

The Oral Tradition

Tales & Tunes of Americana



What is the Oral Tradition? What's So Special?



Long Ago...

- Long ago, in primitive times, stories were passed on by word of mouth. Since the invention of printing, stories have been part of the world's literature. But the oral tradition - myths, tales, ballads, and fables known today – are gifts passed down by elders from far in the past to young people now.

Oral Tradition?

Meaningful detail shared in person, using emotion, gesture & sound

- **Ballad:** A narrative poem composed of short verses, intended to be sung or recited.
- **Epic:** A long, narrative poem that is generally about the deeds of an heroic figure.
- **Fable:** A short that teaches a moral. It usually has animals or inanimate objects as characters.
- **Fairy Tale:** A tale of fiction, usually for children, with fanciful characters.
- **Folktale:** A narrative that has been retold and is well known with a culture.

- **Legend:** A traditional, historical tale, first told orally and later in written form.
- **Myth:** An anonymous story designed to explain the mysteries of life. It usually has exaggerated characters.
- **Narrative:** A story told orally or in writing.
- **Narrative Poem:** A poem, usually long, that tells a story.
- **Parable:** A short story intended to teach a moral lesson.
- **Pourquoi Story:** A folktale that explains certain events, customs, or behaviors.
- **Tragedy:** A work that presents serious or sad events.
- **Tragicomedy:** A literary work that contains elements of both comedy and tragedy.
- **Trickster Tale:** A story about a mischievous, supernatural being.
- **Yarn:** A long true or imaginary tale of adventure.

Why Preserve The Oral Tradition?

- **Ancient Blockbusters Still Captivate**
- **It's the Human Birthright**
- **Speaks the Spiritual Language**
- **Reinforces Truth and Values**
- **Links Pop Culture to Academic Study**
- **Celebrates the Passing of Childhood**
- **Connects Young and Old in Families**



Ancient, Yes...

...But Still Blockbuster Hits!

- **Ancient epics, stories and songs have always satisfied our deepest yearnings for life's truth.**
- **Tales and rhymes passed down through families follow familiar patterns that make them easy to retell, listen to and love.**
- **The hero's journey always mirrors our own struggles, showing us the wisdom and pitfalls in our choices.**



- **Singing verse-making, jokes and stories all have spread by word of mouth throughout time, around the world.**
- **We appreciate diverse cultures^{u7} engaging with other' folklore – even as we preserve our own families' cultural heritage.**
- **Once you know how to look, countless familiar rhymes, beloved folk heroes, wise sayings, fables, jokes, seem to turn up everywhere.**

**“Spoken”
Includes
Everyone**

