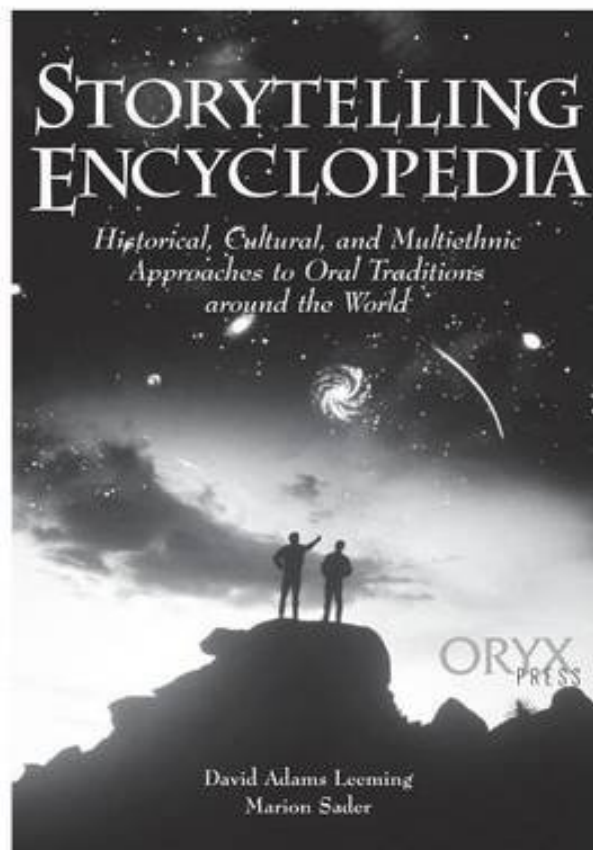


(Library ebook) *Storytelling Encyclopedia: Historical, Cultural, and Multiethnic Approaches to Oral Traditions Around the World*

## **Storytelling Encyclopedia: Historical, Cultural, and Multiethnic Approaches to Oral Traditions Around the World**

*From Brand: Greenwood*

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**From Brand: Greenwood : Storytelling Encyclopedia: Historical, Cultural, and Multiethnic Approaches to Oral Traditions Around the World** before purchasing it in order to gage whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised *Storytelling Encyclopedia: Historical, Cultural, and Multiethnic Approaches to Oral Traditions Around*

the World:

This is the first definitive reference work to address the substantive elements of oral storytelling, a form of communication that dates back to the dawn of humanity. It is an A to Z collection of over 700 entries covering such major storytelling elements as motifs, character types, tale types, place names, and creation mythologies and storytelling techniques of cultures around the world. Examples of subjects covered are the contributions of pioneering folklorists and mythologists such as: Franz Boas, Stith Thompson, and Joseph Campbell; descriptions of such well-known Western tales as Cinderella, the Greek myth of Persephone and Demeter, and the story of Exodus; as well as tales from Native American, African, and Asian cultures, including Indra and the Ants, tales of Anansi, the spider-trickster of the Ashanti, and the Cherokee Bear-man.

From School Library Journal This ambitious undertaking contains more than 700 entries on diverse aspects of the oral tradition. "There are doubtless entries that should have been included that have not been," Leeming writes in the preface, "and there are entries that some might find inappropriate or superfluous." In fact, the problem is neither the omission or inclusion of any particular topic, but rather a certain unevenness in the treatment of the material presented. When dealing with the ancient world, for instance, the work is sure and scholarly: this is an excellent reference for creation myths from almost anywhere. It also offers biographical information on anthropologists and folklorists not generally included in most sources. The problems arise in the book's treatment of more recent influences on storytelling, and in the way it makes connections between the ancient and modern worlds. Both Hans Christian Andersen and Carl Sandburg, for instance, are given short shrift in very brief entries. Elsewhere, the book simplistically presents the Hindu god Ganesa as a forerunner of Dumbo the Elephant and sees Gilgamesh's friendship with Enkidu reincarnated in Lethal Weapon. Indeed, when historical connections are made to the tales currently available to children, the focus is almost always on the Disney version instead of the considerable body of authentic folklore currently in print. Though Leeming's book contains some interesting material, Norma Livo's *Storytelling Folklore Sourcebook* (Libraries Unlimited, 1991) and Anne Pellowski's *The World of Storytelling* (Bowker, 1977) may be of more practical use to both students and storytellers.

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From Library Journal Oryx, a well-known publisher in the storytelling field, presents an encyclopedia that includes entries on characters from both mythology and folklore as well as authors, storytellers, scholars, tale types, terminology, cultural traditions, and more. A selected bibliography is included, and most entries are followed by references to further reading. Cross references are included within the text. Major contributors are listed, but individual articles are not signed. This is unfortunate, as some of the entries are unbalanced and treatment is somewhat uneven, and perhaps knowing the individual author's credentials would help explain the biases. For example, the entry on "Afterlife" covers the traditions of nine cultures in 20 lines and then uses 29 more lines on one Nez Perce Coyote tale. The entry on "Giants" uses approximately 19.5 inches of space but the entry on the concept of "God" only nine inches. The well-known Mexican tale of the wailing woman, La Llorana, is mentioned under "Mexican storytelling" but has no entry of its own, while Pele, Percival, Persephone, and many other similar characters do. This encyclopedia is similar in structure to Jan Brunvand's *American Folklore: An Encyclopedia* (Garland, 1996). Although it is broader in scope than Brunvand's work, reaching beyond the United States to touch on a variety of cultural traditions, it is also less sure in its focus. Nonetheless, it includes a great deal of material not covered in any other reference source, making it a worthwhile purchase for public and academic libraries where usage justifies.

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From Booklist The preface of this one-volume encyclopedia indicates that the subject is "the whole question of the oral tradition we call storytelling<sup>^</sup>-its history, its purpose, its cultural dimensions." It is not designed to be the definitive volume on storytelling; rather, it is a selective work that reflects the knowledge and interests of the writer, editors, and consultants who contributed to the book. Its aim is to give a balanced and interesting treatment of the subject, concerning itself with "historic, cultural, and multiethnic approaches to oral literature around the world." Part 1 consists of four essays that discuss the development and cultural meaning of storytelling. Part 2, the main body of the encyclopedia, has more than 700 alphabetically arranged entries, beginning with Aardeme, Verna, compiler and writer of African and African American folktales, and ending with Zoroastrian Creation. Entries are not signed, though the names of contributors appear near the beginning of the volume. The entries include individuals connected with folklore and storytelling, such as Joseph Campbell and Zora Neale Hurston; characters from folklore and mythology; kinds of folklore, motifs, ethnic storytelling; and places. There are also entries for some titles, such as Mahabharata and Thousand and One Nights. The scope covers the ancient and the modern, familiar and less-known names and characters, variants of tales and ethnic groups of all kinds. Longer entries, such as Near and Middle Eastern Storytelling and Robin Hood, can be more than two pages in length. A very modern touch is entries such as Rap Song and Rock Song, discussing the folkloric elements of these musical genres. Extensive cross-references are used.

Capitalized words and terms used within the articles indicate a full entry can be found. Many entries include lists of a few titles for further reading. Titles cited are standard older ones as well as new ones (as recent as 1996), scholarly as well as juvenile. The encyclopedia concludes with a 10-page selected bibliography that is a compilation of the chief resources used by the contributors. The index helps bring together related entries; for example, the names of the African Americans who have encyclopedia entries are grouped under African American scholars and storytellers in addition to being indexed under their own names. Storytelling Encyclopedia is a valuable source on various aspects of folklore and storytelling around the world from early times to the present. It should prove of interest to librarians, teachers, students, and others interested in the subject.