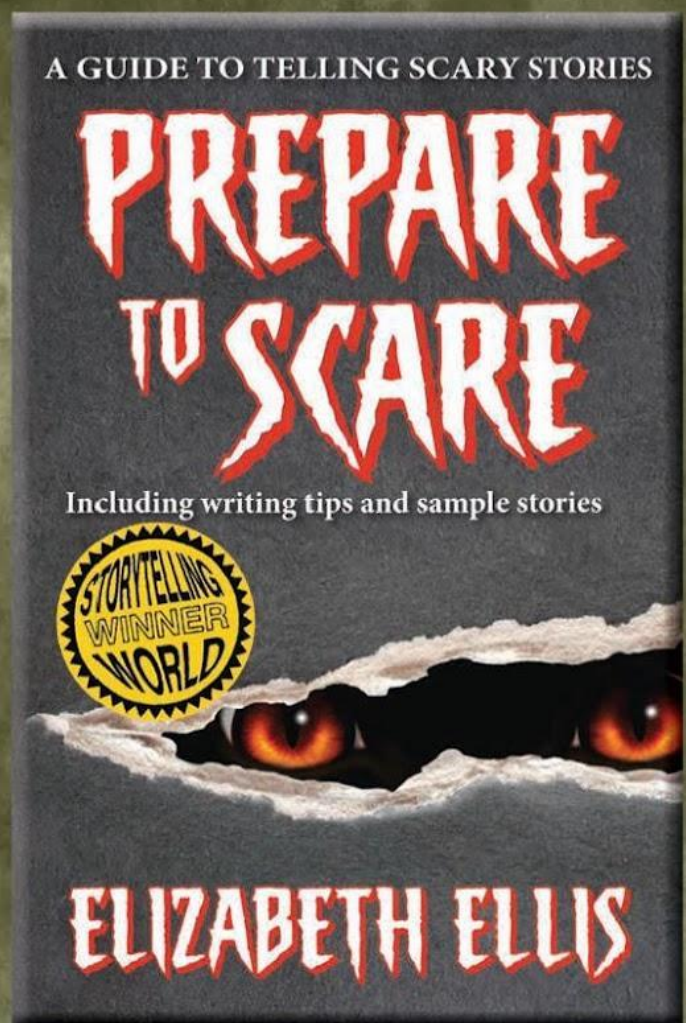
Sara's two collections of poetry
are currently available at lulu.com



DO SCARY RIGHT

(Pay by check & we pay delivery!)

A handbook edited by Circle of Excellence storyteller, Elizabeth Ellis, with contributions by the A-list of scary story writers and tellers on the American Storytelling Festival Circuit.



Prepare to Scare: A Guide to Telling Scary Stories
154 pages, paperback, \$16.95 list price.

Pay by check before 10/31/26 and get...

1 copy for \$17, postpaid
2 copies for \$31 postpaid
3 copies for \$42, postpaid
4 copies for \$50. Postpaid
No phone or online orders at these prices.

Mail order to:
Parkhurst Brothers Publishers
PO Box 356
Marion, MI 49665



Parkhurst Brothers' Old Style Book Sale!

Order any 2 or more by 10/31/26 and get...

Boo-Tickle Tales:

Just-Right Mix of Scary & Silly for Ages 4-9

Lyn Ford & Sherry Norfolk

176 pages, large-format paperback

List price \$17.95 for \$14 each delivered.

How They Linger: Stories of Unforgettable Souls

Donald Davis

320 pages, large print paperback

list price \$19.95) for \$14 each delivered.

Cripple Joe: Stories from my Daddy

Donald Davis

238 pages, hardback

list price \$19.95) for \$14 each delivered.

Trail Guide for a Crooked Heart:

Stories & Reflections on Life's Journey

Jim May

176 pages; paperback

(list price \$14.95) for \$12 each delivered.

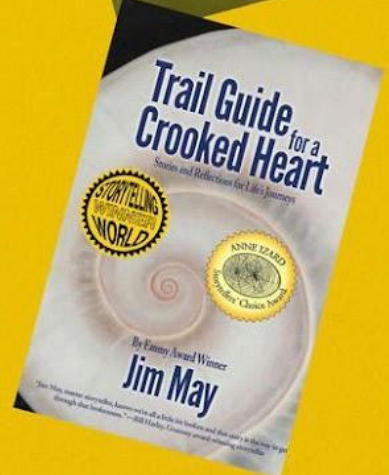
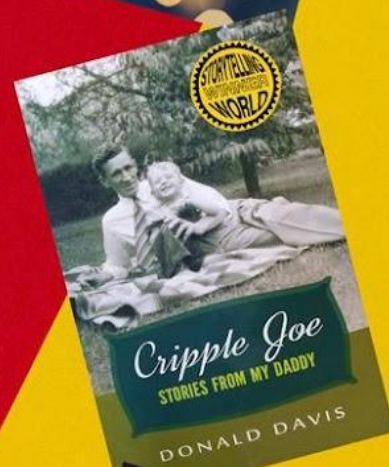
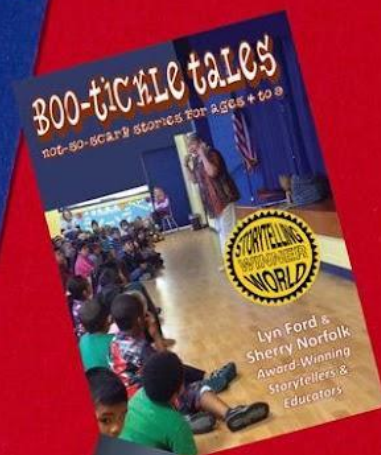
No phone or online orders at these prices.

Multiple-copy orders happily accepted.

Pay by Check & we pay delivery



Mail your order to:
Parkhurst Brothers Publishers
P.O. Box 356
Marion, MI 49665



SCHOOLS ~ LIBRARIES ~ MUSEUMS ~ EVENTS



BOWEN LEE

Performance Artist

STORYTELLER

PRESENTER

KEYNOTE

www.bowenstories.com

www.bowenleecreative.com

Do you have a True, First-Hand Experience with the Weird and Unexplained?



Seeking true, first-hand stories of encounters with the paranormal for possible inclusion on the SPOOKED podcast (spookedpodcast.org)

Contact: Alton Chung
Email: red dirt.1805@gmail.com



Carol McCormick

Storyteller • Author • Trainer • Speaker

Celebrate the ancient art of storytelling and the community it creates.



Shop the Storytellers Tee

www.carolmccormick.net

THE FREE ACCESS COALITION

We are an issue based coalition—We NEVER ask for money, only your participation to keep free public access to public lands, housing, employment and government.

Visit freeaccesscoalition.weebly.com to learn more.

Bring Louisa May Alcott to your school, festival, book club! Through the magic of performance, the author of Little Woman will come, share how she developed as a writer and more! Did you know she was a nurse in the Civil War? Contact her at joanleotta@gmail.com



FEDERATION OF ASIAN STORYTELLERS

STORYTELLERS' CONFERENCE

2026



Chennai, India

Patricia Coffie
203 Emery Drive
Waverly, IA 50677 USA
319-230-0659

maemaude@mac.com

Storytelling filled with love and laughter and sometimes tears from one whose heart belongs to the Midwest.



The Story of

INDUSTRIAL AMERICA
1850's - 1950's

JimKissane.com

EXPERIENCE THE STORIES OF AMERICA'S INDUSTRIAL HISTORY LIKE NEVER BEFORE

www.JimKissane.com

CONTACT: (813) 765-4225

StoryTeller@JimKissane.com

VOICE

teaching the art of storytel

Karen Chace

karenchace.stories@gmail.com

www.storybug.net

774-271-0177



Andrea Lovett

Love2tell12@aol.com

andrealovett.blogspot.com

781-267-9979

Selina Eisenberg
Professional Storyteller

T: 514.794.7832

storytelling18@gmail.com

www.facebook.com/storytelling18

storiesbyselina.ca



Stages: My Life in Stories

by Jessica Piscitelli Robinson

Stages

My Life in Stories



Jessica Piscitelli Robinson

At first glance, *Stages* is a memoir, a collection of amusing, moving stories that follow the author through her life.

As you reach the end of the book, of course, you see the larger picture, like an image arising out of mosaics.

It's also a masterclass on storytelling, and Jessica Piscitelli Robinson a master storyteller.

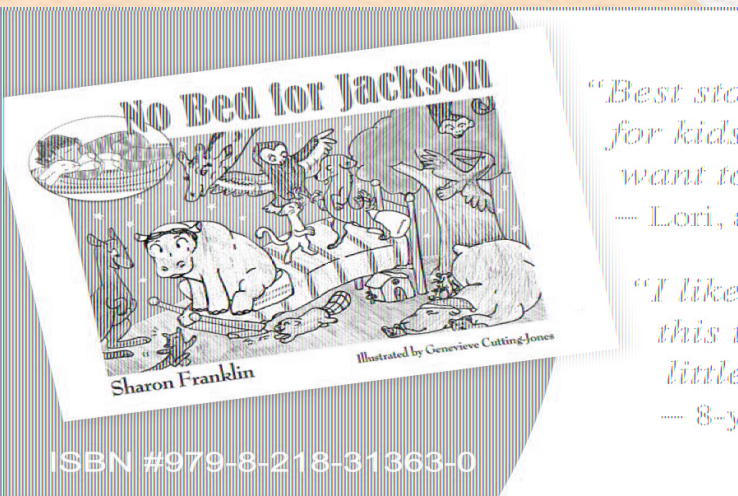
-author, Anne Janzer

TUCKER



P R E S S

jessicapiscitellirobinson.com



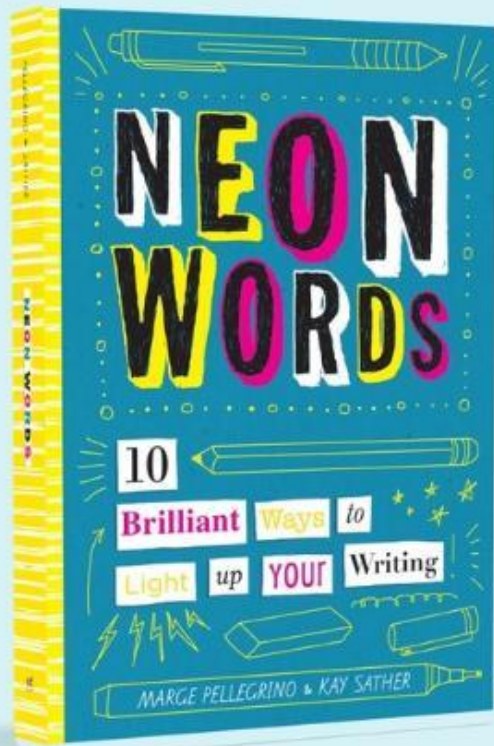
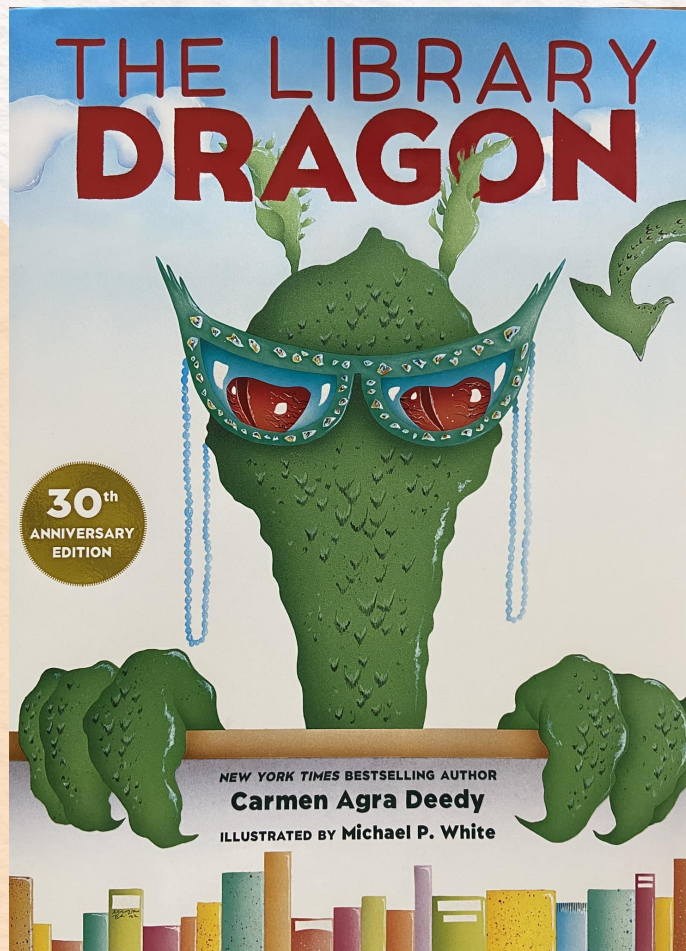
The Strange Case of Lady Liberty



A long-form tandem
theatrical storytelling
investigation

Barry Stewart Mann
& Deborah Strahorn
www.barrystewartmann.com/lady-liberty
404-484-9446

- Unshackle History -



AVAILABLE ON APA.ORG • WHEREVER BOOKS ARE SOLD

"An engaging collection of ideas for group assignments, and fun for individuals, too."

-BOOKLIST



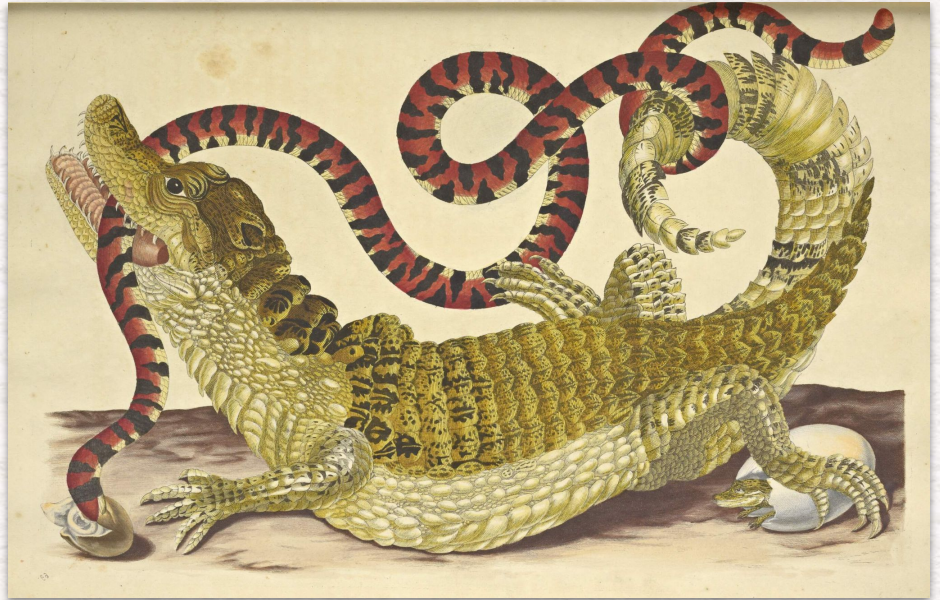
Featuring the Odyssey, the exploits of Fionn MacCumhail, the Mahabharata, the Epic of Gilgamesh, interviews with amazing storytellers and much more

www.JayLeeming.com

◆ Credits ◆

BIBLIOGRAPHY

Pearson, A. Cyril. (1907) *The Twentieth Century Standard Puzzle Book*. George Routledge & Sons, Ltd.



With thanks to [Calaméo](#) for the ability to offer this e-publication.

About the Font

Tinos was designed by Steve Matteson as an innovative, refreshing serif design that is metrically compatible with Times New Roman™. Tinos offers improved on-screen readability characteristics and the pan-European WGL character set and solves the needs of developers looking for width-compatible fonts to address document portability across platforms.

Updated in May 2013 with improved hinting and released under the Apache 2.0 license.

Images

Images provided with permission by the artists and [Unsplash](#), [Old Book Illustrations](#), [Project Gutenberg](#), [Rawpixel Ltd](#), [The Metropolitan](#), [Pixabay](#), Wikipedia, and Wikimedia Commons.



*Everyone has a story to
share.
May you always wonder,
dream, and share.*

-Asia Starr
Head Design & Layout
mamastarrstory.com

Thoughts? Feedback? Feelings?
Contact us at:
storybeasteditor@gmail.com.



