

THE STORY BEAST

For Story Artists, Listeners, and Dreamers

BRIGHT BABBLINGS





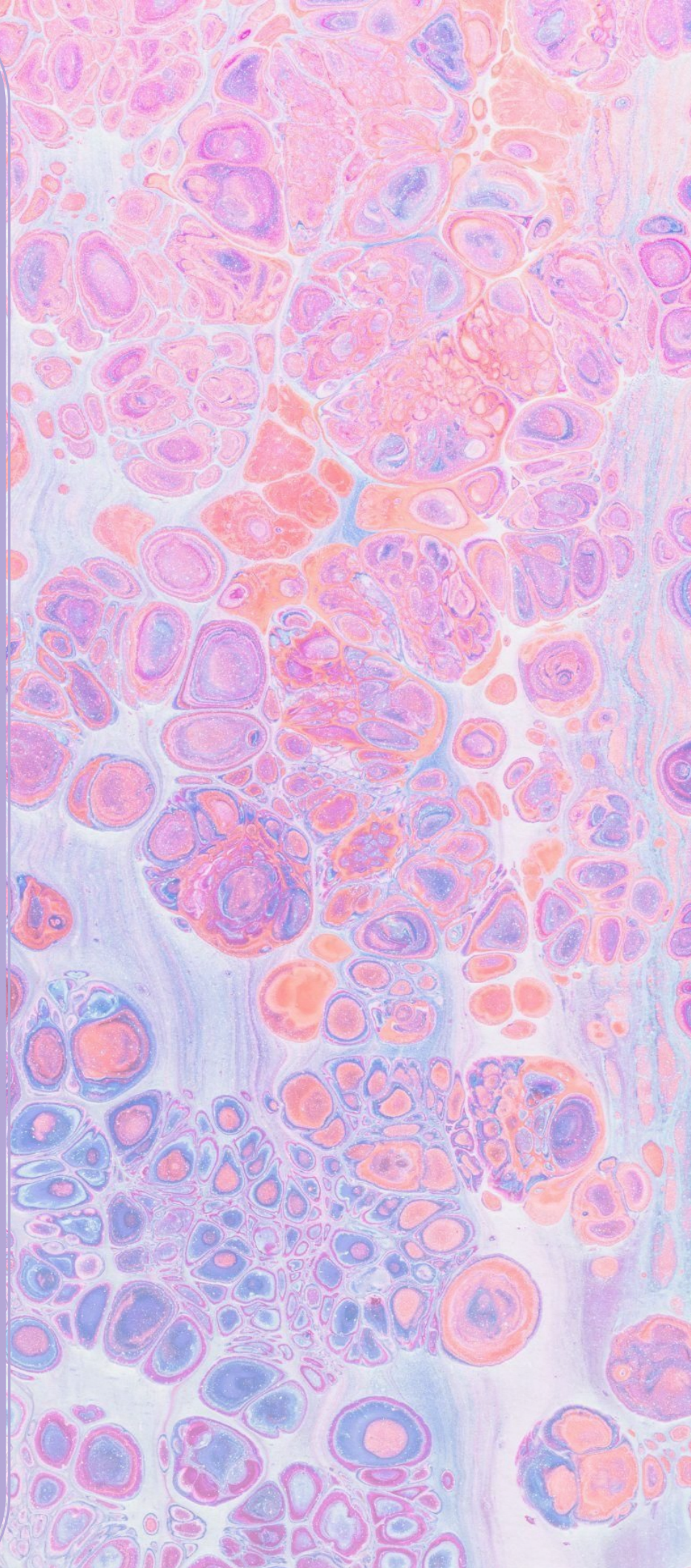
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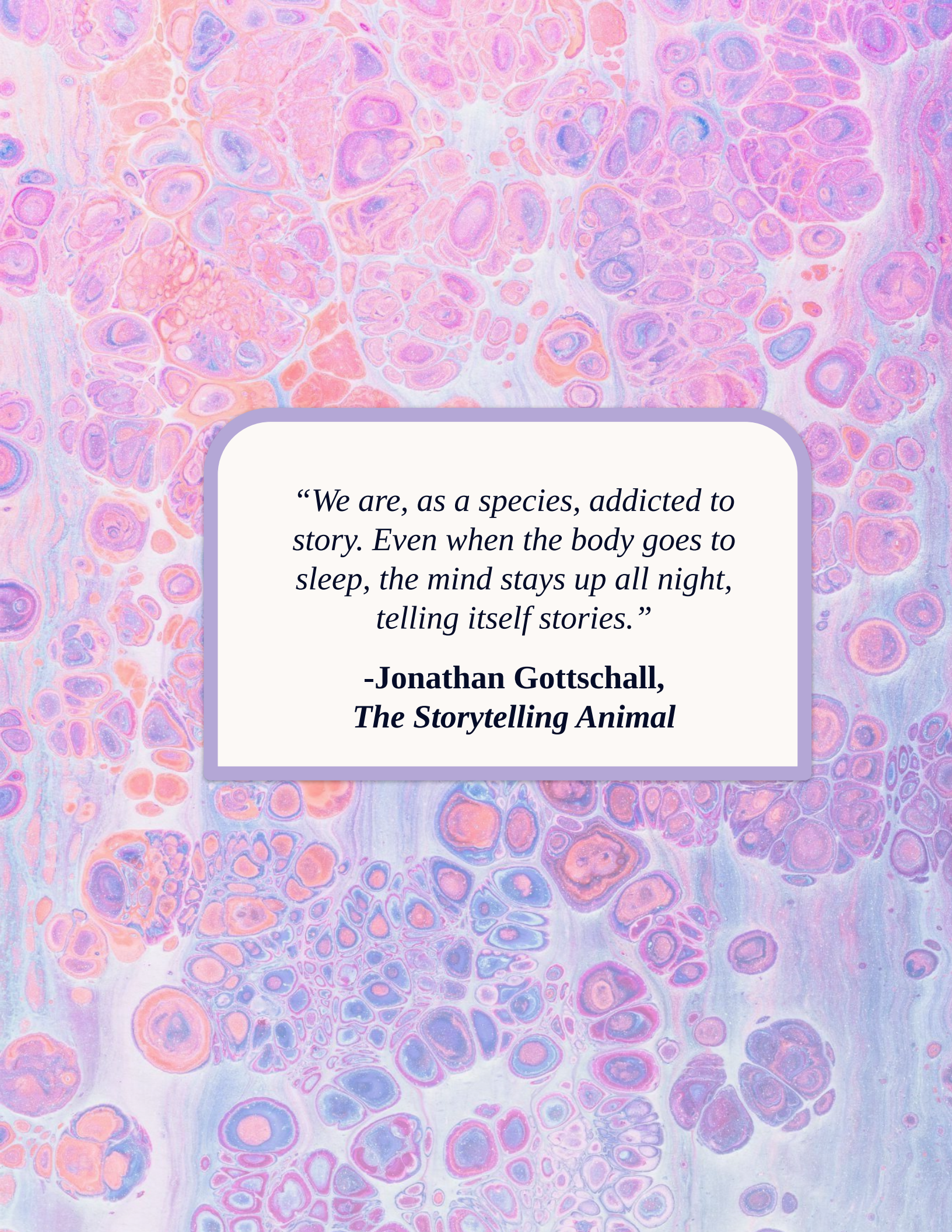
Asia Starr is a Storyteller in the Johnson County Kansas Area, the Head of Design & Layout for [The Story Beast](#) and recipient of the 2023 [J.J. Reneaux Emerging Artist Award](#). Asia specializes in fairytales, folk and humorous stories, with the occasionally Spooky story. You can usually find her telling her stories to an audience of children ranging from preschool to high school. She loves to tell to Adults as well. She hopes to bring that childlike wonder and magic to all that have a chance to stay awhile and listen. mamastarrstorytelling.com/

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

The Story Beast 2023 Themes

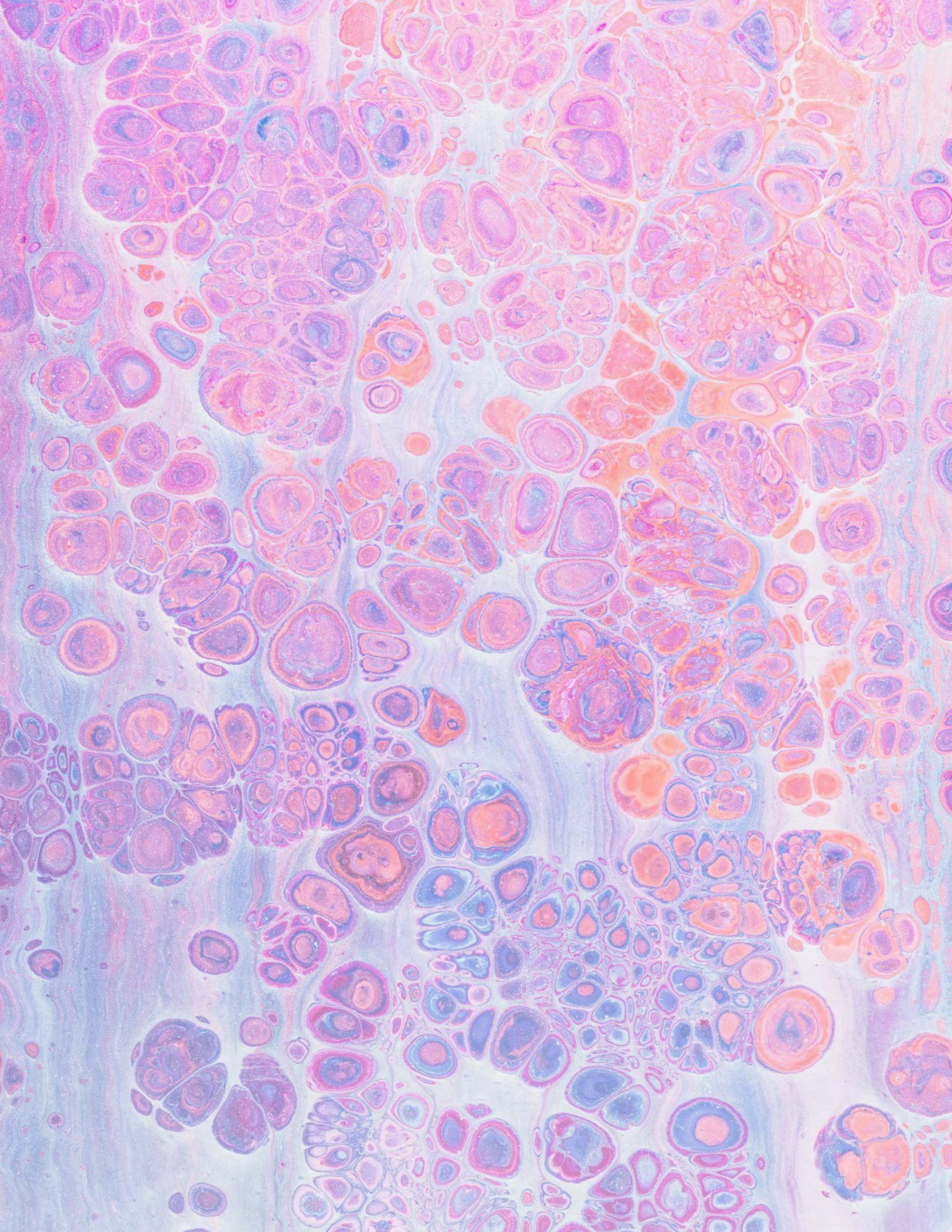
Under the Tome & Tombs - Fall
Submissions due Aug. 1
Peaceful Ponderings - Winter
Submissions due Nov.. 1





“We are, as a species, addicted to story. Even when the body goes to sleep, the mind stays up all night, telling itself stories.”

**-Jonathan Gottschall,
*The Storytelling Animal***



THE STORY BEAST

Bright Babblings

Vol. 2 ♦ Issue 2

Summer 2023



1914 GEORGE BARBIER

L'ÉTOURDISSANT PETIT POISSON...

Robe d'été

The Story Beast
Vol. 2 ♦ Issue 2 ♦ Bright Babblings
Summer 2023

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*“They thanked her and said good-bye, and she went on her
journey.”*

*Illustrated by Arthur Rackham
English Fairy Tales Flora Annie Webster Steel 1922*

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

◆ Table of Contents ◆

◆ Letters

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

◆ Book Notes with Jo Radner

- *Book Notes* by Jo Radner.....14

◆ Taming the Beast

- *National Society of Nursery Rhyme Characters* by Phyllis A. Blackstone20
- *Dad's Work Gloves* by Joan Leotta..... 21

◆ Storycology with Bowen Lee

- *Pajaro* by Bowen Lee.....24
- *The Rain Elves* by Abbie Phillips Walker.....26

◆ Teacher Tales & Tentacles with Carrie Sue Ayar

- *Standard of the Month and Story Chant* by Carrie Sue Ayvar.....29

◆ Journeys

- *Discontented Dewdrop* by Abbie Phillips Walker.....,32

◆ Fusions

- *Time with Antonio* by Brandon Spars 35

◆ Hall of the Bard

- *Shippei Taro: A Japanese Folktale* by Mary F. Nixon-Roulet.....40
- *I See You* by Phyllis A. Blackstone.....43



❖ **Healing Springs**

- *The Spring Beauty: An Ojibwe Legend* by Henry Schoolcraft (adapted).....45
- *The Three Little Butterfly Brothers* by W. H. Weick and C. Grebnert.....46

❖ **Puzzles and Games**

- Lost Word Society with Carmen Agra Deedy.....48

❖ **Story Sightings**

- Stories Everywhere.....50

❖ **Credits**

- Bibliography.....54





POSTAGE
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WELCOME

Summer Solstice is upon us. As a friend of mine used to say, “Let’s all worship the Sun: Ra, Ra, Ra!” She was into Egyptian God humor. Summer is time for picnics, barbecues, vacations, and relaxing in the warmth and sunshine. It is also a time to make new memories.

What are your favorite memories? What makes them special? There is often something timeless regarding our connections to the people, places, and things at the center of our most precious memories. They can touch a universal chord of what it means to be human. They can resonate with many others who may have had similar experiences and feelings. Part of the appeal of stories is seeing ourselves reflected in the characters. Memories can form the basis for some amazing stories.

As an added content bonus, we have been posting videos of our creative contributors and columnists on *The Story Beast* YouTube Channel (youtube.com/@storybeastepub). Here you will get a little of the inside story of how and why they created their pieces, along with tips and nuggets of advice. It is free and new videos are posted almost weekly.

The Story Beast is your e-pub and quarterly forum. We need your poems, stories, and artwork, as well as articles. We also do our best to also bring you interesting and fun Public Domain stories and poems. We envision *The Story Beast* to be a place of connection and community. Please spread the word and tell your friends about us. Let us know what you think and send your contributed works to storybeasteditor@gmail.com.

A big mahalo and thank you to all of you who have submitted your words and artwork to *The Story Beast*. Thank you for allowing us to share your creative spark with others. The deadline for contributions for the next issue of *The Story Beast* is August 1 for the September 2023 issue. Thanks for reading and stay awhile and feast with the Beast!

Thank you very much,

The Spirits of the Beast
storybeasteditor@gmail.com



Dearest Crone:

Do you worry that there are those around you who have stronger magic and would cause you to be no longer needed? Even artificial magic?

Worried About A Takeover

Dear Worried About A Takeover,

My, my, what up and coming magic do you speak of? Certainly, crones like myself will be forever needed. When I was younger, a couple hundred years old or so, I wasted much time worrying over such nonsense. I have learned that one can exist among others of seemingly greater power. Again, “seemingly.”

Do I list all those who possess magic? Where to start...abada, brollachan, colo-colo, derketo, eale. I could go on. I won't. Do you know where these magical beings are? Not where I am.

Of course, then you'll tell me that magic is extinct and I am the last one. Bah! What may appear as an extinction is only that we have not made the invisible visible yet. Do you think all crones are set in their ways like me and prefer to sit by the road. Could a crone sit upon a roof? Or within a well? Or made tiny and within a cookie and only comes out when that cookie is bitten? Besides my sudden need for my aunt's recipe for moth-wing beetle-bug cookies, do I wonder where the other crones are and how they fare? Sometimes. I have to be honest. Do I fear new-aged crones or those who don't even have one wrinkle upon their faces? Bah! Why should I? What I contribute to the world—in my small part of the world—is enough to make a difference here.

Oh, but what of automatons and those of a robotic nature? Hephaestus was famous for creating remarkable devices. Were the gods of Mt. Olympus in an uproar and worried that these automatons would replace them? No! They begged Hephaestus for such toys and tools. At the end of the day, their divine powers remained.

Would artificial intelligence threaten your craft? Is this the takeover you fear? Or, could they be seen as toys and tools while you remain divine in your deeds and actions?

Where can you deepen your knowledge of artificial intelligence? Go to Dewey Decimal 006.3. You could linger and browse 006.4 for pattern and speech recognition (could be fascinating if you see yourself as a storyteller), or even 006.5 for digital audio. Have you heard of holographic storytelling that allows survivors of events to share beyond the grave and respond to questions from students? To still be heard in a 3D form to preserve what could have been flattened by video. What magic!

There is no harm—nay—it would do you good to be aware of what other magic is around you yet maintain and increase your influence for good. You may even evolve and adapt some of that artificial magic to benefit your process.

No matter what you choose to think or do, you are very real. Pinch yourself if you must. Jump in cold water if that helps. How you present story is enough. The unseen all around is not as important as you...seeing yourself. Or, go chat with another crone if this gives no comfort. Oh, bother!

Yours on the Road
- The Crone of All Crones





-BOOK NOTES-

“So many books, so little shelf space!”



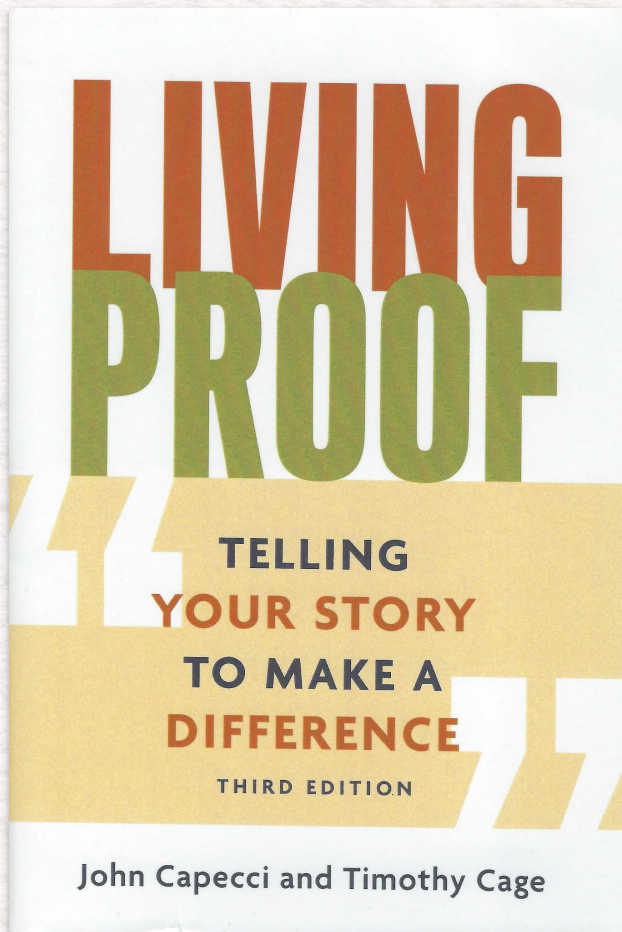
BOOK NOTES

This month's Book Notes present a diverse range of new publications, as usual. I especially want to celebrate three new collections of translations – by Nunnally, Canepa, and Dana, et al. – each a valuable contribution to our libraries. I also salute two welcome works on storytelling and social justice: the essays edited by Cordi, Milks, and Van Tassell, and Jack Zipes' culminating work in *Buried Treasures*. What a season!

And, my usual problem: So many books, so little shelf space! I **will give any book marked with an asterisk (*) below, FREE, to the first person who requests it by email. I ask only \$5 for postage and handling. (I note each book's list price in parentheses.)**

And yet I want MORE books for review! My shelf is undersupplied with the most recent (2022-2023) titles. Have you – or has someone you know – published a storytelling collection or a book about the art form in the past two years? Please let me know! and I will request a review copy. Thank you.

Wishing you many glorious stories,
Jo (jradner@american.edu)



John Capecchi and Timothy Cage, *Living Proof: Telling Your Story to Make a Difference*. Third edition. Minneapolis: Granville Circle Press, 2019. \$22.99.

Personal stories are told in public in many different settings and for different purposes. Communication trainers Capecchi and Cage aim their guidebook in a very specific direction: teaching people to tell their personal stories “to move audiences from apathy to empathy to action.” Their exhaustive book aims to teach how to create and deliver focused, well-framed, well-crafted advocacy stories, and it does so in a series of chapters, accompanied by exercises, first guiding readers in shaping effective and engaging stories, and then presenting specific advice on various aspects of public speaking. No matter what stories you tell or what audiences you address them to, these explicit tips about strategic storytelling can be useful – and may be, for some tellers, a good reminder to examine their ingrained habits.

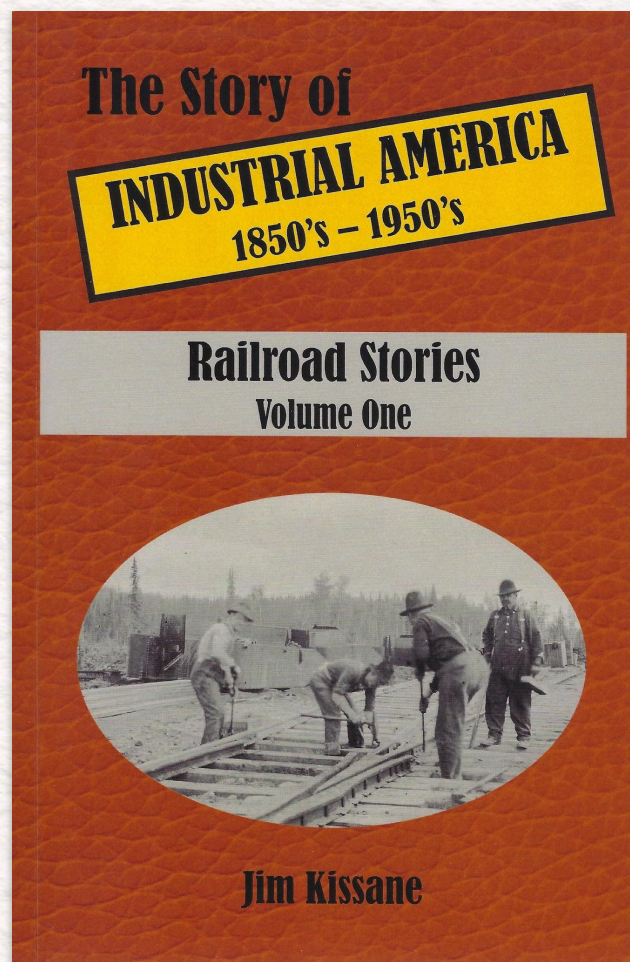
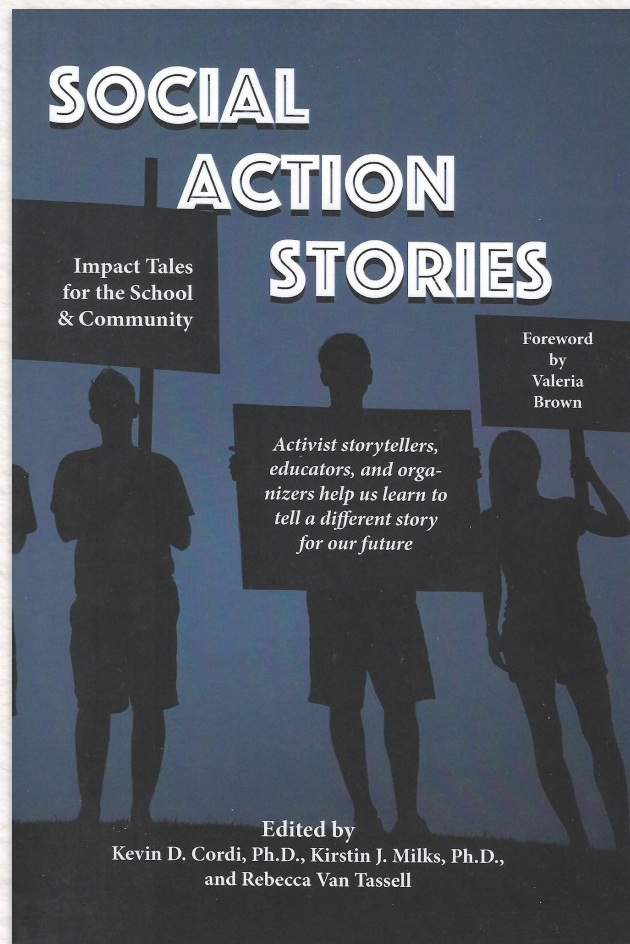
***Social Action Stories: Impact Tales for the School and Community, ed. Kevin D. Cordi, Kirstin J. Milks, Ph.D., and Rebecca Van Tassell. Marion, MI: Parkhurst Brothers Publishers, 2023. \$19.95.**

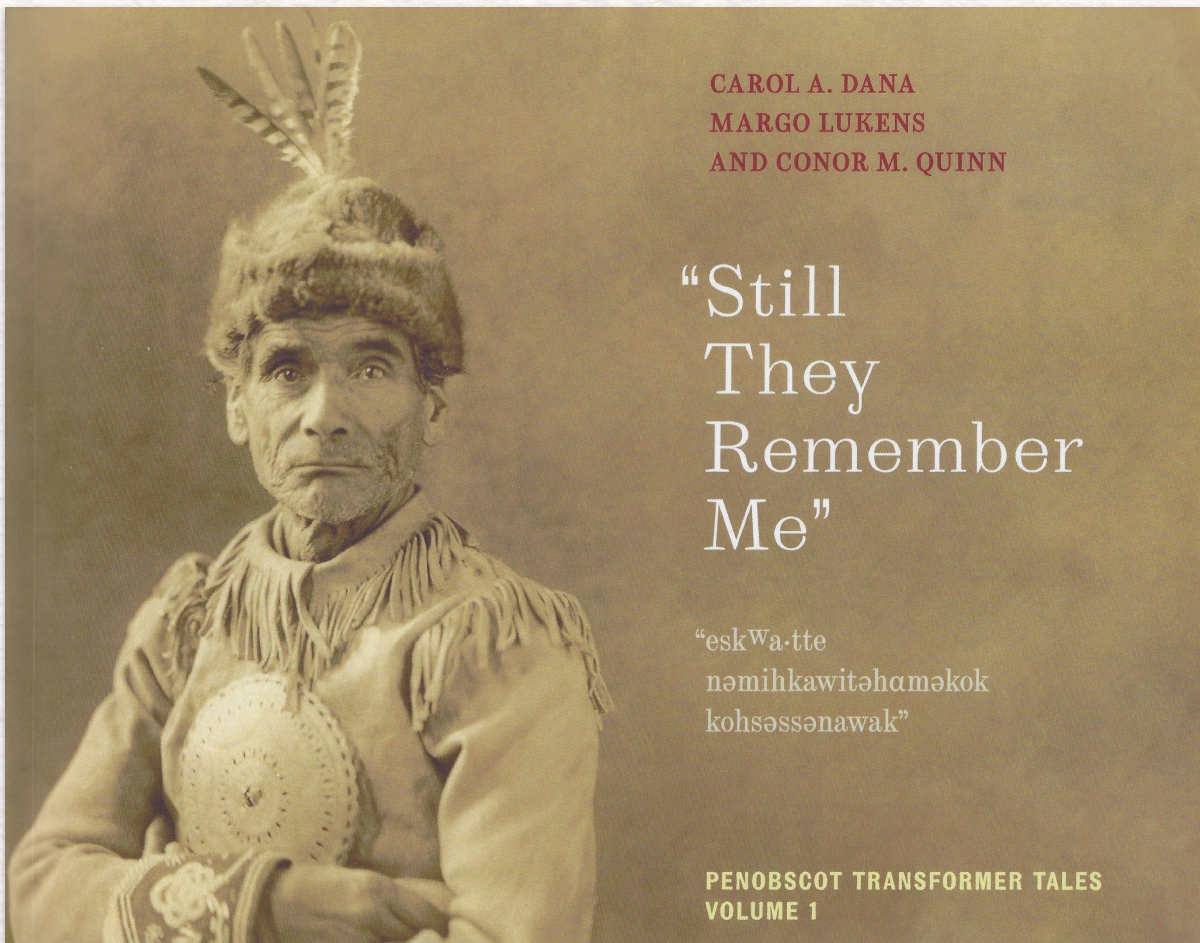
The editors have gathered diverse voices – teachers, community organizers, storytellers, and more – to tell their stories of effective (and significantly ineffective) social action against injustices. Some articles present painful, cautionary tales; others describe positive achievements. Some of the stories provide models for readers’ own actions. Brittany Brazzel moves through her own dismay at being hired as the sole Black teacher in a high school and develops a broad-minded diversity committee that changes the school’s responses to differences. In contrast, when Sabrina Joy Smith, a Black visitor to the Smithsonian Museum of African American History and Culture, sees students on a school trip wearing MAGA hats in the museum, she tries politely to speak with their chaperones about this, meets with incomprehension and defensiveness, and chooses to tell us about this painful experience.

Other articles demonstrate the value of providing the right story, and, especially, the right metaphor, at the right time. Michael Williams tells how he happened to offer a despairing client a crucial image of a dandelion struggling to grow past rocks and through a sidewalk crack to burst into the light. As storyteller in a geriatric psychiatry ward, Dan Yashinsky helps residents believe in healing by seeing themselves as travelers on a journey. Each article in the book is followed by a suggested activity for the reader. Overall, this is a readable, useful, and often inspiring collection for our times.

Jim Kissane, Railroad Stories, Vol. One. Lutz, FL: Fruition Group, Inc., 2022. \$15.00.

Decades ago, when I lived in Washington, DC, I loved to visit the old Arts and Industries Museum down on the National Mall to revel in the recreated 1876 Centennial exhibits – the beautifully polished locomotives, elaborate brass machinery, and even dentists’ equipment. That same love of early industrial history shines through Jim Kissane’s first volume in what will be a series of stories about the early days of American industry. You’ll find dramatic stories (the exploits of Bill Miner, the “Gentleman Robber” of trains), tragedies (the disastrous exit of a woman and baby from a train into a blizzard), and tales that simply portray the romance of steam-engine days. Kissane brings long-ago train travel to life. Reading Railroad Stories will give you background for any story you might wish to tell involving trains! My only wish is that the volume’s bibliography was more detailed, and that each story’s sources were identified.





Carol A. Dana, Margo Lukens, and Conor M. Quinn, “Still They Remember Me”: Penobscot Transformer Tales, Volume 1. Amherst: University of Massachusetts Press, 2021. \$24.95.

This book is a magnificent achievement, significant among publications of native American language and narrative, and particularly important for contemporary inheritors of Wabanaki culture and for everyone interested in Penobscot language and stories. Working with scholars Margo Lukens and Conor M. Quinn, Carol Dana, Penobscot language master for the Penobscot Nation, has created a lasting repository of Penobscot narrative in this bilingual book, the first of two planned publications.

The stories in “Still They Remember Me” come from Newell Lyon (1846-1919), a woodsman who learned the oral tradition from his elders in the Penobscot Nation in Maine and was widely considered to be a “raconteur among the Indians.” The thirteen stories in this new volume were among those that Lyon told to anthropologist Frank Speck. Transcribed for the first time into current Penobscot orthography and with a new English translation, this story cycle focuses on the childhood and coming-of-age of Gluskabe, the tribe's culture hero. Learning from his grandmother Woodchuck, Gluskabe applies lessons that help shape the Wabanaki landscape and bring into balance all the forces affecting human life. The tales are presented in a very accessible format that makes the English translation graceful and readable, but also allows readers to begin to learn the Penobscot language from the details printed on facing pages and from some simple Reader Guides in the beginning of the book.

A grant from the Maine Community Foundation supported this publication and provided that a free copy could be presented to every Penobscot household. The Abbe Museum presented an interview with the authors, including a bilingual presentation of one of the stories and fascinating information about the book's illustrations, available at <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=kSPme2-EVJ8>.

Peter Christian Asbjørnsen and Jørgen Moe, *The Complete and Original Norwegian Folktales of Asbjørnsen and Moe*. Translated by Tiina Nunnally. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2019. \$34.95.

In 1837, young school friends Peter Asbjørnsen and Jørgen Moe set off, inspired by the brothers Grimm, to collect folktales in the Norwegian countryside. They were good at convincing rural storytellers to share their word hoard, and they knew why: “To convince such people to remove the lock from their lips,” they wrote, “it is necessary to allow a true love for these traditions to shine through.” Ultimately, they published 60 tales, delighting in the way these stories “tell us that we are at home in Norway,” with their settings in the forests and mountains. Their work was welcomed immediately and published in English in 1859, translated by Sir George Webbe Dasent as *Popular Tales from the Norse*. And Dasent’s translation – flowery with Victorian style, “translating” the distinctively Norwegian details into landscapes and cultural items an English audience could relate to – has been the only complete translation of these tales until now.

Tiina Nunnally has embedded herself in the language and culture and landscape of Asbjørnsen and Moe’s tales and has produced a vivid and straightforward collection of endearing tales. The translations have a simple, engaging style. Here, for instance, is a random choice – the opening of “The Master Thief”:

There was once a tenant farmer who had three sons. He had no inheritance to leave them and no work to give them, nor did he know what to do with them. He said they would be allowed to do whatever they liked and whatever they had the most desire to do. They could go wherever they wished. He would gladly keep them company along the way.

And that’s what he did.

He went with them until they came to a place where three roads diverged. There each son chose a road. Then their father said goodbye to them and went back home.

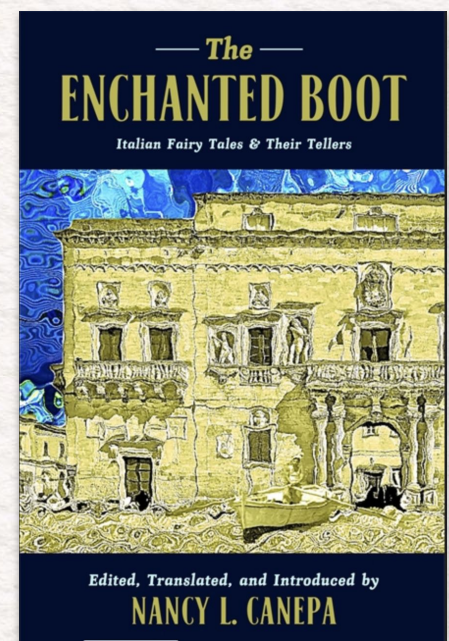
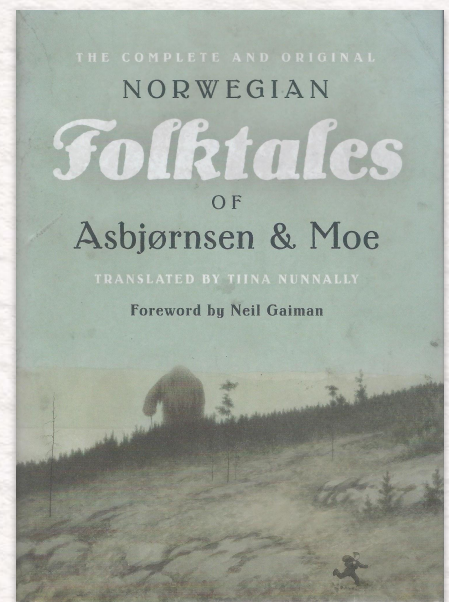
I’ve never heard what happened to the two older sons, but the youngest son walked a long way and for a long time....

Nunnally’s translations feel as though we are listening to a teller, not reading a book. They leap off the page. This is a book to curl up with, to travel with in imagination along the Norwegian cliffs, safe as the Ash Lad among the trolls.

***The Enchanted Boot: Italian Fairy Tales and Their Tellers*, ed. and tr. Nancy L. Canepa. Detroit: Wayne State University Press, 2023. \$39.99.**

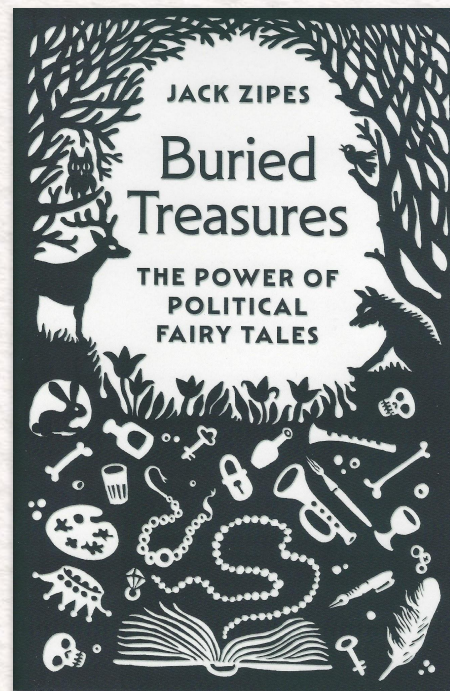
The Boot, of course, is Italy, and Canepa’s volume will be essential to all with a serious interest in the Italian fairy tale tradition. She presents 53 tales from eighteen Italian authors from the 15th century to the present day. Full of treasures and gracefully translated, these tales include not only classic early writers and collectors of Italian tales such as Straparola, Basile, and Calvino, but also much more recent authors who have experimented with the genre, fractured it, and made playful pastiches. In a generous introduction, Canepa delineates the literary development of the fairy tale in Italy and relates this to a series of historical moments. “Ever concerned with metamorphoses, rites of initiation, and thorny familial and societal conflicts,” fairy tales, she offers, “seem a genre made to order for times of shifting identities.”

Canepa’s translations bring fresh air to the early Italian tales. For example, she picks up Basile’s down-to-earth humor and its delightful contrast to his playful use of romantic hyperbole. In “Petrosinella” (Basile’s version of “Rapunzel”), the prince passing by sees Petrosinella’s braids, dangling from her tower, as “two golden banners summoning souls to enlist in the ranks of Love” – but when he first seizes her braids to pull himself up into the tower, he cries “Heave Ho!” and “threw himself through the little window of the room and made himself a meal of that parsley (Petrosinella = “little parsley”) of the sauce of Love.” Every story in this delicious collection brings new discoveries. A welcome bonus is an interesting excerpt from Gianni Rodari’s *The Grammar of Fantasy* in addition to three of his good stories.



***Jack Zipes, *Buried Treasures: The Power of Political Folktales*. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2023. \$35.00.**

For many years these Book Notes have reviewed the fruits of Jack Zipes' retirement: volume after dazzling volume of political fairy tales that the "scholarly scavenger," as he calls himself, has discovered in used bookstores, libraries, dumps, and flea markets, then translated, adapted, edited, and rescued from oblivion. He has brought into the light more than a dozen unjustly neglected nineteenth and twentieth century European writers and illustrators. In *Buried Treasures*, Zipes reviews this work and brings it into powerful relationship to our contemporary world. "Fairy tales," he writes, "reveal what we lack and what we can become. . . . If we let them, they can transport us to alternative worlds where social justice, not dictatorship, dominates."



It was the six-year-old Zipes, dragged to the great man by his grandmother, to whom Albert Einstein delivered his famous advice: in order to "become educated" and "be a great scientist," the boy "should read fairy tales" – and after that, "more fairy tales." Zipes followed the injunction and proved it correct. (Even his wife thinks he's a "fairy-tale junkie.") What a mountain of tales he has devoted himself to!

Buried Treasures brings together essays on most of the Western authors, editors, and illustrators of fairy tales whose work, confronting political oppression and economic exploitation, he has published over the past two decades. He introduces us to Édouard Laboulaye (1811-1883), prominent French jurist and politician and prolific writer, who adapted traditional tales from Africa and Europe to advocate for the rights of women and condemn the exploitation of the poor by rich elites. He surveys the eclectic work of American folklorist Charles Godfrey Leland, who collected native American, Romani, and Italian stories and had a serious interest in magic and witchcraft. We meet Würzburg artist/storyteller Christian Bärmann, dream explorers Ernst Bloch and Mariette Lydis, "soldier for life" and children's author Paul Vaillant-Couturier, and many other revolutionary and resistant wielders of fairy tales. The final essay, on Italian children's author Gianni Rodari, discusses not Rodari's folktales, but his conviction that animation, creativity, and research should be the essence of children's education; the chapter features an inspiring discussion of the Neighborhood Bridges program that has revolutionized schools in Minneapolis and St. Paul.

Buried Treasures ends with an epilogue including Édouard Laboulaye's parable, "Falsehood and Truth," in which Falsehood builds his palace over the tomb in which he has buried Truth. Whenever Truth turns in her grave, "the palace crumbles like a house of cards and buries all the inhabitants beneath its ruins, both innocent and guilty." Nonetheless, "Falsehood, lame and squinting, continues to reign there to this very day." An ironic conclusion. But even today when he sees with horror the revival of fascism in the world, Zipes continues to hope for change, and like Sisyphus, will continue to "keep resisting and rolling."



About the Author

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

Website: joradner.com

-TAMING *the* BEAST-

The Art of Crafting Stories



National Society of Nursery Rhyme Characters

by Phyllis A. Blackstone

The reunion of the National Society of Nursery Rhyme Characters went quite well, except for a couple of snafus.

Music was provided by the Blue Cat Duo, with Little Boy Blue on the horn and Kit Kat Catty on the fiddle. Dish and Spoon stopped in on their way to happiness, having decided to run away together. They couldn't stop touching each other!

Humpty Dumpty sat at his usual spot on the wall acting as if he were in charge of everything. No one pays attention to him anymore. Not long afterward he cracked up and now his brains are scrambled.

It looked like Miss Muffet and Jack Horner were getting cuddly and cozy, sharing curds, whey, and Christmas pie. Everyone thought it was a plum idea for them to get together. Then this big spider showed up. Miss Muffet was so scared, she ran away. Jack Horner didn't seem to mind. By the end of the day, he, and Mary, you know, the contrary one with the garden, were discussing gardening techniques. He was thinking about starting an orchard of plum trees. When Mary mentioned the pretty maids of her garden, his eyes lit up and he asked Mary if he could walk her home.

The only snafu was a near fist fight between Astronaut Cow and Jumper Jack. You know how Jumper Jack is so proud of his fitness routines and thinks of himself as the most agile of all in his age category, which must be some 400 years by now. He declared he was so nimble he could jump over fire, oceans, and mountains. Astronaut Cow had enough of Jack's boasting, reminding Jack that he, a member of the bovine family, had jumped over the moon, earning a place in the Holstein Hall of Honor. Jack responded with a snide comment about the Holstein's massive, black and white ugly body going over the moon, looking so much like an alien monster that it created panic throughout the whole universe! Fortunately, the spat ended when Jack Sprat and his wife, Splatter, intervened and invited them over for Blackbird pie.

Then the Old Woman in the Shoe yelled that her children were missing. Everyone joined in the search for them. They were found at the old schoolhouse with Mary, petting her lamb. They didn't want to leave, but the Muffin Man promised them muffins when they got back home.

By day's end everyone was pleased with the event, except, of course, Peter's wife who stayed inside the pumpkin shell the whole day, feasting on pumpkin seeds, and watching the festivities from the jack-o'-lantern's mouth. What a controlling jerk that Peter is. Maybe on Halloween someone will smash his pumpkin and she will be able to escape.

The day ended peacefully, everyone looking up into the night sky with twinkling stars, wondering if anyone in the centuries beyond would remember them.

Contributor to be contacted regarding permission to tell this work.



About the Author

Dr. Phyllis A. Blackstone, storyteller extraordinaire, is a retired educator and professor who used storytelling as her preferred teaching tool from first graders to graduate students. In retirement she tells stories of wisdom and truth, including folktales, personal stories, and creative narratives. Her audiences include children, families, adults, and senior citizens in venues from classrooms to retirement homes. MY STORIED LIFE is an eclectic collection of real and imagined stories that will tickle the funny bone and bring a tear to the eye. Dr. Blackstone currently resides in Brunswick, Maine. Performance information is available at blackstonestoryteller.com.
Email: phyllis.blackstone@gmail.com Text: 207-860-6622.

Dad's Work Gloves

by Joan Leotta

Dad's Work Gloves, was previously published in Sasee magazine in June, 2020. Here is the link to the originally published article <https://sasee.com/essay/dads-work-gloves/>

Just two weeks after my father died, we began the process of helping my mother clear out the house, selecting and holding on to precious tangible mementos, finding things to give away. I was assigned the basement space he used for his projects. He took pride in his handy work. A pharmacist by trade, he approached the exercise of crafting something with wood and nails with equal precision and respect for exactitude, but without the burden of life or death hanging over the success of the project.

After sorting the nails and screws on the top of the bench, a ray of sun burst through the narrow window of the tiny basement room, illuminating the edge of something wedged between the workbench and the wall. I pulled the workbench forward, and plop, clink, a pair of heavy-duty gloves and a rusty nail fell onto the cement floor.

Smiling, I retrieved gloves and nail. Dad lost the gloves right after his biggest project, one I had not thought about in years -- building my ice rink. I was not a serious skater, but I loved it. However, we lived far from a public ice rink, and between Dad's work schedule and my mom's, I hardly even scuffed the white leather skates that had been my favorite Christmas gift the year before.

After raking the leaves one afternoon on a rare clear Pittsburgh autumn day, I noticed Dad staring out at our yard, thinking. I went out to help him bag the leaves.

"Where are the bags, Dad?"

He pointed to the bags, and then asked, "How would you like your very own ice rink?"

I looked up at him. "My own ice rink?"

"I can build one for you, right here in the yard."

If my dad said he could do it, I believed him. I was fourteen. He could do anything.

We went to the hardware store together. I watched as he picked out lumber, plastic pool lining, and nails. At the register he picked up a pair of leather-palmed work gloves.

"Gloves for real work," he said.

Over the next few days, as my father measured, sawed, and pounded, those gloves protected his pharmacist's soft hands. He worked afternoons on the rink, discovering part-way through that our flat yard had a slight slope.

"Math is our friend," he told me. "You will have your rink. After all, I promised." To give me a flat rink, one side would have to be higher than the other. He measured, calculated it all again, and renewed his efforts.

It was warmish until after Christmas that year. My white leather skates from the previous year still fit. My birthday, coming right after Christmas, was occasion for a warm white parka and some heavy socks for the skates. Thus far, we had seen only a few intermittent night freezes.

"We can't fill the pond yet," he told me.

Two weeks into the New Year, just after my birthday, the weather decided to be wintery at last.

"It's time," he said.

My father filled the pool liner fastened to the four corners of my shallow wooden pond. He filled it carefully, and then turned off the outside water for the winter. Sure enough, that night the temperature dipped way below freezing, and the next day's small bit of sun did nothing much to heat the air or yard.

“Your rink is ready to use,” he announced.

I pulled on the skates, laced them, and twirled and stumbled my way around the ice, smiling and laughing. I skated to music in my head, loving the space. My dad watched from the kitchen until he had to leave for work. I skated until my mother called me in to have dinner.

For two months, every day I skated. I taught myself to circle and to skate backward. I chanted Latin declensions to myself as the sharp skate blades cut a set of circular paths around the inside of my icy square. Imagining applause when my dad was at work, I reveled in his real praise, calling him outside to watch me whenever he was home.

March began a pattern of alternating warm and cold days, and all too soon the ice became too soft for even the sharpest skate blades to grip. One afternoon Dad took out the work gloves and, with the claw end of his hammer, began to extract nails and pull apart the boards. Water sloshed out onto the dormant grass. Before he was finished with the task, his work gloves went missing. I remember helping him look for the gloves – outside, in the workroom, and in other parts of the house. He used woolen gloves to shield his hands for the final phase of the demolition.

When the square pond was no more than a stack of materials in our driveway, my rink disappeared into the maw of the garbage collector’s truck. My dad never built another. I outgrew the skates, I threw out the rusty nail, but I kept the lost gloves that had warmed his hands the year he harnessed winter’s cold to give me my heart’s desire.



This work is not to be retold or performed.



Joan Leotta plays with words on page and stage. She performs tales featuring food, family, and strong women. Internationally and widely published, she’s a 2021, 2022 Pushcart nominee, Best of the Net 2022 nominee, 2022 runner-up, Robert Frost Competition. Her chapbook, *Feathers on Stone*, is from Main Street Rag.

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–STORYCOLOGY–

Storytelling for Environmental Awareness and Action

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





Pajaro

by Bowen Lee



The river in the sky ran for ten days over Pajaro. The atmospheric river that had formed over the Pacific Ocean sent rain on the Central Coast of California that filled reservoirs and lakes and rivers, bodies of water that had been dry or 76% empty. The land below was hard and dry. Three years of drought had sent the roots of plants down deep to search for water underground, or forced them to spread out shallow to catch what little surface water remained. Cities and towns had been cautioned to conserve water and farmers were promised water channeled in for their crops. But in ten days, more water fell than in ten years, and the mountains were filled with snow 324% above normal. It was more water than the land could hold. So the water began to run.

Johnny walked his three goats down to the pasture everyday. But one day, as they were passing the neighbor's turnip field, Johnny saw a hole in the fence. His goats saw it, too. In they went, nibbling on the tender turnip tops. "This is no good," thought Johnny, and he tried and he tried and he tried to chase his goats out of the field, but the goats would not go. They ran and they ran.

At first, the raindrops fell on land like a dry sponge, absorbed immediately. But soon the hard pan earth pushed the pooling water up, and the ground grew soggy. The water had nowhere to go, except to be pulled by gravity, so water began to run. It ran down the San Juan Mountains and the Gabilans into the Salinas Valley. Decades of flat tilled agricultural fields shrugged the water off. Shallow roots of monocrops, disturbed lands from tillage turning soil into lifeless dirt, are not meant to hold water. The water ran and ran.

Johnny finally stopped chasing his goats. He sat down by the road and cried. "Why are you sad?" asked the Fox. Ben pointed to the goats in the turnip field, munching on turnips, pulling them up. "I'll get them out for you," said Fox. She went through the hole in the fence and chased the goats. But the goats ran and ran.

Climate change creates these ups and downs in rainfall, perhaps no rain for years, then downpours that dump water upon the earth. Agricultural practices that favor acres of land with one kind of water thirsty crop deplete soil and make it arid and dry. Water wants to go down, and if it cannot go down into the ground because plant roots and microorganisms and fungi are not pulling it down, water will run downhill. It will fill waterways and race to the ocean. And if it finds a hole during its journey to the sea, water will spill out and flood.

Fox finally stopped chasing the goats. She sat next to Johnny and they both cried. "Why are you sad?" asked the Rabbit. Johnny and Fox pointed to the goats, ripping out turnips and gobbling them down. "I'll get them out for you," said Rabbit. He went through the hole in the fence and chased the goats. But the goats ran and ran.

For years there had been warnings about the weak levees in the Pajaro Valley, where the town of Pajaro lies next to Watsonville. But Pajaro is a sleepy little farm worker community. No five million dollar homes are there, as they are in neighboring communities close by, just the humble houses of people who labor in the strawberry fields and in blue collar jobs that service the communities of Santa Cruz and Monterey counties. In other words, the rich people don't live in Pajaro. Just poor, mostly Mexican, working class families. So warnings were ignored and funds went elsewhere, and when the levee broke during the rains, the water ran into the little town of Pajaro, and 3,200 people were evacuated as their homes were flooded.

Rabbit finally stopped chasing the goats. He sat next to Fox and Johnny and they all three cried. “Why are you sad?” asked a tiny voice. It was Bee. Johnny and Fox and Rabbit all pointed to the goats, tearing up the field and devouring the turnips. “I’ll get them out for you,” said Bee. “We’re much bigger than you,” said Rabbit. “How can you get the goats out when we couldn’t?” said Fox. Johnny just cried. “I can do it,” said Bee, and he flew into the turnip field.

The people of Pajaro were not allowed back to their houses for weeks. They had an hour warning to get out with their belongings, not much time to scramble to gather important documents and possessions. They lived in cars and with families and friends in other towns while water filled their homes and blocked roads and Highway 1. For weeks. When they were finally able to go back to their town, it was filled with mud and debris. Months later, they are still cleaning up. Nobody is helping. FEMA did not step in until the entire county was declared a disaster area. The residents of Pajaro know they are being passed over, and they know why they are not getting the assistance they need. They have tried to get help, but no one can hear them. Poor people don’t have a voice.

Bee went to the first goat and buzzed in one ear, and then the other. It kept buzzing in the goat’s ear until it couldn’t take it any longer and the goat went out the hole in the fence to get away. Then, Bee buzzed in the second goat’s ear until it left the field, and then the last goat’s ear until all the goats were out of the turnip field. Johnny took the goats home and Fox and Rabbit and Bee went to their homes and all ended well for Johnny and the Three Goats.

The ten years of drought, wildfires, and high temperatures brought about by climate change ended in a few days with a series of atmospheric rivers that brought a deluge of water. The potential for more flooding looms in the Central Valley of California when that excess of snow in the Sierra Nevadas melts. The Pajaro flood shows three major problems of climate change: excess carbon in the atmosphere causing global warming and weather abnormalities, monoculture agribusiness depleting soil, and social inequities putting communities at risk.

These problems have been around for a long time. Like goats in the turnip field, people have been chasing after them and they keep getting worse and worse as they persist. It’s time to put the buzz in people’s ears. Tell your policy makers you want change. Get the support of local, regional, national, and international organizations and networks. Let your family and friends know what they can do to help. Whatever you can do to get the word out can stop these problems: excess carbon in the atmosphere, harmful industrial agriculture, and social injustice. Drive less, buy organic, and be kind.

To be told in educational and professional settings with attribution.



Storycology Head Editor

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

Website: storyrex.com

The Rain Elves

by Abbie Phillips Walker
From *Sandman's Goodnight Stories*

The Rain Elf children had been shut up in their houses for ever so long, for it had been hot and the Rain Elves do not like very hot weather.

Their mothers, the Rain Clouds, awoke one morning and found the sun was not shining, so they told their children they could drop down and play on the Earth awhile.

"Now, mind you, do not all go. Part of you can go at a time, because there are so many, many millions of you; the poor Earth would be quite overcome if all the Rain Elves went down at once."

So a few from each family of the Rain Cloud's children went out the door as their mothers opened it and down they dropped upon the dry Earth.

Oh, the gardens were so glad to see them! The flowers lifted their drooping heads and smiled a glad welcome. "Where have you been?" they asked. "It is so long since you were here we thought you had forgotten us."

"Oh no, we didn't forget you!" replied the Rain Elves, "but it has been so hot our mothers would not let us come out. We can stay but a little while, because we have many, many millions of brothers that want to come down to the garden, too; so we will have to go back, and the next shower will bring some of the others."

The little flowers were grieved when they heard this, for they were so dusty and thirsty they felt they could never get enough of the shining little Elves.

"What shall we do to keep them here?" they whispered among themselves. "If they go back to the clouds, perhaps the others will not come. Oh, if the old Wind Witch would only come along she might help us."

"She might get us all into trouble also," said a slender lily. "I think we better trust the Rain Cloud mothers to do what they think best."

But poor little lily's words were not noticed and a tall hollyhock was asked to find old Wind Witch and request her to help them keep the Rain Elves all day.



The old Wind Witch laughed with glee when she heard the request, for she saw a chance to work mischief and make it appear she was trying to do good.

"Tell the pretty flowers they shall have the Rain Elves all day, and their brothers, too," she said to the hollyhock, and off she flew up to the Rain Cloud homes.

She went about the clouds very carefully and gently, for she knew if the Rain Cloud mothers heard her they would call their children home; but by and by she saw her chance, and while the Rain Cloud mothers were busy she softly opened the door of each cloud one by one and beckoned to the Rain Elves.

"Run along quickly," she said. "Your brothers are having such a fine time they have quite forgotten you; they will not be back today, so run along and be merry with them."

The little Rain Elves did not stop to think they should wait for their mothers to tell them when to go, they were so eager to get out.

Down they went quite gently at first with a patter, patter, pat, and then they quite lost their heads, thinking of the fun they would have, and down they dropped, splash, splash, splash.

At first the flowers laughed and danced about for joy, for they were getting their leaves and blossoms washed and their thirsty petals satisfied; but in a little while the Rain Elves came so fast and thick the petals dropped off one by one, and then the stems bent under the swift coming of the Elves.

Pretty soon the garden was filled with water so that the grass could not be seen, while old Wind Witch danced about overhead and cackled with delight at the mischief she had done.

"Oh dear! I did not know there were so many of you!" cried a rose as her stem broke and she fell into the water.

"I was afraid of it," sighed the lily as she fell to the ground. "A few Elves at a time is best. The mother Rain Clouds know."

Such a commotion as there was in the Rain Cloud homes when the mothers found the doors of their houses open! They hustled about and called for the Rain Elves to come home; but they were so taken up with the fun they were having, spattering and splashing, they did not hear.

By and by old Sun Man saw them, and it did not take him long to throw his hot rays on old Wind Witch and drive her away, and then the Rain Elves felt the Sun Man's breath and thought of home.

One by one they disappeared. Some hid among the roses and other flowers that were left in the garden, and others were lucky enough to get back to their cloud houses and their mothers, but they left the garden a very sad-looking place.

"Who ever would have thought there were so many of those Rain Elves," said a bedraggled-looking flower. "I shall never wish for them to stay all day again."

"The lily was wiser than we thought," said another. "The Rain Cloud mothers know best what is good for us, and the next time they send a part of their children I think we better be satisfied and not get them all here at once."

"I think you are right," sighed the hollyhock from the ground, where he had fallen. "Shall I ever see over the wall again, I wonder. Such a fall as I took none of you can realize."

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in the public domain.*

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**-TEACHER TALES &
TENTACLES-**



Teacher Tales & Tentacles

by Carrie Sue Ayvar

Standard of the Month:

The United States is unique among TIMSS countries (Trends in International Mathematics and Science Study) as there is not an official nationally-defined curriculum. Many states have similar standards, phrases, or words; therefore, it feels like it is national when it is not. Thus, we will introduce words you will find common. Please check the state standards where you will be teaching or performing. Search by the featured phrase or word.

Standard addressed: **Early Childhood Language and Literacy**

Begins to vocalize and use vocalization and/or words and/or signs to communicate in various ways to indicate wants and needs. Language, communication, and early literacy development are nurtured through engagement and interactions with adults and other children.

Links to Some State & National Early Childhood Standards:

[U.S. Department's Early Learning](#)

[Division of Early Learning](#) (FL)

[Early Childhood Standards](#) (KY)

[Learning Standards for Early Childhood](#) (PA)

[Early Learning and Development Standards](#) (OH)

Songs & Chants for Early Education

Ah, the excitement and thrill of watching our little ones as they coo and babble “bababa” or say “dada” or “mama” back to us or even to themselves! Bright babblings indeed! How quickly new parents start to distinguish which cries mean hunger or other discomforts . . . and how quickly babies can start to vary their responses! Squealing with delight, clapping as we play “Pat-a-cake” or other nursery rhymes, and/or repeating what they see and hear are all important steps in developing Language and Emergent Literacy Skills.

Once upon a time there were three little pigs. When the time came for them to leave home and seek their fortunes, their mother told them, “Whatever you do, build your houses strong.” Wise Mama Pig! She knew that the buildings had to be strong to ensure success and be able to withstand wolves, strong winds, and unfamiliar challenges.

Language serves as the foundation for learning, especially literacy learning. Rhymes, rhythm, steady beat, and the art of storytelling are natural building blocks when learning language.

Play is the way children learn best, even the littlest learners. Songs, nursery rhymes, and fingerplays create a strong foundation for success, promoting self-regulation, developing listening skills, language acquisition, and building emergent literacy and social skills. Add visual cues, like pictures, physical motions, gestures, and facial expressions to increase the impact and the fun. One of my favorite “Bright Babblings” is this song:

I’ll sing a song and you’ll sing a song and we’ll sing a song together.

I’ll sing a song and you’ll sing a song, through warm and wintry weather.

Repeat with ma-ma or da-da or other vocalizations to the same tune instead of the words.

We can even learn another language with a simple song like this one about the vowels in Spanish:

Las vocales en Español, las vocales en Español, A-E-I-O-U! La B con la A dice BA. La B con la E dice BE. Con la I dice BI. Con la O dice BO. LA B con la U dice BU. BA-BE-BI-BO-BU. Las vocales en Español, las vocales en Español, A-E-I-O-U. (The vowels in Spanish, the vowels in Spanish, A-E-I-O-U! The B with the A says BA. The B with the E says BE. With the I it says BI. With the O is says BO. The B with the U, it says BU. BA-BE-BI-BO-BU. The vowels in Spanish, the vowels in Spanish, A-E-I-O-U!)

Continue with different consonant and vowel combinations.

Young children build self-confidence, body awareness, vocal communication and a better understanding of space, time, movement, sound, and rhythm while playing with song and story. So, sing a song, share a rhyme or fingerplay—the shortest stories I know—and play!



About the Author

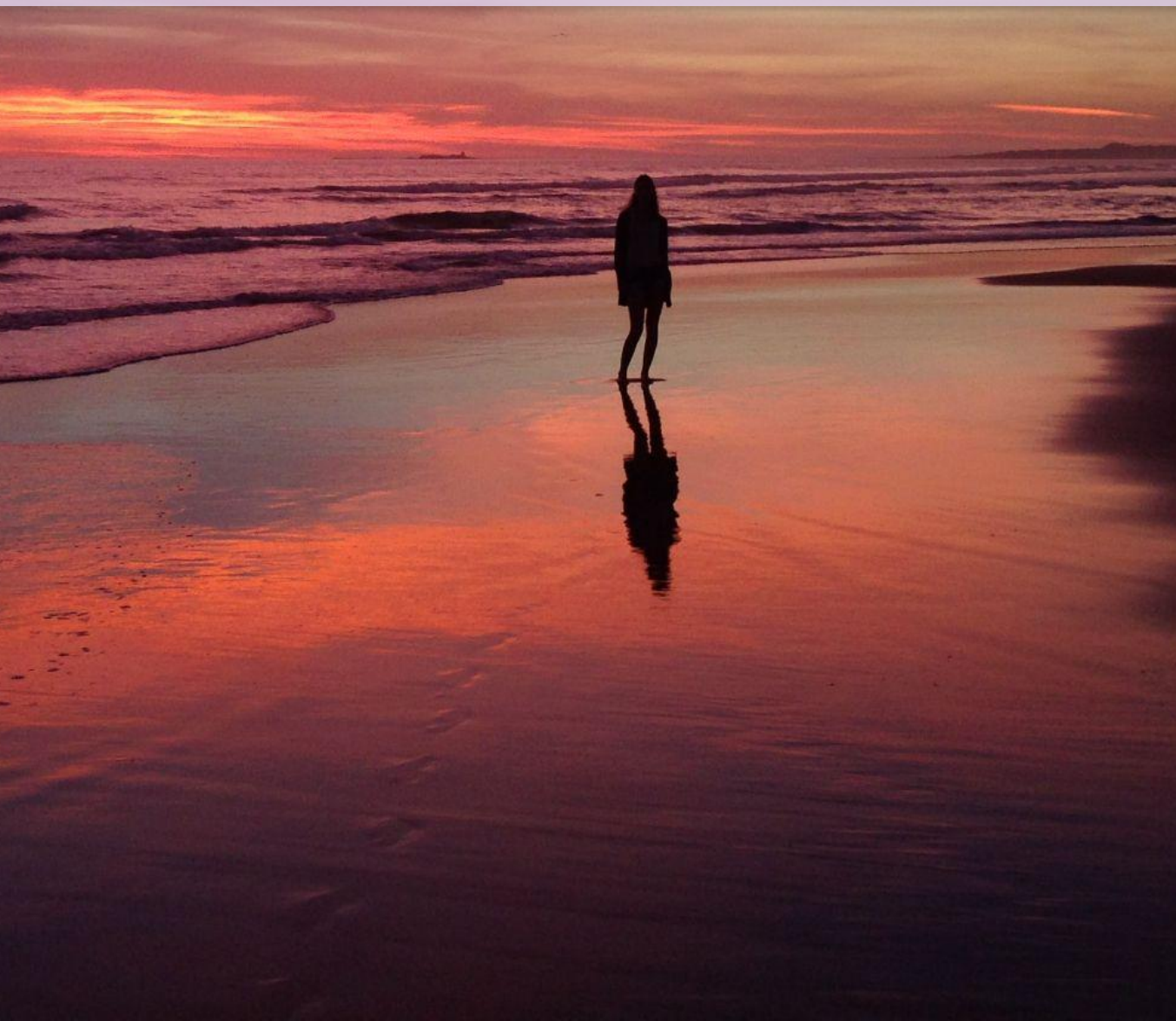
How is it that an Arabic surnamed, Eastern European Jewish girl from Pittsburgh, PA, tells multicultural stories in Spanish and English? Perhaps it is because she is a 3rd generation award-winning storyteller who came of age in Mexico. Blending traditional, international & personal tales, bilingual storyteller Carrie Sue Ayvar (pronounced EYE-BAR) takes her listeners on a journey into the imagination connecting people, languages, and cultures through her stories that flow effortlessly between Spanish and English.

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-JOURNEYS-

**“What marks do you leave in the places you go?
Who sees them?
Don’t you ever wonder?”**



Discontented Dewdrop

by Abbie Phillips Walker
From *Sandman's Goodnight Stories*

One morning a little Dewdrop was resting on the petal of a wild rose that grew beside a river.

The sun shining on it made it glisten like a diamond and a lady who was passing stopped to admire its beauty.

"It is the most beautiful thing in the world," she remarked. "See the colors in that tiny little drop. Isn't it wonderful?"

"Wonderful," repeated the Dewdrop when the lady had walked away. "If I were like the river I might be wonderful; it is too bad; here I am sitting here while the river can run on and on and see all the sights. It bubbles and babbles as it goes, and that is worth while. I have never a chance to be wonderful. Oh, if I were only in the river water I might be something."

Just then a breeze passing heard the little Dewdrop's wish.

"You shall have your wish, foolish Dewdrop," she said, blowing gently on the rose, which swayed, and off went the little Dewdrop into the rushing river.

"This is like something, being a part of this river," said the Dewdrop as it mingled its tiny drop with the running river. "Now I am worth admiring and can see something of the world."

On and on it ran with the water of the river, but it was no longer a Dewdrop; it was a part of the river.

"I wish I could stop for a minute so some one might admire me," said the silly little drop, for it thought it could still be seen and was making all the babbling it heard as the river ran along.

But no one admired it, nor did it stop. On went the river to a larger river, and by and by it came to the bay and the Dewdrop went rolling into it with the other water.

"Surely I am greater now than ever and worth admiring," thought the drop, but it heard no sweet words such as the lady spoke of the little Dewdrop on the rose by the river.

The bay mingled at last with the ocean and little Dewdrop knew at last that it was no longer a thing to be admired for itself alone, but a part of the great ocean. It was completely lost in the vastness of the mighty waters of which it was only a drop.

The breeze went whispering over it, calling, "Little Dewdrop, little Dewdrop, where are you?"

But the drop answered never a word. It did not even hear the gentle voice of the breeze, so loud was the roar of the ocean.

"Come away," called a loud wind to the gentle breeze; "that is no place for you. I must blow here and make the waves high, and you will never find your little Dewdrop. It has been swallowed long ago by the ocean. Go back to your river and tell the other Dewdrops the fate of their companion."

The gentle breeze went away and the loud wind swept the ocean, making the waves high and the roar louder and louder. The little Dewdrop was there somewhere in the great whole, but it was lost forever in its longing to become great.

The gentle breeze went back to the river, and as she sighed around the rose where the discontented Dewdrop had rested she heard another drop say: "Look at the river. Isn't it big? Here am I only a Dewdrop, so small no one can see me."

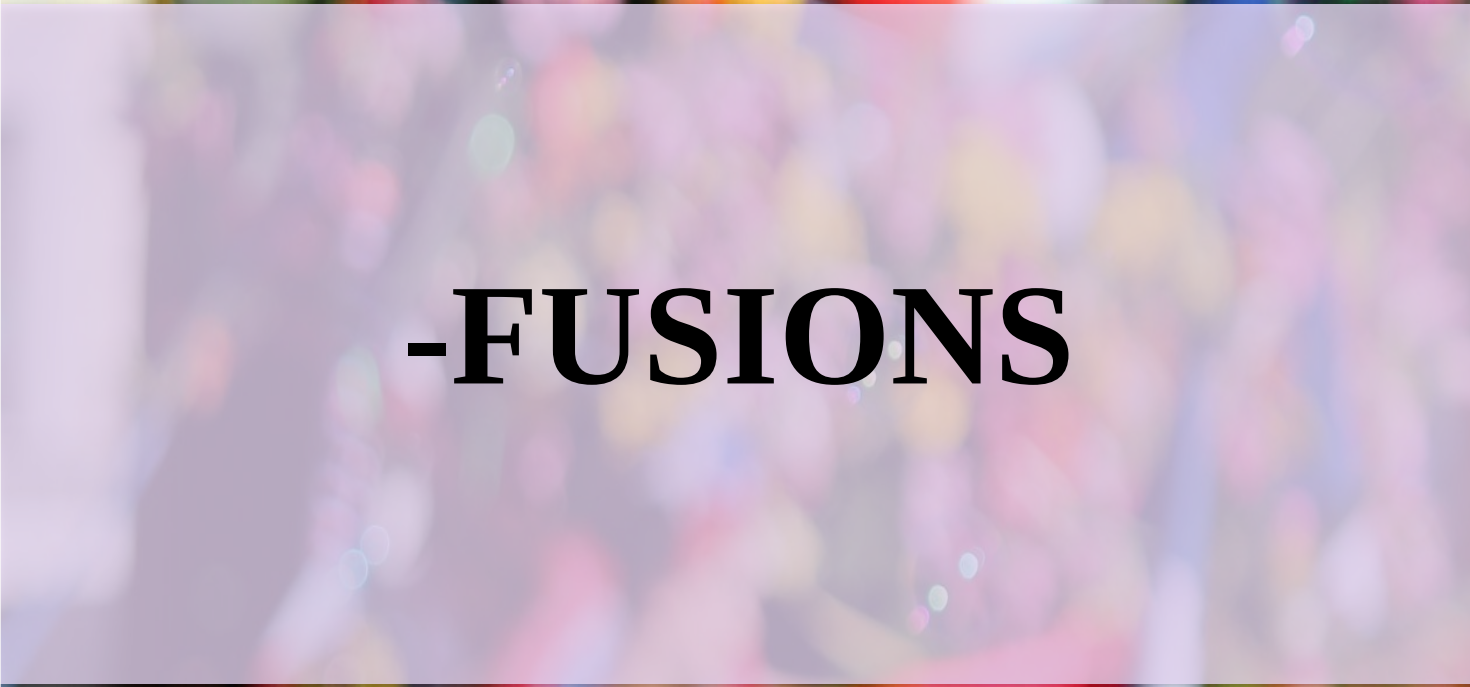
"Ah, that is where you are mistaken, my dainty Dewdrop," said the gentle breeze. "You can be seen now, but if you were to become a part of the river you would never be seen. You would lose your identity as soon as you mingled with the waters of the river. Be your own sweet self and be content with the part you play in this world. You are helping to make it more beautiful by your own dainty beauty. Do not wish to do what only seems a greater thing."

And then she told the fate of the discontented Dewdrop that had wished to become great and how at last it was swallowed by its own greatness, and its dainty beauty which had been so admired no longer remained.

"Be content with the small but beautiful part you play in this world," she told the drop, "and do not long for a greatness which may result in your unhappiness."

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in the public domain.*





-FUSIONS





Time with Antonio

by Brandon Spars

If you have been to any of the larger storytelling festivals such as the one at Jonesborough or Timpanogos, the chances are you have seen Antonio Rocha perform. He is a regular at the big ones. However, he is also a frequent teller at the medium-sized ones, and the small ones, too. On Saturday April 29, the Bay Area Storytelling Festival took place in Orinda, California. It was once pretty big, but as those who organized it for more than thirty years began to retire it wound down. However, last year, under the leadership of Linda Yemoto, Sara Armstrong, Regina Stoops, and Claire Hennessy, it came back as a small festival. And this year, it grew a little, perhaps inching its way into the category of medium-sized!

Antonio was the reason that many made the trip to Orinda from all over the Bay Area.

Antonio hails from Maine, but a quick look at his biography, not to mention his repertoire of folktales, which he pairs with personal stories, reveals his Brazilian origins. He moved to the United States in 1988 to study mime with the master, Tony Montanaro, on a Partners of the Americas grant. Mime forms a core to his storytelling to this very day, and he often performs a purely mime short segment as a “palate cleanser” between his longer spoken pieces.

As a board member of the Storytelling Association of California, which formed more than thirty years ago to support the Bay Area Storytelling Festival, I had the pleasure of hosting Antonio at my home for two nights. And this meant I got to bring him to my high school classroom for a day of fun with my students.

At eight-thirty in the morning, on the Friday before the day of the festival, my students dribbled in. Some were scarfing down food, some were jousting with one another with their lacrosse sticks, and many were scrolling on their phones. One barely made it to her desk before collapsing in a heap with her head in her arms. I don’t think any even noticed the tall man wearing all black standing next to me at the front of the room. The students, to my chagrin, seemed particularly scattered and unfocused -- and here was this gift that I was sure they would be unable to appreciate.

But Antonio worked his magic. He immediately had them on their feet. They were holding an imaginary point in space. Then the point became a stick, which they swung slowly up and down, using their eyes to keep the length of this imaginary baton consistent. Antonio started with their bodies, telling simple, short narratives, and then before we knew it, we were hauling in invisible fishing nets full of invisible fish, and climbing up rock faces, using belay ropes to steady other climbers and transport gear.

In one of my classes, which is titled “Authentic Voices,” and is devoted to creating true stories for live performances and recorded podcasts, Antonio told a full-length story. It seemed to start as a folktale -- or possibly a legend. It was set in the past, but how long ago I couldn’t tell because of that timelessness that is in these genres.

The story began when Antonio announced this was a story about a horse who saved six people’s lives. Our next character, in keeping with a folktale, was another animal, the villain of the story. Brazil is plagued with a particularly vicious kind of snake called a fer de lance. Antonio could capture the deadliness of the snake with his hands, which became the jaws and coils of this dangerous animal. Its bite meant death for most. Then we were introduced to a family. There was a young girl who was devoted to her parents, especially her father. But she was particularly fond of the family’s horse, which we expected would go on to save the six lives.

The story continued, a life and death situation occurred and is resolved. The story seemed to end, but Antonio turned the whole story on its head. It wasn’t a folktale after all. It wasn’t a legend about a loyal horse willing to give its life for its owners either. It was a true story! When Antonio revealed the surprise, there was an audible gasp of joy mingled with disbelief and wonder.

From my seat on the sidelines in my own classroom, I had a rare perspective on the twenty students who had entered the classroom that morning. As Antonio worked his magic, as my students slowly let go of their exhaustion, their phone addiction, their rambunctiousness, and as they concentrated on Antonio, my frustration with them, something all too familiar, changed into compassion. They became bright eyed, youthful children, full of wonder and excitement. And I am filled with appreciative kindness toward them and all they must do in a day -- their sports schedules that keep them on campus until ten at night, their rushed mornings, and, of course, the demands of their texts and emails and snapchat accounts that beep and vibrate impetuously.

The students left the class calmly and quietly, many of them thanking Antonio on the way out. I noticed none of them were on their phones.

After three classes (two were ninth grade while the elective “Authentic Voices” was mostly twelfth graders), Antonio met with three students privately. These were the students who were part of the youth panel I was hosting at the Bay Area Storytelling Festival the next day. It was to them that he imparted some of his deepest wisdom. As they ran through their pieces with him, he revealed something that really forms the core of all of storytelling. In just half an hour, between these aspiring tellers’ performances, he described the difference between storytelling and all other genres of live performance -- whether it is acting or poetry recitation. It is in the eyes of the storyteller, or, more accurately where the eyes of the teller are looking.

“The eyes go to three places,” Antonio said. “When you are narrating, your eyes should be past your audience, almost like the back wall is a movie screen where the pictures of your story are playing.”

He went on to mention that if your eyes are not on the imaginary picture screen behind your audience, they should be on the audience itself, but only when you are addressing them directly. This is a big difference between storytelling and recitation as well as storytelling and acting. He gave examples. A teller might be describing a canyon as deep and vast and dark. The teller should be seeing the canyon on the imaginary screen. But then the teller might interrupt this by suddenly looking at members of the audience and saying something directly to them, like “It’s a bit like the Grand Canyon. Have you been there?” Or “deep canyons fill me with fear. It is like swimming over the dark depths of the ocean for me.” (Antonio used different examples).

And then, if the eyes of the teller are not on the imaginary screen behind the audience, or on the audience itself, they should be on a character or object on the stage. If there is a scene where the teller is talking to someone, the teller should be seeing the character. They should angle their vision forty-five degrees to the side and down if the character is shorter than them, or up if the character is taller. If the teller is holding a gem, they should be seeing the gem in their index finger and thumb. This is the part of storytelling that is akin to drama and acting.

It was amazing how much crisper and more organized the student tellings became -- immediately! One student had been dramatizing a conversation with her mother. She used the indirect discourse of the written page:



On the night before my junior year, I was lying in the fetal position on my bed. You see, junior year is the worst. My mom sat next to me. I said, “Mom, I can’t go to school tomorrow. I’m not ready. I’m not ready for AP Physics, Calculus, or the SATs.” Then my mother said, “You don’t have to be. That’s tomorrow.”

My student was reporting all the “she said/I said” phrasings of indirect discourse. This was a perfect opportunity for Antonio’s story framework. The first line was narration. My student looked to the imaginary screen behind her audience for the line, “On the night before my junior year, I was lying in the fetal position on my bed. My mom sat next to me.” Then she could directly address her audience and inform them that the junior year was supposed to be the hardest. Then Antonio told her to hunch her back and raise her arms, imitating the fetal position and simply deliver the line. Now she was like an actress on the stage. When her mom answered, my student simply lowered her arms and turned her head, casting her line of vision down at her side, where my student would have been lying from the mother’s perspective. All three of these “modes of delivery” – narration, direct speech to the audience, and dialog – were present in this short sample of her story. Recognizing this gave all three of my student tellers much more confidence. They no longer let their gazes wander with uncertainty. They simply had to decide whether they were narrating, acting out dialog, or speaking personally to the audience.

My students were joined by two who studied with Kirk Waller in the drama program he runs at the Fellowship Church here in the Bay Area. And these five students were joined by a slam poet who works with the organization Youth Speaks. The panel was very well attended and well received.

Of course, Antonio’s performance was a big highlight of the festival. He did an hour-long historical story about a ship from the early nineteenth century named Malaga. The wood had been cut in Maine, and the ship’s dark history included transporting slaves from West and Central Africa to Brazil. Antonio and the ship shared the bond of having roots in these two parts of the world. There were many powerful moments when the ship and Antonio spoke directly to one another, through time and space, confiding in one another, at times comforting one another over the terrible human tragedy of slavery.

When I said goodbye to Antonio, the events of the three previous days – all the laughter, the stories, the wisdom – flashed before my eyes. Throughout the entire time, I kept saying to myself how lucky I was to get to spend time with a storyteller who is a legend in himself.

Contributor to be contacted regarding permission to tell this work.




Fusion Head Editor

About the Author

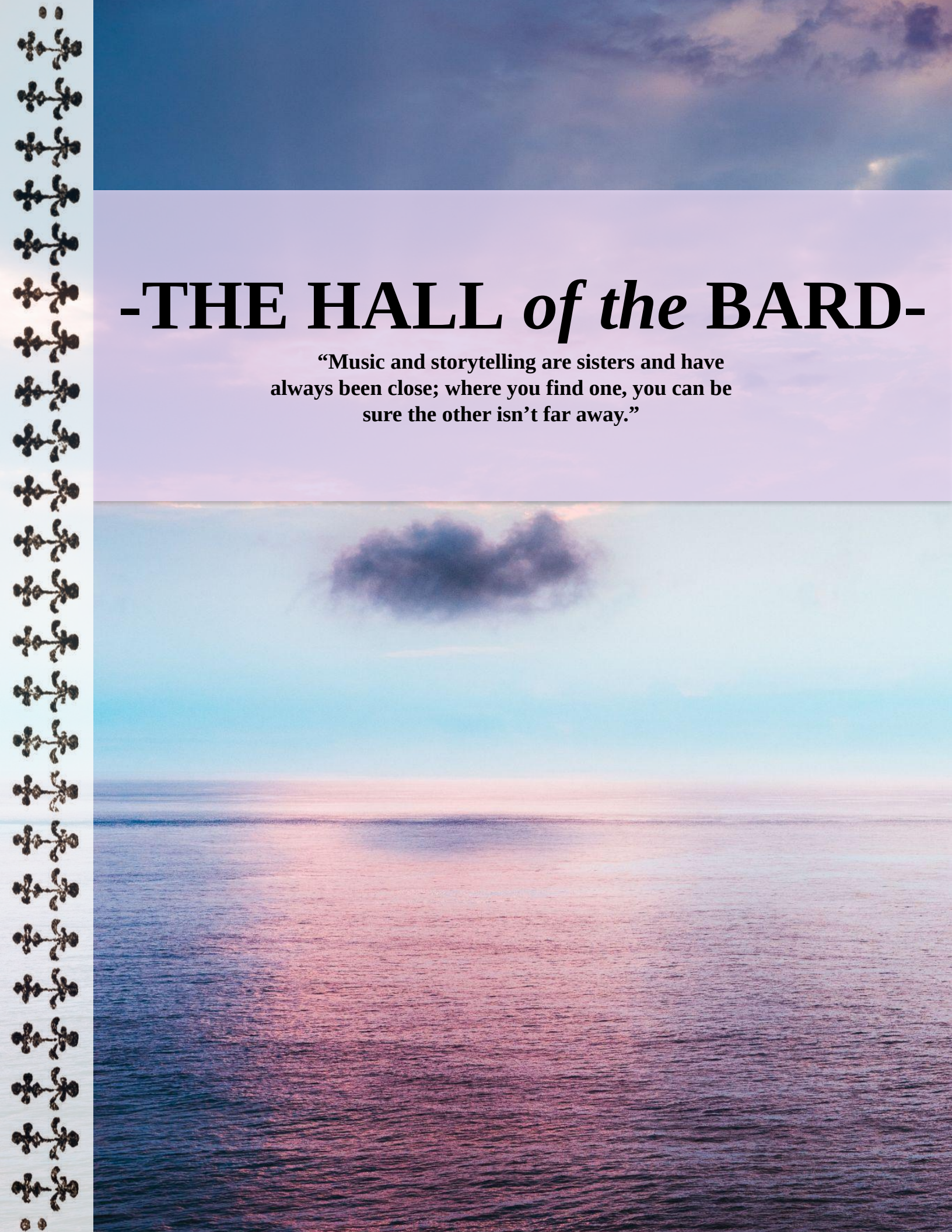
As a teacher of both high school humanities and college writing, Brandon has always brought storytelling into his lessons. He has contributed to countless workshops and conferences on the intersection between storytelling, ancient history, and pedagogy. He is the author of four books on storytelling.

Website: [.brandonspars.com](http://brandonspars.com) .



-THE HALL *of the* BARD-

“Music and storytelling are sisters and have always been close; where you find one, you can be sure the other isn’t far away.”





Shippei Taro: A Japanese Folktale

by Mary F. Nixon-Roulet

Adapted from *Japanese Folk-Stories and Fairy Tales*

Once upon a time there was a brave soldier lad who was seeking his fortune in the wide, wide world. One day he lost his way in a pathless forest, and wandered about until he came at length to a small clearing in the midst of which stood a ruined temple. The huge trees waved above its walls, and the leaves in the thicket whispered around them. No sun ever shone there, and no human being lived there.

A storm was coming up, and the soldier lad took refuge among the ruins.

“Here is all I want,” said he. “Here I shall have shelter from the storm-god's wrath, and a comfortable place to sleep in.”

So he wrapped himself in his cloak, and, lying down, was soon fast asleep. But his slumbers did not last long. At midnight he was wakened by fearful shrieks, and springing to his feet, he looked out at the temple door.

The storm was over. Moonlight shone on the clearing. And there he saw what seemed to be a troop of monstrous cats, who like huge phantoms marched across the open space in front of the temple. They broke into a wild dance, uttering shrieks, howls, and wicked laughs. Then they all sang together:--

“Whisper not to Shippei Taro
That the Phantom Cats are near;
Whisper not to Shippei Taro,
Lest he soon appear!”

The soldier lad crouched low behind the door, for brave as he was he did not wish these fearful creatures to see him. But soon, with a chorus of wild yells, the Phantom Cats disappeared as quickly as they had come, and all was quiet as before.

Then the soldier lad lay down and went to sleep again, nor did he waken till the sun peered into the temple and told him that it was morning. He quickly found his way out of the forest and walked on until he came to the cottage of a peasant.

As he approached he heard sounds of bitter weeping. A beautiful young maiden met him at the door, and her eyes were red with crying. She greeted him kindly.

“May I have some food?” said he.

“Enter and welcome,” she replied. “My parents are just having breakfast. You may join them, for no one passes our door hungry.”

Thanking her the lad entered, and her parents greeted him courteously but sadly, and shared their breakfast with him. He ate heartily, and, when he was finished, rose to go.

“Thank you many times for this good meal, kind friends,” said he, “and may happiness be yours.”

“Happiness can never again be ours!” answered the old man, weeping.

“You are in trouble, then,” said the lad. “Tell me about it; perhaps I can help you in some way.”

“Alas!” replied the old man, “There is within yonder forest a ruined temple. It is the abode of horrors too terrible for words. Each year a demon, whom no one has ever seen, demands that the people of this land give him a beautiful maiden to devour. She is placed in a cage and carried to the temple just at sunset. This year it is my daughter's turn to be offered to the fiend!” And the old man buried his face in his hands and groaned.

The soldier lad paused to think for a moment, then he said:--“It is terrible, indeed! But do not despair. I think I know a way to help you. Who is Shippei Taro?”

“Shippei Taro is a beautiful dog, owned by our lord, the prince,” answered the old man.

“That is just the thing!” cried the lad. “Only keep your daughter closely at home. Do not let her out of your sight. Trust me and she shall be saved.”

Then the soldier lad hurried away, and found the castle of the prince. He begged that he might borrow Shippei Taro just for one night.

“You may take him upon the condition that you bring him back safely,” said the prince.

“To-morrow he shall return in safety,” answered the lad.

Taking Shippei Taro with him, he hurried to the peasant's cottage, and, when evening was come, he placed the dog in the cage which was to have carried the maiden. The bearers then took the cage to the ruined temple, and, placing it on the ground, ran away as fast as their legs would carry them.

The lad, laughing softly to himself, hid inside the temple as before, and so quiet was the spot that he fell asleep. At midnight he was aroused by the same wild shrieks he had heard the night before. He rose and looked out at the temple door.

Through the darkness, into the moonlight, came the troop of Phantom Cats. This time they were led by a fierce, black Tomcat. As they came nearer they chanted with unearthly screeches:--

“Whisper not to Shippei Taro
That the Phantom Cats are near;
Whisper not to Shippei Taro,
Lest he soon appear!”

With that the great Tomcat caught sight of the cage and, uttering a fearful yowl, sprang upon it, With one blow of his claws he tore open the lid, when, instead of the dainty morsel he expected, out jumped Shippei Taro!

The dog sprang upon the Tomcat, and caught him by the throat; while the Phantom Cats stood still in amazement. Drawing his sword the lad hurried to Shippei Taro's side, and what with Shippei Taro's teeth and the lad's hard blows, in an instant the great Tomcat was torn and cut into pieces. When the Phantom Cats saw this, they uttered one wild shriek and fled away, never to return again.

Then the soldier lad, leading Shippei Taro, returned in triumph to the peasant's cottage. There in terror the maiden awaited his arrival, but great was the joy of herself and her parents when they knew that the Tomcat was no more.

“Oh, sir,” cried the maiden, “I can never thank you! I am the only child of my parents, and no one would have been left to care for them if I had been the monster's victim.”

“Do not thank me,” answered the lad. “Thank the brave Shippei Taro. It was he who sprang upon the great Tomcat and chased away the Phantom Creatures.”

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I See You

by Phyllis A. Blackstone

“I see you,” thought the teacher.
“I read in the paper this morning that your father was arrested last night for
selling drugs to teen-agers.”

“I see you,” thought the custodian.
“I see you every day as you push your cart with the wobbly wheel,
Laden with your possessions in plastic bags,
Checking the trash for redeemable bottles.”

“I see you,” thought the owner of the clothing boutique.
“You try on a black ensemble.
Your red, puffy eyes and quiet tears suggest funeral attire.”

“I see you,” thought the volunteer who served the hungry patron at the
community meal. “I will return to offer you seconds or ask if you would like a
container to go.”

“I see you,” thought the chaplain as he sat with the parents at the military base.
“We don’t know where he is.”

“I see you,” thought the chief of the disaster preparedness team.
“A moment ago, life was normal.
Now it will never be normal again.”

“If you see me,” thought the student, homeless person, bereaved widow, hungry
patron, anguished parents, and disaster victim.
“If you see me,
Help me, comfort me, guide me, feed me,
Give me hope—if you see me.”



To be told in educational and
professional settings with attribution.



About the Author

Dr. Phyllis A. Blackstone, storyteller extraordinaire, is a retired educator and professor who used storytelling as her preferred teaching tool from first graders to graduate students. In retirement she tells stories of wisdom and truth, including folktales, personal stories, and creative narratives. Her audiences include children, families, adults, and senior citizens in venues from classrooms to retirement homes. MY STORIED LIFE is an eclectic collection of real and imagined stories that will tickle the funny bone and bring a tear to the eye. Dr. Blackstone currently resides in Brunswick, Maine. Performance information is available at blackstonestoryteller.com.
Email: phyllis.blackstone@gmail.com Text: 207-860-6622.



-HEALING SPRINGS-





The Spring Beauty: An Ojibwe Legend

by Henry R. Schoolcraft (adapted)

An old man was sitting in his lodge, by the side of a frozen stream. It was the end of winter, the air was not so cold, and his fire was nearly out. He was old and alone. His locks were white with age, and he trembled in every joint. Day after day passed, and he heard nothing but the sound of the storm sweeping before it the new-fallen snow.

One day while his fire was dying, a handsome young man approached and entered the lodge. His cheeks were red, his eyes sparkled. He walked with a quick, light step. His forehead was bound with a wreath of sweet-grass, and he carried a bunch of fragrant flowers in his hand.

“Ah, my son,” said the old man, “I am happy to see you. Come in! Tell me your adventures, and what strange lands you have seen. I will tell you of my wonderful deeds, and what I can perform. You shall do the same, and we will amuse each other.”

The old man then drew from a bag a curiously wrought pipe. He filled it with mild tobacco and handed it to his guest. They each smoked from the pipe and then began their stories.

“I am Peboan, the Spirit of Winter,” said the old man. “I blow my breath, and the streams stand still. The water becomes stiff and hard as clear stone.”

“I am Seegwun, the Spirit of Spring,” answered the youth. “I breathe, and flowers spring up in the meadows and woods.”

“I shake my locks,” said the old man, “and snow covers the land. The leaves fall from the trees, and my breath blows them away. The birds fly to a distant land, and the animals hide themselves from the cold.”

“I shake my ringlets,” said the young man, “and warm showers of soft rain fall upon the earth. The flowers lift their heads from the ground, the grass grows thick and green. My voice recalls the birds, and they come flying joyfully from the Southland. The warmth of my breath unbinds the streams, and they sing the songs of summer. Music fills the groves wherever I walk, and all nature rejoices.”

And while they were talking thus a wonderful change took place. The sun began to rise. A gentle warmth stole over the place. Peboan, the Spirit of Winter, became silent. His head drooped, and the snow outside the lodge melted away. Seegwun, the Spirit of Spring, grew more radiant, and rose joyfully to his feet. The robin and the bluebird began to sing on the top of the lodge. The stream began to murmur at the door, and the fragrance of opening flowers came softly on the breeze.

The lodge faded away, and Peboan sank down and dissolved into tiny streams of water that vanished under the brown leaves of the forest.

Thus, the Spirit of Winter departed, and where he had melted away, there the Indian children gathered the first blossoms, fragrant and delicately pink,—the modest Spring Beauty.

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The Three Little Butterfly Brothers

by W. H. Weick and C. Grebner
From *Deutsches Drittes Lesebuch*

There were once three little butterfly brothers, one white, one red, and one yellow. They played in the sunshine, and danced among the flowers in the garden, and they never grew tired because they were so happy.

One day there came a heavy rain, and it wet their wings. They flew away home, but when they got there they found the door locked and the key gone. So they had to stay out of doors in the rain, and they grew wetter and wetter.

By and by they flew to the red and yellow striped tulip, and said: "Friend Tulip, will you open your flower-cup and let us in till the storm is over?"

The tulip answered: "The red and yellow butterflies may enter, because they are like me, but the white one may not come in."

But the red and yellow butterflies said: "If our white brother may not find shelter in your flowercup, why, then, we'll stay outside in the rain with him."

It rained harder and harder, and the poor little butterflies grew wetter and wetter, so they flew to the white lily and said: "Good Lily, will you open your bud a little so we may creep in out of the rain?"

The lily answered: "The white butterfly may come in, because he is like me, but the red and yellow ones must stay outside in the storm."

Then the little white butterfly said: "If you won't receive my red and yellow brothers, why, then, I'll stay out in the rain with them. We would rather be wet than be parted."

So the three little butterflies flew away.

But the sun, who was behind a cloud, heard it all, and he knew what good little brothers the butterflies were, and how they had held together in spite of the wet. So he pushed his face through the clouds, and chased away the rain, and shone brightly on the garden.

He dried the wings of the three little butterflies, and warmed their bodies. They ceased to sorrow, and danced among the flowers till evening, then they flew away home, and found the door wide open.

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in the public domain.*

-PUZZLES and GAMES-

"Curiouser and curiouser!"

A Riddle For You

I go, but never stir,
I count, but never write,
I measure and divide, and, sir,
You'll find my measures right.
I run, but never walk,
I strike, but never wound,
I tell you much, but never talk,
In my diurnal round.

-SB

Last Month's Answer: Time



LOST WORD SOCIETY

by Carmen Agra Deedy

Once again it's time to play along with Carmen Agra Deedy's LOST WORD SOCIETY.

Summer is here! Time to dust off lawn furniture, soak up some vitamin D, and make like a plant and photosynthesize. It's also time once again to step into the Way Back Machine to a time before this to find yet another rarely used word in modern English.

Each issue we will give you an archaic, obsolete, or otherwise "lost" word. We will make up three silly sentences using the word, probably incorrectly. Your job is to make up a definition for the lost word. The challenge, should you decide to accept it, is for you to use your new word in a story, just for fun. Next issue we will publish the true definition of the "lost" word and provide you with another one. Have fun!

SMATCHET (n.) 19th century; obsolete.

- 1) Desperate, he grabbed the nearest weapon off the wall, a rather large smatchet, and attempted to defend himself against the trained warrior with the enchanted blade.
- 2) He picked up the small smatchet she had dropped, as she had fled in tears, inhaling its heady, spicy perfume, eliciting memories of the glorious days and nights before it all went wrong.
- 3) The smatchet arrived in the morning post, an elegant portent of the profound joy, the few bitter-sweet memories, and the deep happiness he would experience over the remainder of his short life.

Last Month's Lost Word:

SINAPISTIC (adj.) Archaic - anything having to do with mustard. *Origin: the Latin for mustard is sinapis.**Sinapism (17th-18th century) was the term used for the use of mustard plasters. A mustard plaster was a poultice made of mustard, flour, and warm water. This paste was spread across half of a flour sack, which was then folded over and applied to the chest. It was said to draw out the phlegm.



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



-STORY SIGHTINGS-

What's going on?



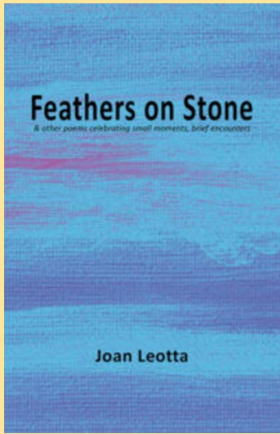


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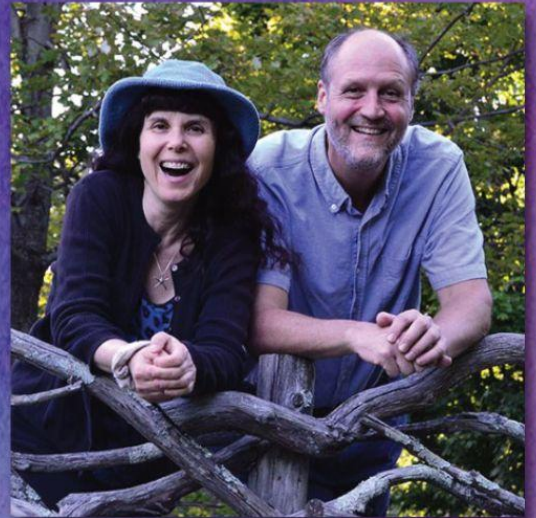
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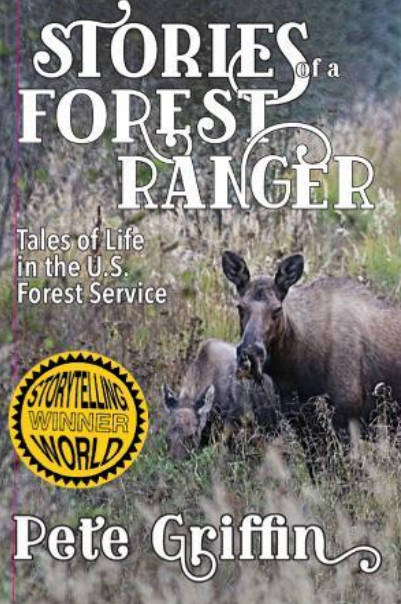


Jeri Burns, Ph.D. and Barry Marshall, The Storycrafters, perform and teach nationally and internationally as The Storycrafters. In addition to their work in schools, libraries, conferences and festivals, they are healing storytellers at Stamford Hospital Psychiatric Unit and former adjunct college faculty at Southern Ct. State University. Jeri is adjunct faculty at the State University of New York at New Paltz, communication coach for public defenders at New York State Defenders' Institute, and public radio essayist. Barry is sound engineer/producer of various storytellers' recordings, including those of The Storycrafters.

In addition to their award-winning recordings and radio show, The Storycrafters have been recognized with The National Storytelling Network's Circle of Excellence Oracle Award and the Cayman Islands' Gold Star Award for Creativity in the Arts. They live in New York's Hudson Valley with their son Zack, their most treasured creation.



Learn more at www.parkhurstbrothers.com



Musings of a wildlife biologist

Pete Griffin grew up in the pristine woodlands of northern Michigan, Studied forestry and biology in college, and served the US Forest Service his entire career. In semi-retirement, he has become a professional storyteller working on Disney and Princess cruises along the Alaskan coast. Griffin lives with his wife in Juneau, Alaska.

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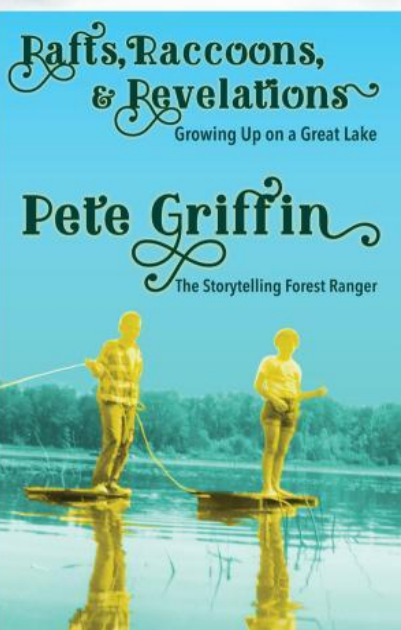
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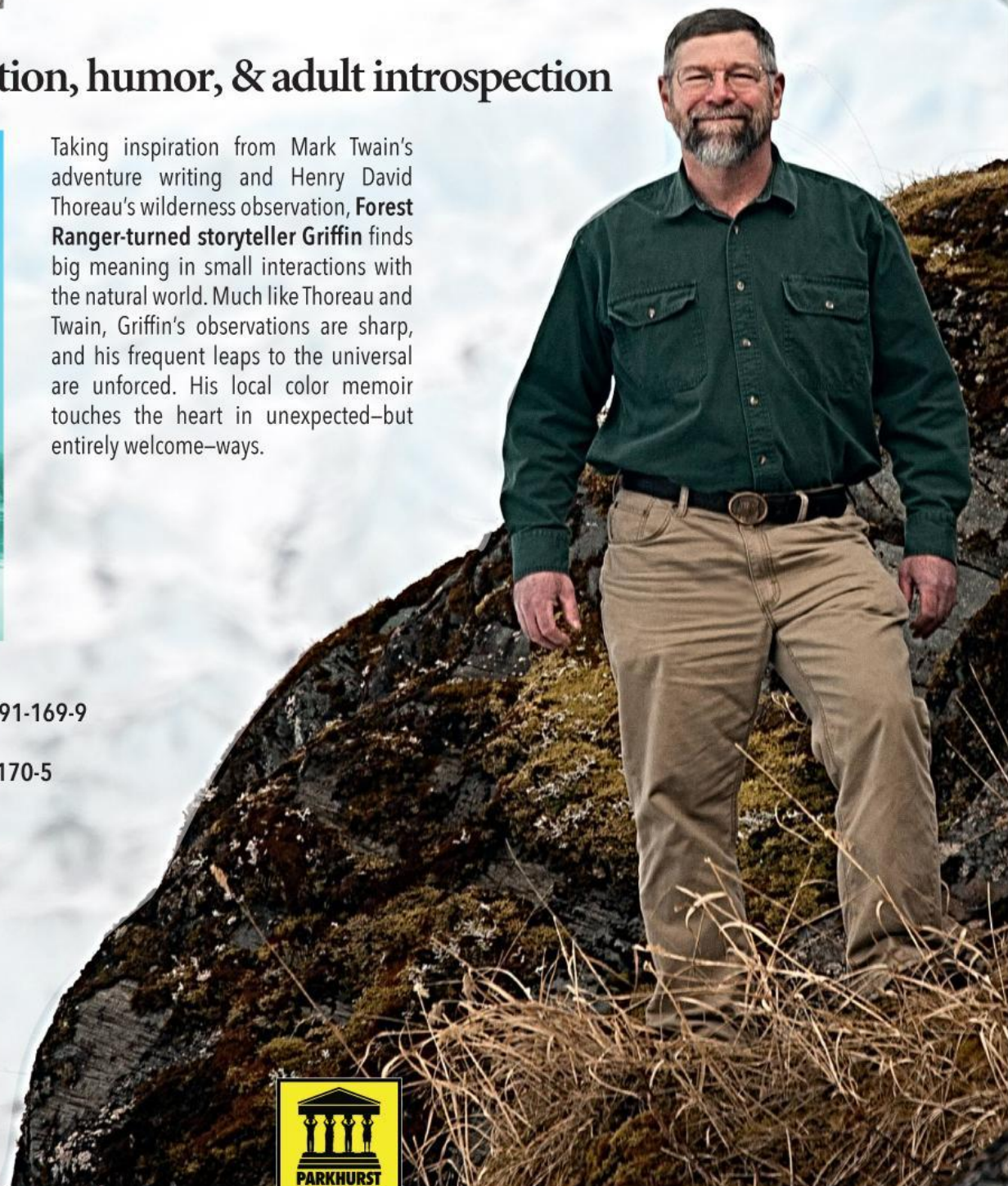


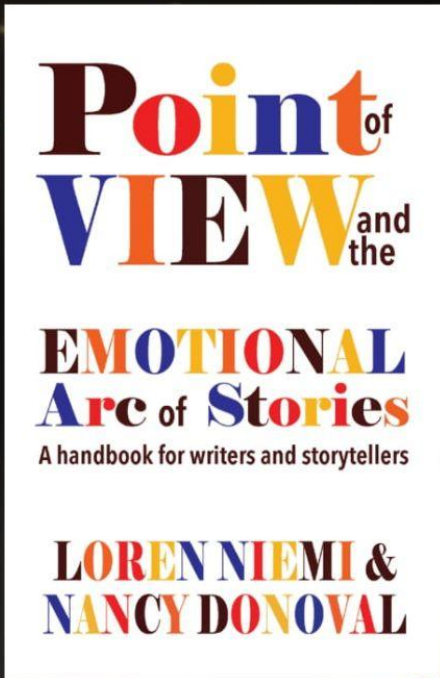
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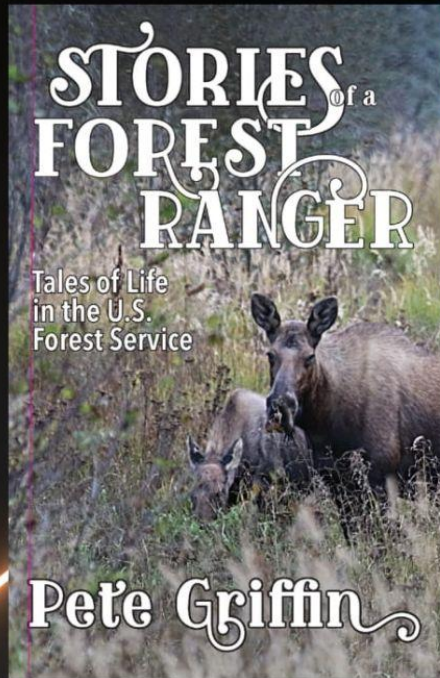
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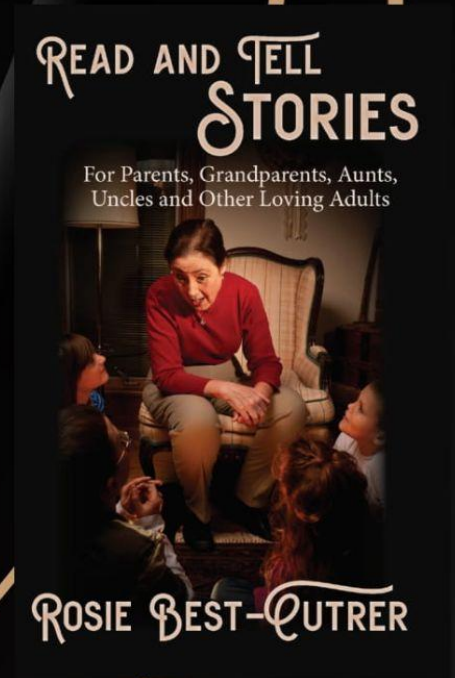




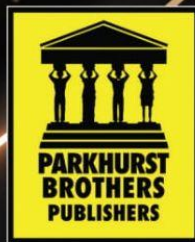
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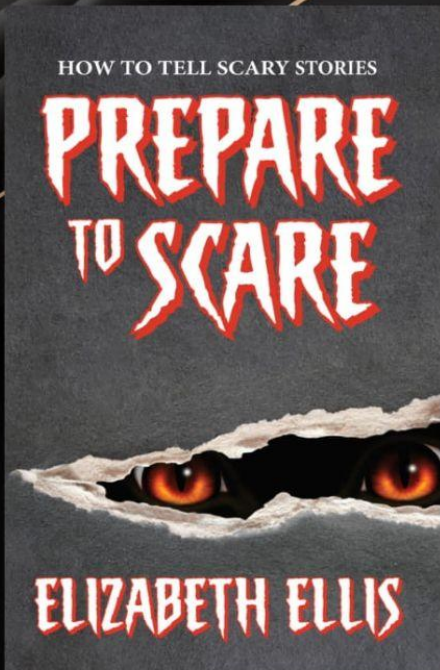
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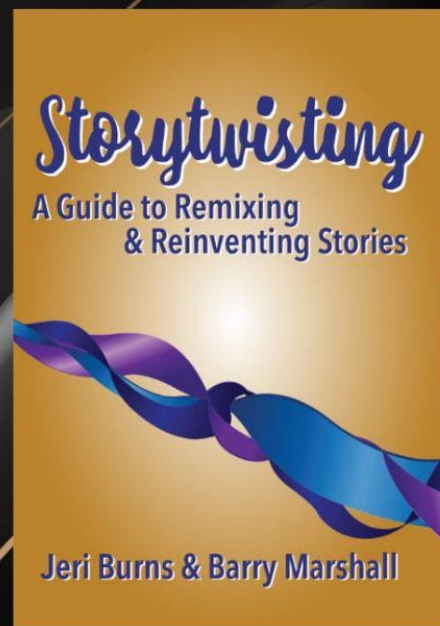
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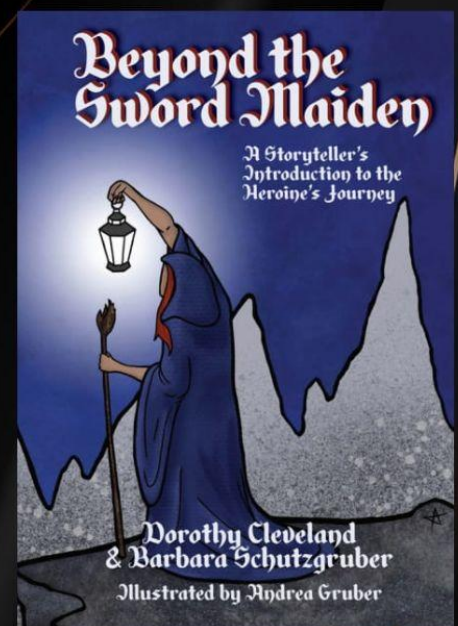
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