

# Resources for storytelling

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# Introduction

This guide, produced by Dr Jenny Moon, is a set of resources for students and tutors about developing the skills of storytelling and transfer to disciplines such as education, media, marketing, leisure and tourism.

## 1. Oral storytelling in the curriculum

Oral storytelling is interesting, enjoyable and a life skill. Teaching students to tell oral stories may seem to be best related to performance arts, but these resources were developed for media students. They can be adapted for students in education and other disciplines. A close look shows there are benefits for any student at any level and for professional development.

Oral storytelling is a useful skill for students at any level, from school through to higher education. In university, work on storytelling supports:

- self-presentation skills;
- induction;
- modules on communication;
- personal development work;
- workplace learning and communication skills;
- modules relating directly to the study of story.

There are two elements in oral storytelling – the *story* and the *performance* (telling). These vary in importance depending on the discipline studied. For media students both are important because storytelling includes presentation skills as well as content.

There is absolutely no point in telling a story unless the audience is engaged –engagement is central to the skill of the storyteller and central to giving a presentation as part of degree study and training. For media and business students audience engagement is crucial when learning to pitch a project idea to a panel of assessors.

Telling a story well is a valuable social (and parenting) skill as well as a performance skill for students to study. Making do without notes; deciding how to move, where to stand or sit; using face and body language to communicate ideas; creating and releasing tension through voice, intonation and pace. For students working with story within their discipline, storytelling offers a route to understanding the history and nature of story, its structures, its connection to audiences, and its effects on them. Which stories are appropriate to tell, why do some stories work and others not work?

## 2. Students building storytelling skills

### Oral storytelling

This material by Jenny Moon can be followed up in depth in Chapter 11 of her book, *Using Story in Higher Education and Professional Development* (2010) London: Routledge.

Oral storytelling has several distinctive characteristics. Firstly, stories are told and not read. Secondly there is the directness of voice (Rosen, 2009). Voice is involved in reading out loud so the issue is the retelling (in Irish terms, the 'craic') and non-reliance on a text. Harrett (2008) explores the difference between storytelling and reading, emphasising the unspoken qualities of oral storytelling such as emotional atmosphere, innuendo, mood – ideas not specifically conveyed in language. Harrett talks of the 'magic - the indefinable

spark that binds speaker and listeners in a shared journey through imagination'. Harrett demonstrates that we cannot define everything in language. The unspoken is an important element in all human communication and in the work of storytelling in particular.

### **The value of learning to tell stories**

There is no point in telling a story to others if they are not fascinated and engaged by the story. Storytelling implies the enlivening of a story to hold attention – to facilitate engagement. These qualities are central to the process of storytelling but they are also central to good communication and teaching processes (Glanz, 1995; Martin and Darnley, 1996; Moon, 2001; Parkin, 2008). It is the ability to present material confidently without dependence on a handful of script. This is quite apart from managing the content of the story. One important reason for learning to tell stories orally, concerns the transfer of knowledge and skills and emotional charge, to wider communication skills.

Most undergraduate, postgraduate and doctoral students are expected to make oral presentations. In media and arts disciplines this is considered as practice for pitching ideas. For many students, storytelling skills can be transferred to employment interviews and situations where material has to be presented to an audience who want the presenter to make a compelling human connection with them. Storytelling can be regarded as practice in managing self-expression, posture, voice and confidence: qualities needed in every situation where the presenter seeks to shape and influence the event and the outcome.

Forms of storytelling are also important in politics (Levinson, 2008), business and management (Denning, 2001, 2004), religion, tourism (guiding tourists), in various forms of training (Parkin, 1998), language learning (Heathfield, 2009), the arts and architecture, work with children in a variety of contexts in care, social and community work (Gersie, 1991; Jennings, 1999, 2004), library studies, various talking therapies and of course, performance studies. There are also places for storytelling practice in leadership, confidence-building and public speaking schemes (e.g. Toastmasters) in which the ability to present confidently is central to the role. The confidence that can come with the ability to tell a story is related to personal development planning and student success programmes (META, 2005) and, of course, storytelling ability is a totally portable form of entertainment – and that can always be useful! In family and personal settings it is a valuable, childcare, parenting and grand-parenting skill.

For many other disciplines (e.g. religious studies), the ideas around the nature of story itself are important because understanding story and its use as a human artefact is an essential element. This applies to students in disciplines from performance, childhood studies, education, to media and language. As well as the value for communication and pitching, oral story telling provides a valuable and unique way of studying story. The qualities that make an orally told story work effectively are not always the same as those that make a visually told or written story work. Selecting stories for retelling gets you right into thinking about what does and does not work as a story

### **A background to oral storytelling**

A few notes about the place of oral storytelling in society in case it might seem like an activity of the past, or mainly for children. Storytelling is common to all civilizations (Hopen, 2006). Told stories come under a variety of overlapping headings – wonder tales, fairy tales, tall tales, myths, legends, ghost stories, trickster stories, jokes and more. Storytelling is portable entertainment, and as people travelled they shared their stories and because oral telling leaves stories flexible and open to interpretation and reinterpretation, the stories gained new forms, meanings and names. Sometimes, for example, the beginning of one story was furnished with the ending of another. Maybe this does not happen quite as in Salman Rushdie's book (*Haroun and the Sea of Stories*, 1990:85, 86), in which the Plentimaw fish eat stories.... These fish, says Iff (the floating gardener), 'are 'hunger artists...when they are hungry, they swallow stories....and in their innards ...a little bit of one story joins on to an idea from another and hey presto when they spew the stories out they are not old

tales but new ones'. The Disney Corporation has been a great source of reinterpretation of traditional stories (Grainger, 1997; Cassady, 1994) – it carries on a tradition that stretches back through the centuries.

In the past, without electronic sources of entertainment and good sources of lighting, stories were everywhere. They were told 'at the loom, in the field, with needle or adze or brush in hand' as well as in the market square and entertaining the nobles at the ball (Parkinson, no date). Stories were also told in order to change minds (parables). At times, they have been collected to serve purposes – the Brothers Grimm collected stories to promote nationalism in Germany in the early to mid-19th century (Grimm and Grimm, nd). To bring that seriously into the present, it was announced at a folk festival in 2009 that the British National Party was collecting traditional folk song to promote nationalism.

Oral story telling for adults and children still happens despite good light, printed media, radio, television and computers. There are still many different cultural forms and manifestations of traditional storytelling (Nwobani, 2008; Pendry, 2008; Shah, 2008; Jackson, 2008). In the UK, stories are told in pubs, round camp fires, in story groups, at festivals, in folk clubs, stand-up comedy venues, schools and in residential care situations. There are storytelling performances in theatres, and cafés, at National Trust Properties (Schrieber, 2009) in street performances and ghost walks. Storytelling is used in celebrations and religions (sermons) and after dinner speaking. It is used in work with refugees as a means of giving comfort (Aylwin, 1994). The Society for Storytelling supports storytelling in the UK (<http://sfs.org.uk>) and lists professional story tellers. An Internet search returns about 10 million results. Wikipedia has a large entry on storytelling at <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Storytelling>. In the United States there are many schools of storytelling. In an academic context storytelling is studied in *The George Ewart Evans Centre for Storytelling* ([www.storytelling.research.glam.ac.uk](http://www.storytelling.research.glam.ac.uk)) and other similar centres.

## Learning to tell stories orally

Storytelling is not a matter of learning stories word for word. Occasionally there are sets of words that are important in story because the story revolves around them (e.g. 'Fi Fy Fo Fum – in Jack and the Beanstalk). There are, of course, the names of the characters to learn. If these are difficult, shorten them. It is the nature of oral stories that they are reinterpreted. When I am looking for stories, I find that some contain whole sections that do not carry forward the action of the story. Sometimes they are bits of other stories that have become incorporated and can be excluded. Sometimes they add to the aesthetic qualities of the story and can be retained but abbreviated. In a successful storytelling, everything needs to contribute to the storyline in some way or other.

## Selecting stories

Stories are often grouped according to the audience for whom they are intended, but this does not mean that useful stories for adults cannot be drawn from children's books. Many traditional stories were told in the past to adults, but in Victorian times were modified for use with children. That mainly meant taking out sex and extreme violence. In my experience an adult can get as 'lost' in a good story as children, and likewise, young children can be enthralled by what are meant to be adult stories even if they do not fully understand the whole story.

There are some storytellers who will only use stories that they have heard orally. I am less precious. I find stories mostly in books. There is great delight in looking through a new book of stories for those that might be suitable. I seek books in libraries, occasionally in bookshops but also in charity and second hand shops. There are some sources of good stories on the internet. There is a list of sources with these resources.

Finding stories and therefore finding the appropriate sources for stories is a matter of individual choice. The new storyteller has to find out what makes a 'good' story to tell for her. I can only say that the sorts of stories that appeal to me for telling are 'strong stories' with a beginning, middle and clear ending with a clear

plot or twist. Beyond that good stories have a touch of magic – I cannot define ‘magic’, I can only use that word to describe the *something* that makes me want to share that story with others. It has a jewel-like quality. I can often look through whole books of stories, and find nothing with that quality. Clearly factors like length and complexity can be an issue too. Most times when I tell stories, they have to be short – sometimes only four minutes or more typically eight to ten minutes, and length becomes a factor in choice. Sometimes stories I tell relate to a theme. Recently I had to select a series of stories for a Medieval Fete that celebrated the anniversary of the consecration of a church and I tried to include stories with references to churches. Other times it is Halloween or a religious festival.

## Styles of telling stories

There are different styles of storytelling. None is right or wrong. Some storytellers act as if they are a conduit through which the story flows. The teller is still and the story comes out through the voice alone. In contrast, others move and the story comes out through voice and body. The movement flows with the voice - it is not that the teller says something and then mimes it. Another style is more conversational – the teller tells the story as a part of a conversation with the listeners. There may also be singing or a musical instrument integrated with the telling – or drum beating is used to denote increasing tension in the story.

## Learning a story

It is the ability to learn a story that most concerns potential tellers. It is not difficult to learn a story – usually easier than people think but it is a matter of an individual finding her best way of learning. Some people can learn a story from reading it several times and learning from the words. A common method is to imagine the story as a series of scenes – and, in effect, describe what is going on in each scene. Each description will lead on to the next scene and the teller works from these images of what is going on in the story. This seems to be closer to the nature of story than learning directly from the verbal sequence since images incorporate the unspoken elements of story - but this is a matter of personal preference.

When I learn a story I read it through probably twice, then I summarise it on paper in a numbered sequence of scenes or events in the story. My notes might take up to two sides of A5 paper but often a lot less. There is no point in writing the story again. As I write I am visualising the events of the story. I repeat in the top corner of the sheet any difficult names of people or places. I may underline various ideas in the story that either I must use in order to make the story work or that I want to use because it helps the flow of the story. If there are difficult scenes, I have sometimes even sketched them with ‘pin men’. I then tell the story to myself two or three times when I am on my own. I need to get right ‘inside’ the story in my mind. This practice in telling the story is vital but I often do not tell it to myself as well as I would if there was an audience! Since I have found that I tell a story through my whole body, and move when I tell, I will sometimes tell short sequences of the story to see how I move. I do not plan how I will move – movements just happen, but it is useful to know what might happen! The feeling of the movement seems to help the memory for the story. However, I have said that some people tell stories in this way, and some do not. The moving and telling is easier when I am relaxed. In the videos that accompany this material, I feel that my movements are tense at the start but improve as I relax in the filming.

It is also worth thinking of the involvement of the senses in the telling of a story. Invoking vivid sight, touch, sound and smell or movement sensations enriches the experience for listeners. These ideas can be added to a story. It can also be helpful to go beyond the story – to think more deeply about the characters. What are they feeling, what do they look like? What is their history? What motivates them? This is more important in a longer story in which the personalities of the characters are more relevant.

In learning stories from the sequence of scenes, it is useful to bear in mind that stories tend to have underlying structures. They are often something like the following:

- introduction or opening word
- an initial situation is described
- a problem emerges that has to be solved – this is what makes the story
- there is introduction of some sort of ‘helpers’, crucial to solving the problem
- obstacles (there are often three in traditional stories)
- there are attempts to succeed – and there may be more than one attempt
- there is success – achievement – transformation - resolution
- and a final few words to round things off

I often write further very brief notes on the story on an index card which I would take to a storytelling session. This is particularly useful when there are difficult names of characters or places or sets of words that have to be said and the card is a last minute crib. Though I have rarely needed the card, it is comforting to know it is there

### Beginning and ending stories

Beginnings and endings are really important. A weak ending leaves the listeners with frustration and negativity. I think that the beginning of a story should be designed according to the context of the storytelling. There are times to give a title and times to ‘jump straight into’ the story with no introduction. I do not always introduce a story with the title. Titles are often made up by the person who wrote the story out the last time! I might say ‘This is a story from China’ or some such words. There are traditional and quasi-traditional beginnings and endings, many of which are very familiar:

- Once upon a time
- Long ago and far, far away
- Once upon a time and in a place that we may not know
- Snap and my story is in.....(and the ending: ‘snap my story is out...’)
- It happened where north, south, east and west meet
- Once there was (once there was not)
- I light the story fire – and the flame springs up....(end on: - The flames of the story fire are dying – but the story’s embers glow for ever.....)

(This list is developed from Grainger, 1997)

Some of these add atmosphere to a story. One reason for weak endings relates not to the quality of the ending but to the pacing of the telling of the ending where it tails away or ‘subsides’. The pacing may need to be modified to signal the ending – it might slow down or speed up to a climax. It may be helpful to use a formal ending as well - such as:

- and that is the end of my story
- and so it was until this day – unless, that is, you know differently
- my tale, now is now told - in your heart, now hold it
- a story, a story, it came - and now it goes
- and that is the way it was, and that is the way it is – to now and maybe for ever

(Modified from Grainger, 1997)

Sometimes I use a small gong to denote the beginning and the ending of a story. It defines the ‘storytelling space’ very clearly

### Telling the story

In my experience there is usually a limited time for a story. However, the same story can last for ten minutes or twenty minutes. It is a matter of how it is told and how much detail is included. It is important to judge time - but looking at a watch half way through a story is not a good idea!

Sometimes the storyteller can stand. Sometimes there is a storyteller's chair – and on occasions an ornate throne. Some tellers will want to be free to move. There are occasions when the audience is seated on the ground (especially when working with children) but telling from a position that is looming above them will not work, so another position is essential. It is a matter of 'reading' the situation and working out how best to manage it. Half kneeling can be a compromise.

As in any performance, there is a need for eye contact with the audience. Storytelling is about engaging. There are times when the teller is talking through one character to another, and then eye contact may need to be briefly with the imagined other. With large audiences, the eye contact needs to be exaggerated – as do other gestures or movements.

Pacing and the use of pause are vital skills. Silence is very powerful. It can tell of events in the story as much as the words. That goes also for creating variety in presentation - using loud and soft voice, coming forward and moving back. Occasionally there is extraneous disturbance during the telling of story – like the ubiquitous mobile phone and then the skilled teller may manage to link the phone call into the story – 'Oh yes and the phone rang just at that moment – it was her father telling her....' Or '...but it was just a call for someone else'. This will probably elicit a laugh even in a serious story. I find that the odd aside can be useful if said quickly with a forward gesture to denote that the teller is coming out of the story briefly, e.g. 'I wish I could find one like that'; or 'I could eat an apple like that right now!'

The use of props is a matter of judgement. I do not use props on a regular basis, but just sometimes a single object can be useful. In one story I tell, there is a very round pebble. I sometimes say – 'It was a pebble like this.' and hand one round. The pebble in the story is imbued with magic. I tell the story of willow pattern china, and hand round broken pieces of the china with relevant pictures on it. The pieces of china were found at a Victorian 'dump' near where I live so they have their own story. In another story there are seals that slip out of their skins to become people and I often use a black piece of silk when telling that story.

There are some obvious things that can go wrong with storytelling just like they can with any form of presentation. Beyond having a poor story, some are:

- lack of 'presence' of the teller
- unclear or too quiet a voice
- pace is too fast or too slow or there is too much repetition
- disorganised telling – muddling the sequence
- body language is not right
- too much performance (irritating)
- storytelling and movements are not integrated (also irritating)
- apparent disengagement of the teller with her story
- monotonous telling – and so on

Most new storytellers think that the worst that could happen is that they will forget the story. In my experience, this rarely happens. Remembering a story is not at all like remembering or forgetting something 'learnt by heart'. My worst fear of forgetting is usually about loss of names but mostly they just seem to appear as if helped by the flow of the story. With foreign or unfamiliar names, a list on the floor is a

possibility. It is worth noting that commonly promoted methods for memorising involve linking words into a story (Bower and Clark, 1969; Buzan, 2006).

Occasionally I do forget a detail that is important to the story – and then I will just say, quite casually ‘oh – I forgot to tell you that.....’. I have never dried up. Storytelling is like a conversation with an audience and one finds one’s way around difficult bits.

There are books and coaching schemes that help people to learn to tell stories but in the end, it is only by telling stories and watching others tell them that people can become proficient storytellers.

Two stories, told by a storyteller, to demonstrate one style of oral storytelling. The appropriate times to watch/listen to this material is marked in Part B. Each story lasts for around 10 minutes. The two web links for the stories are:

[http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=x\\_CZFMfaYHg](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=x_CZFMfaYHg)

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=A2mqyxcPIuY>

### 3. Planning guide for tutors

#### Three stages

- 1 The tutor provides a short briefing session
- 2 Students read the background information and watch the storytelling videos  
[http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=x\\_CZFMfaYHg](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=x_CZFMfaYHg)  
<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=A2mqyxcPIuY>
- 3 Students learn a story, perform it to an audience and hopefully receive some feedback

The briefing will depend on the students’ access to the resources. The resources can be presented completely on-line, or tutors can provide the resources as hard copy with video web links

Every student should have the opportunity to perform and get feedback. They can use video or mobile phone technology to capture themselves telling a story to others. Audiences can be peers or another group.

Brief the students about the purpose of the activity. How does it relate to their module or programme? Describe the purpose and hoped-for learning outcomes. Emphasise storytelling as a valuable social skill and do everything you can to make the session enjoyable for all. Be clear about the skills students can develop and how these skills help with performance, employability, work-based learning, pitching to potential buyers, connecting to significant people in their studies and their work. Help students to see storytelling as really relevant in their lives.

The videos are good examples of individual approaches to storytelling. But they aren’t designed to show the right way to do it. Emphasise individuality and choice – there are many ways to tell a story and communicate with others. It is worth making a connection with joke-telling: jokes are a specific form of social storytelling and many people already possess the performance skills needed for telling jokes. They can practice transferring their skills to the wider form of storytelling.

The videos were created to be seen in sequence. Show the first video and follow this with the reading material. Then show the second video. If the resource is available on line, try to sequence it in this way. Afterwards, the students should choose a story to prepare.

There are ten short stories available here – but any story may be used. Often, one story appeals more than another, so it is important for students to choose one they really like. Many folk or fairy tales are suitable if they are written in no more than two or three pages. To help students make their choice, they will need to:

- know how long they have – it can help to have a fixed performance time, e.g. 10 minutes;
- use a story with a simple line and no complicated words.

## 4. Organising storytelling sessions

Students working at a distance will need:

- 4 To find their own audience – preferably four or more friends, family or peers;
- 5 Someone to record their storytelling, e.g. using video, mobile phone camera shots, or digital audio;
- 6 To write a reflective piece as part of their response.

Students working face to face will need:

- 1 To make the space comfortable and appropriate for storytelling;
- 2 Time to prepare the space, tell their story, step out of role, and receive feedback;
- 3 To write a reflective piece as part of their response.

### Managing face to face sessions

#### With small groups

Students take turns in telling their stories. The space needs to be comfortable and appropriate. Students may want to change the space to suit their telling. Ten stories with feedback could take two and a half hours. Most audiences won't want to sit that long without a break, so perhaps three hours total.

#### With large groups and plenty of space

Using several rooms or a large theatre space, students can work in several story circles. The tutor can visit them in turn. One student can organise the sequence of tellers and manage the feedback process.

#### Group size

The dynamics of storytelling and the interplay of teller and audience is very sensitive to group size. For the type of skill development and feedback proposed here, it is best to have an audience of at least six.

#### Where space or time is at a premium

Students should be asked to work in their own time. They should arrange a session among themselves with a minimum of six. These notes will be useful in helping them to manage the session and feedback. Video, audio or mobile phone shots will be useful for recording the session and the students can produce a written account following their performance.

#### As part of a lecture

The tutor can show the first video, followed by a discussion of the key points and relevant skills, and conclude with the second video.

#### Working in two groups

Students split into two groups and work in separate spaces. Each group is told a short story lasting ten minutes. The groups come back together and mix up with students forming pairs, one from each group. They work in their pairs, taking turns to retell the story they have just heard, personalising their performance in some way by making the story their own in some way.

### Working with the structure of a story

Many stories have a clear structure. Many Folk legends and fairy tales contain:

- an initial situation;
- a problem that arises;
- barriers to progress;
- a test or transformation of some kind;
- a magical or mystical solution known only to the hero or bestowed for a reason;
- some sort of confrontation and struggle;
- a resolution that brings things to a conclusion (and they all lived happily ever after).

A short story is told to the whole group (or read or given for reading). There is general discussion of the structure of the story. The structure is agreed and each part is retold by a single student, who is encouraged to make that part of the story their own as much as possible.

### Memorising and developing stories

Students work in pairs and each person is given a very short story, i.e. no more than one side of A4. Each student works quickly to memorise their story before telling it in their own words. Following this they discuss their strategies for memorisation (e.g. changing difficult names to something they can easily remember), for embellishment and for exaggeration. The pairs come together in a large group. One or two pairs retell their stories to the whole group. Following this they discuss their experiences, their strategies for memorisation, and the difference between telling a story to a single person and a group.

### Feedback about performance

Needs to be positive where students are unfamiliar with this work. It could consist of a couple of comments about what (specifically) went well, what was enjoyable about the performance and what could be developed.

## 5. Assessment, feedback and follow-up

There are many reasons for using assessment opportunities as part of the learning process.

It is not necessary or recommended here that students be graded on how *well* a story has been told. Grading may be necessary where students are following a performance-focused programme.

Students value feedback where it relates clearly to the original purpose of the work and where the feedback provides clear guidance for improvement. However clear it may appear to tutors and peers, students do not always recognise feedback when it is provided. When this happens students miss an opportunity to use it for reflection, review and improvement.

Students may respond differently to peer and tutor feedback. Some will prefer one and some the other. For most students, telling a story in public is a challenging matter and they may be much more comfortable with feedback coming from one source rather than another. Some may feel that tutor feedback is too heavy and summarily critical; others may find peer feedback too embarrassing and too competitively pitched, particularly where grading is also involved.

After each storytelling, take a few minutes for the storyteller to make a paper note of their performance and for each listener to note:

- two positive points – that indicate what worked well in the storytelling;
- one point for development that the storyteller could implement the next time.

The listeners' slips are collected and given to the storyteller to support reflection and development.

Those new to public storytelling often improve considerably given a second or third go in fairly quick succession. Ideally the first session of telling is followed by at least one further session of telling to a group within a few days. A second session can be with self-selected stories.

Students may be required to complete a more formal assessment that focuses on a specific issue related to the nature of story, storytelling and performance. Experience of group storytelling and the giving and receiving of feedback is a good basis for formal assessed work.

## 6. Stories for Telling

### Seeds

There was once a wild and lovely garden that was a long way from the hustle of everyday life. The house, of which the garden had been a part, had crumbled and decayed and existed now only as heaps of yellow ochre rubble and a few low walls around the hearths. Plants sprawled and crawled on these walls. Pink valerian pushed stones apart, ivies clung and ferns sprouted like green fountains. A sycamore grew in what had been the kitchen doorway, and the old garden plants, freed from the constraints of the gardener's hands now conformed only to the law of the wilderness. Scented roses wavered away from the remains of a trellis arch, competing with the prickle of a large gooseberry bush – and bramble was winning hands down, everywhere.

Insects, birds and animals abounded in the old garden. Butterflies clustered on buddleia bushes; bees droned in the sunlit areas and flies zipped across the patches of shade. By night, foxes chased rabbits and a badger had burrowed his way through the fragrant soil of what had been the herb garden. Perhaps those with a lingering right over the land were the cats that were descended from Jemima, a gentle tabby that had been fed by a lonely kitchen maid long ago. Another remnant of the life of the house was the little stature of a boy, made in grey limestone. He stood askew on a stepped pedestal in a marshy area that had been the lily pond. One side of him was in permanent shadow and was greened with moss.

As with all very wild places, the spirits of the wood had moved in. Humans, in their ignorance have called these spirits and fairies, but while they tell the stories of spirits to the young child, they mock the older child who still believes. The spirits dwelled in the root spaces beneath the tall trees, in the dark of hollow trunks that had been the play-places of children in past times and they flew in the high canopy of leaves. They revelled in the breezes, shaking branches and they danced to the music of summer twilight.

Late summer was a special time. The spirits would come from far and wide to the old garden and they played conkers, as children play now with fruit from the chestnut, but they used seeds and the string was spun cobweb. The seasoning of the seeds was a highly regarded skill – the seeds had to be hard but not brittle, and burnished to a high shine. Just the conditions for this treatment were found in the hollow in the base of the statue and over the years the hollow had become filled with woodland seeds...or maybe it was just that the canny squirrels had made this their food store.

And so the wilderness rested over the years and, but for the occasional lovers from the village who sort the peace of the deep shade, no person entered. However, sadly, as happens in the modern day, the land was spotted by a man who was interested in making money. He persisted until he bought the land and then he laid out plans for building. One day, late in the summer, the sound of chain saws came, ripping at fresh wood. The trees shuddered deep to their roots. As men tramped through and used fires to destroy the undergrowth, all life that could move, fled. Birds ceased to sing and the woodland spirits thrashed around, disturbed and angry and then, on a day of high winds, they disappeared. Soon the men reached the site of the house and carted away the old stone and razed the land on which it had stood. The statue was knocked down by a digger, into the mud that had been the lily pond and was buried further by a mound of earth

pushed on top. In a day or two more, men came with tanks on their backs and sprayed chemicals over the ground to rid it of the vestiges of the wild. The remaining plants drooped as everything was destroyed. Trenches were now dug and foundations put in. Houses went up – red brick square houses with new brass knockers and tarmac drives.

The people who came to live in the house that was built over the site of the kitchen garden of the old house, were themselves old. They had time to be keen gardeners. They abhorred weeds and removed even the cooling mosses that softened their lawn. The garden was dug, hoed, raked and sprayed. The edges of flowerbeds were cut sharp and the faces of the flowers glowered out, colourful, but pompous. They were from the Garden Centre and were expensive.

These people had grandchildren who would make occasional visits. The children lived in a city flat and the garden was a great source of joy to them, especially the gap between the wood fence and the shed that their grandfather could not get at with his garden tools. One day, they would build a pond there. They imagined watching fish swim under lily pads – but that time was a long way off.

‘Don’t let your ball go on the garden bed, now, will you. Don’t break the flowers...’, the Grandmother would say as the children went out. But they were used to those kinds of words in the city.

One Easter, when the children arrived, a section of the vegetable garden was newly dug and the children looked wistfully at it and eventually asked if they could dig in the soil there and their Grandfather nodded. They decided to practice digging a pond. They started to dig, but did not get very far before they struck something hard and sparks flew from the spade. As they cleared the soil, a face began to appear and the eyes of the boy statue stared up at them. They wanted to rush in and tell everyone but half way to the door they slowed and, nearly together decided to keep this a secret. They dragged and pulled the statue down the path towards the space behind the shed. As it bumped through the earth, seeds, hidden so long ago, fell from the base. The children cleared earth from the statue and the girl ran to the house and struggled back with a large yellow bucket, slopping water onto the newly scattered seeds as she went. The children spent even more time in the garden, now that they felt that they owned a small part of it.

‘How they enjoy my garden’, said the Grandfather, thinking of his floral display.

The children went home. Spring came and warmed the earth even behind the shed and the wild seeds sprouted and grew and came into flower without anyone knowing. In the Summer the children were back – but this time everyone was sad because the Grandfather was ill and could no longer tend the garden. The new plants flourished and the statue was once again surrounded by growing things. While the grown-ups were deep in their worried conversations, the children played around the statue and the wild things in the garden.

A few weeks later the family arrived for the last visit. They came with a van crammed with furniture. They were now moving into the house and their Grandparents were moving to a flat.

What was particularly exciting was that the children were to have the bottom of the garden for a play area. They were free to do what they liked with it.

It was over a year later. The sun had shone for weeks but now cooled towards Autumn. A mouse scuttled through the undergrowth at the bottom of the garden, shaking stems and then abruptly changing direction as it came face to face with a large shiny black beetle that had crawled up from the edge of a small pond. A bee buzzed around a yellow flower. And in among the stems and leaves, other forms raced and darted, collecting seeds and carrying them to the hole in the base of the statue. That evening in the dusk, with the first few burnished seeds carefully threaded onto cobweb strands, the games were back in play. And even in this small place, the spirit of the wild lived on.

## Jack and the Wisdom at the End of the World

You will have heard of Jack and his beanstalk adventures and how Jack met the Giant at his castle in the clouds and the goose that laid the golden egg. Well the goose was old now and no longer laid eggs - she just ate. Jack's mother was getting on too and she worried about Jack, with the money running out – and – well she knew her son did not have the best brain...and he had no girlfriend either.... So one day, with great soul searching, she suggested that it was time he should sort out his fortune by paying a visit to the Wise Woman who lives at the end of the World.

Jack, in his good willed way, said 'Mother, I am sure you are right', and the next day, he left, carrying the packed lunch – of course - made up for him.

He set out in the direction of the sunrise, walking jauntily along the road and humming. The road came to the riverside and there was a ferryman waiting there with a pole in his hands, ready to pole the punt to the other bank. The ferryman asked Jack where he was going and. Jack told him that he was on his way to visit the Wise Woman who lives at the end of the World to seek his fortune.

'I see', said the ferryman thoughtfully, 'Jack – while you are there, I suppose you wouldn't do me a favour and ask the Wise Woman how I can be freed. You see, I am stuck to this boat and my pole and have to just keep plying the river, back and forth for ever and ever. And Jack, you know, I am so bored'.

'That's unfortunate', said Jack, 'I will ask her'. And with that he jumped from the boat and walked on towards the place of sunrise. He went up and over the rolling hills and onto the path through the forest. Feeling a bit tired, he sat for a moment in the dim light on the roots of a tree. No sooner than he sat, but the tree started to creak and groan. He did not like the sad sounds. He asked the tree what was wrong - and added,

'I am on my way to see the Wise Woman who lives at the end of the World. I am seeking my fortune'.

The tree creaked again and said 'You are lucky Jack. I'm am small and crooked and it's miserable being small and crooked. Can you – er- ask the Wise woman how I could grow up to be like other trees. I so want to be up there in the light, Jack'.

Jack agreed cheerily and went his way counting on his fingers the two things now that he had to say to the Wise Woman. He reached the edge of the wood and his path stretched over fields, uphill and down dale. He was rather pleased with himself. Then, coming over a hilltop, in the corner of a field he noticed a cottage with smoke curling from the chimney. It looked very friendly but when he came near he heard the sound of a woman, weeping. She was sitting on a bench by the door, handkerchief in hand, with tears flowing down her pretty cheeks. Jack was a kindly soul and he asked her what was wrong.

'Oh Jack, I can't stop weeping – it goes on and on and I am so miserable'.

'But you have such a pretty cottage', Jack said – and he added, 'Well I am on my way to seek my fortune from the Wise Woman who lives at the end of the World. My mother told me to go and here I am!'.

'Won't you stay with me for a while, Jack'. She sniffled a bit and her tears dried. – 'Look, Jack, it will be getting dark soon, you could have some tea and stay the night here'. Jack thought that would be a good idea and so he had a delicious tea and slept well in a bed with a gingham coverlet. But the next morning, despite her pleading, he insisted that he must continue and she started to weep again.

'Jack, Jack –just one thing. Would you just ask the Wise Woman how I can stop weeping all the time'.

Eventually Jack came to the end of the World, and the Wise Woman, was there, asking where he had been because she had been expecting him.

'There are three things I have to ask you', Jack said, 'Well – I think it was three. The woman back there, who is crying – she wants to stop crying.....'.

'Oh yes', said the woman, 'she needs to find a husband to live with her and then she would stop crying'.

'Ah I will tell her that', said Jack, 'And what about the tree that groans in the forest, how could it grow like the other trees?'

'Yes, I know about that tree, Jack. When it was a seedling, some robbers came with a chest of jewels they had stolen and hid it by the tree. The tree roots do not have room to grow. There is a spade leaning up against the tree. If someone were to dig up the treasure, the tree could grow up fine and strong'.

'I will tell it that', Jack said, '- and the ferryman who cannot stop poling the ferry back and forth across the river?'

'Ah now he had an unwise encounter with the Giant's wife and a spell was cast on him. I have to tell you this quietly....'. She leant forward and whispered something to Jack. 'Now you tell him that, and he will be free'.

'Well thank you Wise Woman. You have been very helpful and I will pass on all the advice. I must get on my way now'. Jack turned to go, but the Woman called him. 'Jack – is it possible that you have forgotten something?....'

'Oh yes', Jack said. 'Yes, what about me and how I can seek my fortune?'

'Well Jack: to seek your fortune, you just have to be ready to seize every opportunity that your way'. Delightedly Jack agreed to do that and he went his way and his first stop was at the cottage of the woman who wept.

As Jack approached the cottage, he heard the sound of weeping and there she was with a large handkerchief. Then she saw him and her tears dried and a pretty smile grew on her face.

'Jack, welcome back! It's lovely to see you again. Come and have a cup of tea and tell me what the Wise Woman said'.

'Well she said that you need to find a husband and then you will stop crying. And tea would be nice – but I must be on my way'.

'Surely not, Jack! Stay for supper and you can sleep here again - and maybe you could stay for a few days and we can – well Jack....', she sidled up to him, '.....we could get to know each other a bit better couldn't we.....'.

'I have to go and do as the Wise Woman said, and find chances to seize in order to find my fortune'. And, as he walked away, there was a sound of sobbing and then the full flood of tears.

Jack walked on through dale and over hill until he came to the forest and he found the little tree and as soon as he was sitting on its root it creaked and groaned.

Oh Jack, it's you again. So what did she say – the Wise Woman?' Jack told the little tree how robbers had buried treasure and that treasure was restricting its growth. Jack looked around, 'Ah and there is a spade there - and if you can get someone to dig up the treasure, you will grow big and strong'.

'There is your chance, Jack – you dig it up', said the tree.

'No no', Jack said, 'I have to hurry on and find an opportunity to seize so I can find my fortune. I cannot hang around here with you', and on he went.

Jack passed through the trees and onto the path up and down the mountain and eventually he came to the river bank where the ferryman was waiting for him.

'Ah, it's my friend Jack. Step aboard and tell me all about your trip'. So Jack got onto the punt and told the ferryman about the tree in the wood and the box of treasure and the pretty woman who cried and how she needed a husband.

'And what about me, Jack? What did the Wise Woman say about me'.

'Well she said that you are under a spell and that to get out of it, you simply have hand the pole to a fool and then you must get off the boat as quickly as possible and the fool will come under the spell and have to ply the ferry across the river for ever. There was a pause as the ferryman got out his handkerchief.

'Err, err Jack, could you just take the pole from me for a moment while I blow my nose...' he said. Jack leant across and took the pole from the ferryman and immediately the ferryman sprung onto the bank.

Actually, Jack quite liked the river - and plying back and forth was all right even if it was for ever, and he even called the boat, the Fortune, though he may still be there and he may be getting a bit tired of it all by now.

The ferryman? Ah well he rushed to the forest, dug up the robber's treasure, and with a sack of jewelry, he raced over hill and dale to the house of the woman who wept – and soon they were married and her weeping stopped. And maybe he is still there – counting his fortune.

Traditional story rewritten by Jenny Moon

## The Pebble

This is about Sam and a strange hour – and how Sam could have become a very wealthy 6-year old...

The story starts long before parents, grandparents and even grander parents were alive – in the days when the magic of Magimen was stronger than it is today. Maybe people knew more then – well actually, some did! Then, each village had its own Magiman, who lived in a cave beyond the village huts.

The village of Ubug had a Magiman called Mogum. Mogum was not quite a real Magiman. It took three lifetimes to become a real one and he was in his first, but he tried hard. Mogum's cave was stuffed with herbs, spices, crystals in bottles and powders all higgledy-piggledy. On walls were scrawled and scribbled recipes for spells, and strung from the stone roof were crushers, mushers, sieves, saucepans – the paraphernalia of magic-making. Mogum had yet to become a tidy Magiman.

Folks would wander the wooded path over the rickety bridge to Mogum's cave to ask for spells. Mogum would grind and mix, stir and knead the wet and dry ingredients to make spells. Though few spells worked, the villagers wanted to keep their Magiman so they persuaded themselves that Mogum was doing fine – but no-one dared to ask for a big spell.

One day, a cheeky lad broke the rules and asked Mogum to make him into a Magiman for one hour. Well he did not just ask - he put it as a bet. Mogum thought – if this were to work and he were to win this bet, he might jump a lifetime and get Real immediately. How impressed everyone would be! He chucked and sent the boy away, pondering his recipes and humming with excitement. He found one spell that seemed promising, huffed and puffed and set about some spices and powders with pounders and mushers. He heated and burned, cooked and cooled and dried the smelly substances until they were as he thought they should be. Then he went into the woods and found a spotted toadstool and the shed skin of a poisonous snake.

Three days later, garbed in his most spangled cloak, Mogum called the boy back and started to chant around a bowl of brown liquid that looked like gravy, though from it crackled and flashed blue and red sparks.

'Good', said Mogum, 'Good, good...'. He was about to smear the stuff on the boy when there was a rumble. The bowl wobbled seriously, then blue smoke erupted from it. Cats everywhere jumped – as happens when magic goes seriously wrong – then there was the huge bang! Mogum and the boy landed some way away. The boy ran. Mogum looked at his ragged cloak and at his cave which was a heap of rubble. Blue and red sparks spluttered from everywhere.

'Dear me, dear me!', he said, then, as any self-respecting Magiman would do, he wandered off to look for a new cave and a new village.

All this happened a very long time ago. The ground splattered by the spell soon covered in earth. The rocks of the cave were crushed to pebbles. Plants seeded there. People forgot the spell – all they noticed was that there were unusually tall trees with larger shinier leaves there and then they forgot that too. The land was ploughed into fields and houses were built, and fell down and new ones were built on top. Sam's house was built there and because Sam liked to make things, Sam's Dad made him a sandpit in their little garden.

On a fine Autumn evening, Sam was playing in his sandpit. The sun made patterns on the sand as it shone through the apple trees and sometimes an apple would fall. Sam made a sandcastle with a track running down and he tried to get apples to roll down, but they fell off. He looked for something else and picked up a

comfortably round pebble from the garden bed. He was about to try rolling it when Mum called him for tea. He knew there were chips so he ran in quickly, slipping the stone into his pocket.

The hour that followed was the strangest ever for Sam, and his parents.

Sam reached the door and pulled off his sandy trainers. He could not smell chips and on the table was a plate of cold meat and some salad.

‘You said chips....’

Mother had decided that the cold meat had to be finished.

‘I’ve got those nice little tomatoes.....’

‘But you said it was chips. I wish we could have chips’. Sam was rubbing the round stone in frustration. Quite suddenly there was a smell of chips, and in one of Mum’s own dishes was on the table, piled high with golden chips. Sam reached forward and took one.

‘Oh Mum...!’, he said, assuming that she had been teasing.

Dad arrived and could make no sense of what Sam’s Mum was saying. The chips were, after all, there. What was the fuss? They tucked into the meal and talked about what had happened.

‘I am sorry to say that you don’t just wish and something happens’, said Dad. ‘- I’ll just try wishing for a piece of best fillet steak ....’. Of course, nothing happened.

They finished the chips. Sam sat back, hand in pocket, thinking about wishing.

‘Now, I wish.....I wish we could have the juiciest sausages, creamy ice cream with chocolate sauce, fizzygallop drink...’. He reeled off a list but y the time he had finished, the table groaned with the weight of the wonderful treats on his list.

‘Well....’, said Dad.

‘Well.....’ said Mum. ‘I wish I knew ..... But of course, she did not have the stone, so her wish did not come true. They settled down to eating again – and they ate and ate. They were confused and it was a relief to do something familiar like eat – and eat.

‘We’ll think about it later’, said Dad, shuffling to a comfortable chair with his hand on his middle. Then the magic hour ran out. The stone, long ago splattered by the magic of Mogum’s spell, at last became an ordinary stone, that eventually worked its way through the hole in Sam’s pocket and back onto the garden bed. Sam and his parents never did know how they could have used the magic – but they were a happy family and so maybe that was just as well.

Jenny Moon

## Designing Rabbit

This is a North American Indian story.

This story is set in the days before Creator had sorted out what he (– or she?) was going to do about the seasons. He was in discussion with the Sun over this and, on dull days or whenever the Sun was not busy shining, they would get together over a cup of yellowmoon tea in the Creator’s sitting room to discuss the matter. They had sorted out Summer and Winter – and Autumn seemed to slot quite well between these two - but they had not sorted out what would happen in the Spring.

The Creator had not quite sorted out what some of the animals should look like either. He was trying out a prototype of rabbits. At present, he was trying a version with four legs of equal lengths and a long pointed nose somewhat like that of a mouse. And rabbits had, in that version, a long silky tail that trailed behind them. They did eat grass through. That bit of the design seemed to be working well.

It was winter now – and snow covered the hills. Valleys and forests were white and the lakes were frozen hard. Rabbit was eating in his customary way, using his long front paws to scrape down through the snow to the grass underneath. The grass was crunchy and Rabbit licked his pink lips.... He liked it like this.

However, this was also the day when the Creator and the Sun finally finished their design for Spring and set it in motion. Sun shone as brightly as he could and then revved up the heat. The snow twinkled and then started to melt. The crunchy grass that rabbit so loved, became soggy and the ground, once so clean and white, became mud. Rabbit did not like this at all – soggy grass and brown mud were not for him. He looked around for something else to eat and then chanced to look up, and in the sunshine, the buds of the willow were breaking out in the branches above and they looked particularly delicious. Hunger was beginning to gnaw in Rabbit's stomach but there was a problem. He stretched, and jumped and reached but could get to only two buds. Then he had an idea. There was still snow lying in some places and he rolled snowballs and packed them round the willow bush and then packed more snow between them to make a platform through which all the branches stuck out, with the lovely buds on them. Rabbit was able to scramble out to the buds that he so wanted to eat. Perched on the platform he gorged himself – and of course, after such a big meal, what else would he want but to lie down. He curled up on the snow platform in the sun and was soon well asleep.

.....and the sun went on shining - and shining and the snow platform melted. When Rabbit finally awoke, he was stretched across several branches with twigs sticking into him in a most uncomfortable manner and he could hardly move.

Now in addition to the same-sized legs, the pointy nose and the long tail, in those days, Rabbits still had a bit of brain and so he used it to consider his predicament. He needed to get down to the ground. Eventually he decided that the best he could do was to launch himself – and perhaps that was all he could do really. He launched himself – and fell through the air elegantly for a few seconds and then stopped suddenly with his tail caught in the fork of two branches. So there he was, spread-eagled in the air like a Christmas tree ornament, spinning gently round. He thought again and decided that he might free himself if he spun himself round more quickly, so he sort of swam in the air and started to spin and he spun faster and faster – and faster. There was suddenly a loud crack that even the Creator heard. Rabbit's tail broke, leaving some in the tree and leaving him with a tiny puff for a tail. Now, constrained by nothing, Rabbit fell hard onto the earth. His long front legs buried themselves into the soft mud, and his nose became squashed up. The Creator came to see what was going on and he laughed and laughed at the silly looking creature that Rabbit now was, especially when Rabbit hopped away on his new legs, deeply embarrassed. But it seemed that the design worked quite well and so the Creator left Rabbit that way. And this is how all rabbits are now – and if you look at willow bushes early in the spring, you will see some of Rabbit's tail that was left behind.

Traditional story rewritten by Jenny Moon

## The Middle of the Sound

The village of Appledown lay comfortably settled between rolling green hills on three sides and the sparkling blue sea on the other. The tides rose and fell over a broad stretch of yellow sand on which the children built magnificent sandcastles.

Eglin lived in the smallest house in Appledown. It was called Egg Cottage. It was small – but tall and narrow – so tall and narrow, in fact, that Eglin and his visitors had to turn nearly sideways to go through the front door, and the letterbox could only fit up and down.

Eglin was very proud of his little house. He painted and re-painted it. This month the door was pale blue, with the letterbox red. The windows above the door were blue and Eglin had out his yellow curtains with the poppy borders. His house looked particularly bright because on both sides of it were grey houses painted in

grey and black, and black and grey. The three houses were packed so tightly together that people said that they looked like a sandwich standing on end – with a magnificent filling.

In the grey and black house lived Mr and Mrs Grimble. For every bit that Mrs Grimble was small and active, Mr Grimble was big and round. He was fond of his great arm-chair which was placed by the fire in winter, and by the window overlooking the beach in the summer. It worked quite well. While Mr Grimble whiled away his time in the chair, Mrs Grimble danced around him, saying ‘You never do anything Grimble! Paint the walls! Mend the ladder! Do the curtain rail!’ And the more he did not do it, the more she tired herself out. But each time this happened, oh – the noise that would come through the walls into Egg Cottage! There was her high twittering and his low rumbling voice and Eglin, who enjoyed sitting and thinking, could not hear himself think.

On the other side of Egg Cottage were the Ubbles with an unaccountable number of children, though Eglin thought that there might be five when his teapot jumped off its mat five times in a row as they slammed their front door one by one. It was also when the Ubbles were in their house, that Eglin could not hear himself think. He liked to sing too, and he could not hear his own songs. All this meant that when Eglin did have a chance to think, he thought, however much he loved Egg Cottage, that he would like even more to buy the cottage for sale up the hillside. It was a cottage on its own with no neighbours, but with a pretty flower bed and a pear tree partly shading a small green lawn with a white fence all the way round. But Eglin did not have the money for it.

Eglin loved to walk. Every day he put on his rainproof, sunproof, and windproof red hat and set out. He would pass the Ubbles’ house and then go down past the grocery shop, the church hall and the school, and then turn down the High Street to the sea-front. On the beach, he would, throw bread for the gulls and watch the crabs sidle sidle round in the weed of the rock-pools.

The day in question was a wet and blustery autumn day. Clouds raced, the sea crashed, and spray blew in, stinging the eyes. Eglin was there as usual, glad of the wind and wave sounds that blotted out a particularly noisy morning at Egg Cottage. He had finished his time with the crabs and was feeding the gulls – when one bird stood there for longer than the others, looking at him. The gull cocked his head on one side and winked. Then Eglin thought he heard the gull speak – unless he was just hearing the wind and the waves. It came like a song in his head:

Poor poor Eglin wears a frown  
In the midst of all that sound -  
But there’s a treasure to be found  
In the midst of all that sound,  
Eglin - tell your neighbours, Eglin Tell them...tell them...tell them...

The bird seemed to be laughing, then it flapped its wings, circled around Eglin, and, catching a current of air swooped away. Eglin pushed his hat up further on his forehead. Songs did come to him, but not like that one. He did not know if the song had come from the bird or from his own head so he thought it and his thoughts told him to go and do what the song said and tell the Grimbles and Ubbles.

Mrs Grimble opened her front door, a door as wide as Eglin’s was tall. Eglin told her the story.

‘Treasure, oh ...oh yes....’ She flashed her bright little eyes and rubbed her hands quickly and said ‘Ah yes’ several times, as Grimble came to the door yawning.

‘Ah well you may as well leave it to us, Eglin, there’s a good chap.... I shall go and sit down to think about it’. The door was closed firmly. A deep rumble and high twittering sounds were evident even before Eglin reached the gate to the Ubbles house.

The Ubbles' front door was as broken down and faded as Eglin's was newly painted and fresh. At the second knock, the door shuddered, flew open and an unaccountable assortment of bodies nearly fell on top of Eglin. The children got up and a little boy with dirty cheeks said

'Hlo Mister' and 'What d'yer want?' all in the same breath. When Eglin explained and repeated gull's words, the little boy jumped about excitedly and all the others jumped about and suddenly they all disappeared into the house and the door slammed as fast as it had burst open. The sound of footsteps and voices rose....and rose.

Eglin went home. He sat in his rocking chair, but he could not hear himself think, though ideas of treasure and the peace at the cottage on the hillside were somewhere in his head. He made himself a cup of tea, but the kettle nearly rattled off the stove and the cup nearly jumped out of its saucer. There was so much noise that Eglin had to go for another walk.

He passed the Ubbles' house. Through the window, he saw CD's and teddy bears flying across the room. The television was on its side and something was in pieces on the table. An Ubble child was prodding at the piano with a screwdriver. Eglin hurried on, wondering where Mr and Mrs Ubble were.

As Eglin reached home from his walk, feeling a little refreshed, he was met by a loud shriek and a louder twittering and Mrs Grimble shot out of her front door, running up the street, her skirt tucked up. She was yelling 'We've got it, we've got it....', as she went. Eglin turned to watch her. She ran into the entrance to the park where the Appledown bandstand stood.

'The middle of the sound', thought Eglin, 'Clever – maybe she has got it'. But a little later, the Grimble front door slammed and a voice rumbled, 'I told you so' and then the rumble continued and the twittering started up and Eglin's china dog began to dance on its shelf and the coat-hangers clattered on their rail. Then the Grandfather clock in his hall started to chime at every sound and Eglin decided to go to bed and get under the duvet –

'But how can I sleep in the midst of all this noise', he thought. He had a funny feeling as he thought this so he said it aloud and again, slightly differently – 'How can I get to sleep in the middle of all this sound.....'. A smile came to his face. 'Ah ha!' he said, 'Ah ha, maybe I understand now. We shall see...'.  
Jenny Moon

Eglin climbed the stairs, wondering what would happen next. What did happen next, amid all the other noise, was a rattling from Eglin's bedroom and then a clonk and then the sound of his bedsprings springing. He recognised the sound of the clonk as the opening of the hatchway into the attic in his tall and narrow roof, which he had only opened once years ago, and shut again quickly as ten spiders made their way towards him.

When Eglin reached the top of the stairs and went into his bedroom, there on the bed, still bouncing on the flowery quilt, was a brown wooden box that had burst open. On the box were the words 'Simpson, Egg Cottage, 1850'. From the box spilled strange coins and old jewelry. Eglin was so astonished that the sound all around him faded – and a picture of the little cottage on the hillside grew in his mind.

'If this is mine, I can buy that little cottage', he thought.

In four weeks time, the treasure box that had belonged to the Simpsons, who had lived at Egg Cottage so many years before, was on a pretty round table. The box was cleaned, polished and it overflowed with fruit – black grapes, red apples, yellow bananas, and green pears. Eglin sat outside on the lawn under the shade of the pear tree, listening to the song of a bird. On the fence sat a curious gull. He seemed to cock his head and laugh, before swooping off in the breeze.

## The Buried Moon

This story is set in a low lying area fen area in Lincolnshire, called the Lincolnshire Cars. It is a traditional story that may date back to times of Moon worship. It is a useful story for Halloween!

The Lincolnshire Cars was an area of bog, of marsh, stagnant ditch and fen with the odd scraggy bush. There were small villages dotted around and causeways, known only to the locals who crossed between the villages. Then, and who knows, maybe now too, it was a place of evil. Things would emerge by night and roam on the bogs, bent on devilish deeds. But this happened only on dark nights when there was no light from the Moon. There would be boglins crawling through the goo of the smelly and bubbling mud. Dead folks would rise up, stare out and sink back. Witches zipped through the air above them, with cats on their sticks that would flash fiery eyes here and there. Slimy hands would reach from the quaking bog grass, beckoning and grasping and drawing things down into the slime with them and there were will 'o the wykes with their tiny lit lanterns carried on sticks. And all the time there was a rising and falling moan and sighing, and sometimes things cried out like the middle of your worst dream.

The Moon knew that evil went on when she was not shining her beautiful light on the Cars. It upset her to sense these happenings when her back was turned and one day she decided to go and see for herself. She waited until the end of the month and then slipped on her black cloak and pulled the hood over her shining face and came down to the Cars. All that could be seen of her in the darkness was a slip of white foot feet as she tripped lightly over the bogs, hardly touching the ground. For the evil beings, this was the greatest opportunity ever – for the Moon with her light was their greatest enemy. And they were all there that night, the slimy hands grasping at her, the witches whisking round her head, with the cats casting their eyes of fire at her and the dead folks rising from the bog to stare with tongues lolling out of open mouths. The shrieking and moaning was terrible that night.

All was well for the Moon at first but suddenly her gown caught on a scraggy bush and she stumbled. She struggled to stand, but slimy hands had her in their grip and in seconds the other things were there, pulling her down. Then, in amongst all the commotion there was another sound – the clear call of a human in distress somewhere nearby. She struggled harder and her hood briefly flopped back, allowing her full light to shine out over the Cars. The cry was from a villager who had lost his way in the Cars earlier in the day. For a moment the dreadful things receded into the mud and the light enabled him to find the causeway and to reach safety.

However the Moon was still trapped, still caught on the bush and in her struggle, her hood fell back. Darkness returned and the dreadful things were back, now plotting and planning how they would bury the Moon for ever as she grew tired and weak. The Things fought over their ideas – so much that the first signs of dawn streaked the darkness. They panicked and, pushed a large oblong stone down on the Moon, burying her in the bog. Two will o' the wykes stood guard with their lanterns. Dawn came and the Things pulled back into the slime.

For a few nights the villagers did not notice the absence of the new Moon but time went on and the continuing darkness bothered them and worse, the Things from the bog became more bold. At nights there were noises round the cottages, taps on the doors, and hands appearing at windows. The sighing, moaning and shrieking grew and in their dread the villagers kept their fires alight all night, afraid to let the darkness into their cottages, afraid that it would be followed by the Things. After a while, a band of men went to see the Wise Woman who lived at the Old Mill to ask what they should do. She looked in mirror, stirred the brewpot and thumbed through the pages of her great book and said that at present she could not tell them what had happened to the Moon. She advised them to put straw, a pile of salt and a button on the sills of their doors to keep the dreadful Things at bay – and to return to her if they heard any news. They did this but it helped but little.

People gathered in groups and shared their fears and it happened that one night in the tavern a group of men were talking and they were overheard by a visitor from a village the other side of the Cars. He cried out – ‘Hey, I think I know where the Moon is’. He told them how he had been lost on the Cars, terrified that he would die, when suddenly there had been a few moments of clear light, enough for him to escape.

The group of men went back to the Wise Woman and this time she came back from her mirror and told them that they should do what they feared most of all, set out onto the bog in the darkness. They were to place a stone in their mouths and without speaking, seek a coffin, a cross and a candle. They set out, shaking with utter terror. They walked for a while, close together to avoid the grasping hands, the witches and the crawling boglins – and they came to what looked like a coffin half in and half out of water. Above it, on a scraggy bush, a fragment of cloth was stretched like a cross, and nearby was the lantern of a will o’ the wyke. One of the men had a stave, and they used it to lever up the large stone. It rose slowly and quite suddenly fell aside. For a moment, lying in the muddy water at their feet, there was the beautiful face of the Moon, shining up in glory and then she was back, up in the sky and shining down on them. There was a great howling – a shrieking and moaning and crying like you have never heard before as the Things shrunk back into the bog.

Since then the Moon has shone especially brightly over the fens in gratitude for the manner in which the men of the Cars rescued her.

Traditional story rewritten by Jenny Moon

## The Pickpocket’s Story

A man was wandering in a busy city street. He looked lazy and idle but if you were to watch him more closely, you would see that he was far from idle. He was watching people, and when they stopped to look in shop windows, he would come in close behind them and you might also see some quick movements of his hands, something slipped into his pocket and then later casually transferred to a battered shopping bag in his other hand, or to his back pocket. Having picked the pocket of one tourist, he would be on the look-out for another – with the idle look about him again. Peter the Picker – as the others knew him, was actually undoubtedly successful and a good looking guy – but truth to tell, he was a bit lonely. Women in whom he was interested wanted to know about how he could be so wealthy when he did not seem to do any kind of job.

One day he was doing the side street where people queue under tall trees, to go into a museum – it was not his usual territory. He was standing in the queue with his hand easing up a fat wallet in the back pocket of a substantial bottom when he felt something brush his backside. He whisked his hand round to his own back pocket and his own wallet was gone. A woman was walking briskly away from the queue, tucking something away into a handbag. He ran after her and looking her closely in the eye, he said

‘I think we are at the same game aren’t we? You’ve got my wallet in your bag’. She hesitated and then with a sly smile, opened her bag and handed him his wallet. There was an urgent pause and then they both burst into laughter.

The chatted for a bit about which streets they worked and the prize spots and other pickpocketing matters and went for a coffee. Well to cut a long story short, they liked each other; they met a few times and then decided to work together. They were a formidable team and the streets of that city were unsafe places for those with fat wallets or open handbags. And from being working partners, the relationship developed and they became lovers and as life happens, they decided to have a baby.

The baby was born, a beautiful boy with blond hair and chubby limbs and their friends teasingly called him Top Pocket Junior - or TPJ for short. However there was one unfortunate problem with TPJ. He was born with one of his arms crooked – his elbow was permanently bent. Do what the parents could, they were unable to release the arm. Being fairly wealthy, they went to private specialists and consultants but none of these visits seemed to change the position of the arm – it looked as if TPJ he would grow up with the crooked arm. Well

this was the situation until one day they were at a popular seaside, wheeling the baby along the seafront in his grand pushchair. In amongst the stalls and other slot machines and the sellers of candy floss, they passed a hypnotist's booth. The woman pickpocket said

'We have failed with everything else, let's see what hypnosis can do, so they wheeled the baby inside. There was a woman with long coiled black hair and a sparkling gown, seated in an ornate chair. They explained the problem and the woman nodded slowly.

'Yes, my Dears, my charts said you'd be in today', she said. 'Be seated'. Then she turned to the baby, spoke a few words and lifted from a stand a sparkling crystal pendulum and dangled it above the baby's head. It started to spin slowly and she talked in a low voice. For a while nothing happened, and then the crooked arm very slowly rose towards the dangling crystal and started to straighten out. Suddenly something fell and clattered gently on the floor. It was something that had been clasped in the crook of the baby's arm and it sparkled like a diamond – indeed, it was diamond that was set in gold. It was the midwife's engagement ring.

Rewritten by Jenny Moon

## How Peace of Mind was Found

Long ago, there was little village called Carik – a cluster of thatched stone huts by the side of a lake with blue hills rising beyond. The villagers came and went, growing their food, sewing and mending, making their tools and fishing on the lake. Children played happily in the shallows of the clear water and every day there were bright coloured stalls where traders sold their wares. Some of the traders were local, and some came from the villages in the hills.

Every so often, after the fishermen had unloaded their fish, there was a Gathering of the villagers and their Elders. Such things as the progress of the crops and the catches of fish and how to deal with naughty children were discussed. The Gatherings were usually harmonious. Sometimes there was singing - it was largely a happy village. However, in the late days of one particularly stormy summer, there were problems with the harvest and this seemed to lead to disputes among the traders. At the same time the fishermen found that their old boats were beginning to leak. The disputes and leaks could be repaired, but there was unease too. The mood of the Gathering was ill tempered and towards its end, one man stood up to address the Chief Elder:

'Mostly things are good in our village. The sun shines and we go about our days happily, but, lately we are troubled. We argue and grumble. How can we find our peace of mind again?'

There was silence - then the Elder stood:

'You are right, Tom, we are troubled. Our peace of mind is lost. We must consider how to find it again'.

Within the week, word went round that a delegation was to set out in search of peace of mind in the Great City beyond the hills. The Great City was a place of spires and turrets, gleaming marble and clever people. There, some peace of mind surely could be purchased and brought back for the village, and within the day a small group of villagers was assembled with donkeys to carry food and tents for the long journey. They carried the money that had been collected for the purchase of the peace of mind.

The group set out - at first along the lake side and then up the steep paths towards the pass over the hills. They traveled by day and camped and shared stories around the fire at night. After several days, they could see, sparkling in the far distance, the spires and turrets of the Great City and another day took them to the city walls and the bridge over a moat. They set up camp for the night and the next day entered the city. They had decided to spread out and explore. They were, after all, not too clear what peace of mind might look like. They would have to ask many people before they could find it. One walked in the bazaar, looking at the delight on the faces of the women as they admired the beauties of cloth. Another sought the highest turret – the one nearest to the gods of the blue sky, and another walked among people who relaxed and smoked pipes by the doors of the temple. Another walked among the pillars of the temple itself absorbing

the holiness. Soon word got round the city that men from the lakeside village had money to purchase peace of mind and the ears of the schemers and thieves pricked up. It was not long before a dishonest trader caught the arm of one villager.

‘Do I hear you are seeking to purchase peace of mind – because....er...’, he said, stroking his beard. ‘I can help you. By chance, I have some for sale – on special offer’.

The villager was delighted and agreed to meet the man the following day with the money. Over night, the trader found a cheap wooden box, painted it in bright colours and edged it with gilt. He picked up from the ground three pebbles and put them into a leather pouch, tied the pouch and put it into the box.

The excited villagers met the trader the next day and eagerly handed over their money. As the trader gave them the box, he said

‘There is one thing. You must not look inside the box until you arrive in your village - or the peace of mind within will be disturbed and lost’.

The villagers set off back to their village, singing with joy at their good fortune as they wound their way along the paths. At times, they talked about what might be in the box and how it might give them peace of mind. At times too there were thoughts in their minds that they might just have a little look inside before they reached the village because, after all, they had done all the work in seeking and purchasing the peace of mind. Surely they deserved some for themselves before they reached the village.

They spent the last night, a particularly dark night, by some ruins. During the night, three of them, at different times, silently crept from his mattress, picked up the box, opened it, untied the pouch and picked one of the pebbles for himself. Each thought ‘I will put it back when I have the peace of mind’ and in the dark, each imagined that he was slipping a magic gemstone into his pocket. The last man, of course, had a problem: if he took the pebble, there would be nothing left - but he had an idea. In the dust of the ruins there were many large black beetles scurrying about. He picked one up and slipped it into the bag and closed up the box.

When the men picked up the box the next day it felt different but they ascribed its different feel to the transforming qualities of the peace of mind within it and they felt even happier that they brought back something of great value.

Later that day, towards dusk, the group arrived at the village to great celebration of their success. The precious box was handed carefully to the Chief Elder who, in his fine silks, carried it ceremoniously on a silver tray to a large hut near to the water’s edge. The villagers filed in behind him and, in the half darkness and in reverend silence, the box was opened. Before there was much more than a crack open, the beetle shot out, straight up the dangling sleeves of the Chief Elder. Nobody, not even the Elder, saw what it was that had emerged from the box. Something had come out and disappeared and all that remained in the box was an old leather pouch. Amid consternation, the hut door was shut and people looked high and low for the peace of mind that had so mysteriously disappeared - and they became increasingly upset. In all the commotion, the beetle rapidly made off down the inside of the Chief Elder’s silks, to the floor and scuttled to the nearest crack in the flagstones. Of course people saw it, but that was no surprise, there were plenty around.

During that evening there was a great sadness in the village. They had acquired peace of mind, only to lose it before they could make use of it. However, during the night, the Chief Elder was touched with a rare moment of wisdom. As far as anyone knew, the lost peace of mind was still in the hut. The hut would become the Place of Peace. From then on, if a villager felt the need for peace of mind, he or she would go to the big hut and sit for a while in silence and without fail, he or she would emerge, feeling more at ease – more peaceful.

And that is how peace of mind was brought to the village of Carik. They say that in later years the hut was made into a church and people continued to seek peace of mind there – and still do today.

Jenny Moon

## The Gifts

Way back in time there was a girl born to a nobleman. She was the pride of her parents, though Eleanor was quite a tomboy. She loved to play with the boys, running in the fields or playing hide and seek in the woods. As Eleanor grew older, she became more and more beautiful and one by one the three brothers, who were her playmates, fell in love with her and when she was getting to the age of marriage it was not one but three proposals that she received. That made her sad because she loved all three brothers equally and did not want to choose just one of them and besides, she was not really ready to settle down. The parents met and earnestly discussed the situation and it was decided that the brothers should go on what we would call a gap year in order that they could grow up a bit and think whether they wanted still to marry Eleanor. While away, each would purchase a gift for her and on the basis of the gifts, she would choose which brother she would marry.

The boys departed from a crossroad some way from their home, and agreed to meet there in exactly two years. One went East, another North and the third went South. Each wandered far and wide, and each grew up into a fine young man, having many adventures on the way. One, in the East, helped to extract genies from discarded lamps. The brother in the North looked after two young children that he found wandering in the forests. Their names were Hansel and Gretel and he spent all his money on them. The other brother in the South helped a boy called Jack cut down an enormous beanstalk down which a sky giant threatened to descend. In one thing the brothers remained the same, however and that was that each remained determined to marry Eleanor on his return.

The time came for the boys to be thinking about their journey back – and the gifts that they would purchase. The first brother, in the East was wandering around a bazaar one day and came across some interesting carpets. They were woven with strange colours and had long silky tassels. He was shuffling through them to choose the best when the trader came up.

‘Ah yes’, he said, ‘You want to purchase a carpet but I must tell you that there is more to these than meets the eye’. He pulled one out. ‘Sit on it’, he said. The brother duly sat on the carpet on the floor. Then the man muttered a strange word and the brother felt the carpet shift and wobble beneath him and then, with a few slips and slides, it lifted on a gentle current of air, carrying the brother with it.

‘Think where you want to go and it will take you’, he said.

‘Let me down, said the boy, ‘and I will have this straight away, it is a perfect gift for my lady – indeed, now I am sure that I could say she is my ‘wife to be’”.

The second brother in the North decided that since he had so little money left he would purchase a beautiful flower at the market but before he got there, a peddler in the street offered him a healing lemon. It was fragrant and a yellow that reminded him of Eleanor’s hair. Eleanor, he said, is worthy of more than the gifts of the wealthy – which he assumed that his brothers would buy.

The third brother was also thinking for gifts and he mentioned this to Jack, whose gardening prowess had given rise to the beanstalk. Jack told him that he had just the thing and to wait and Jack returned with a mirror. It was ornate with a pretty painted border of red and yellow – but it was not quite the quality of gift that the brother had envisaged. Jack said

‘I can see that this is not quite what you thought you wanted – but this mirror will not disappoint you. Look into it and think of your second brother’. The third brother looked into the mirror and instead of seeing his own face, there was his brother, in the street, buying a lemon and talking about it as his gift for Eleanor. He thought of his other brother – and there he was walking along with a tassly bit of carpet under his arm.

‘Yes, the mirror will show you the person you think of, wherever that person is’, said Jack. And the brother said immediately that he would have the mirror. With his brothers carrying such poor gifts, he felt optimistic enough to begin to plan his wedding.

The brothers met at the cross roads after exactly two years. They put down their gifts in order to embrace each other warmly then each showed his gift and when it came to the mirror, they decided to try it out by looking for Eleanor in it. To their horror, the mirror showed Eleanor in a bed, with her parents about her. She looked deathly pale and a Priest leant over her giving the last rights and the image was beginning to fade. The brothers were desperate to get back. Within a few seconds all three of them leapt onto the carpet and hung onto each other as it wobbled and finally took off. In very little time they were outside the Manor and rushed in to find Eleanor. The brother with the lemon was ahead of the others, and as soon as he arrived, he pushed the priest aside and bit the lemon so that juice ran and he placed drops of juice on Eleanor's pale lips. Before the Priest struggled to his feet and gathered up his prayer book and cross, Eleanor's face was showing signs of colour and a weak smile broke out on her lips. As the other brothers entered the room, she sat up in her bed.

And you might ask which of the three brothers she married. Well she reasoned like this. But for the mirror, the brothers would not have known she was ill; but for the carpet they would not have reached her in time and but for the lemon she would not have lived. So that was not very helpful. However the brother with the carpet could go anywhere in the world he wanted, offering tours far and wide earning a good living. The second brother had his mirror and surely he would earn great esteem as a soothsayer all over the world. But the brother with the lemon only had a squeezed old bit of lemon – and she said therefore, she would marry him.

Rewritten by Jenny Moon

## Beauty and the Beast

There was a rich Merchant who lived with four daughters - but his wife had died. Three of the daughters spent most of their time pampering themselves and thinking of the rich men that they hoped to marry. The youngest daughter was named Beauty. When the father was not around, the others bullied her into doing their share of the household chores as well as her own.

One day there came a message that the Merchant's ship had come into port laden with silks and rich embroidery, gowns and jewellery from the East. The Merchant made ready to set off for the port, that was further away than usual - and, as usual, the older girls asked their father to bring them back fine gowns and jewels from the cargo before he sold it on. Noticing that Beauty said nothing, he asked her what she wanted and she told him only that she wanted his safe return and – perhaps a simple red rose. He smiled. He so loved the simple grace of this child.

He set off on horseback, full of good hopes, staying in grand inns with sumptuous meals and fine wines, anticipating his greater wealth but things did not go according to plan. As he traveled, pirates raided the port and the shipload of riches was taken off to sea again. The Merchant was now desperate. He had been relying on the money he would earn from the cargo, and now he had to sell his horse in order to have food to eat on the way home and so he set off for home on foot, seeking only the cheapest lodgings.

After some days, late on an evening when he had still not found suitable lodgings, he passed near a great mansion in deep woodland. He knocked at the kitchen door, hoping he would be able to sleep by the kitchen fire and to do an odd job to earn his breakfast. However, his knock pushed the door open - but all was quiet and no-one came. He knocked again and then crept in. The kitchen was dark and there was no fire in the grate. He called out. There was no reply and so he pushed on a further door that opened into a great hall. Still there was no-one - but a fire blazed in a large stone fireplace. Velvet chairs were drawn up the fire and the place was lit by candles that twinkled through a vast and sparkling chandelier. The wood panelled walls were hung with rich tapestry and hangings.

The Merchant walked over to the fire to rub his hands in the heat. Then, so tired, he sat for a moment - but fell fast asleep. He woke to find a meal spread on a low table near him with a place set for one. He called

again to no avail, then, desperately hungry, he set about the meal and immediately fell asleep again until the morning.

In the morning the tray had been cleared and the Merchant, now much refreshed, looked everywhere for someone to thank. He went out into the garden where the sun shone on bushes of beautiful roses. 'Beauty wanted a red rose - just one won't hurt', he thought, and he bent to pick one. At once there was a great roar. A terrifying figure – like a cross between man and beast came lolloping and galloping towards him and, gripping the Merchant's arm in a large claw it raged:

'You have taken hospitality and now ungratefully you deign to steal from my garden. You will pay.....'.

The Merchant was terrified. He had no money. The beast calmed a little, but still holding him it roughly growled.

'What I most want is a girl to look after my house and talk with me – maybe to marry. Send one in two weeks or I will seek you out and you will die. Go!'

The Merchant left, very shaken, but still holding the rose. Since everything else was so wrong for him, dying might not be such a bad choice, but he wanted first to see his daughters and a day or two later, he arrived home. The three older daughters came running up to him but fell back scowling when they saw that he was on foot and had no horse laden with presents. Beauty came running from the kitchen with her arm open wide to hug him. She was delighted with her rose, but quickly she noticed that her father was quiet and eventually she persuaded him to tell her the story. The older daughters hoped that their father would come into wealth again and argued that since the rose was for Beauty, she should go. The Merchant was prepared to die but Beauty would not have that and bravely prepared to depart.

Beauty found the mansion and, like her father, knocked and no-one was there. She entered and found the fire lit and food ready for her so she ate, and like her father, she slept. In the morning she was woken by a gruff, but not unfriendly voice that seemed to come from behind a curtain.

'You have come, brave girl – and you are beautiful as well. I do not want to frighten you so let us talk, but I will remain hidden for now'.

Over days, then months, Beauty settled into the mansion. In the day she tended the garden and walked in the forest, watching the birds and animals, and in the evening, she had long and fascinating conversations with the Beast. Earnestly she asked him to show himself but still he remained hidden until one day, when they had been happily laughing, the curtain shifted and shyly and slowly the ugly man-beast emerged. Beauty held back her shock and walked towards him and stroked his forehead, and from then on they spent their days together.

Time went on. The Beauty and the Beast lived well and in great happiness and one day the Beast asked Beauty to marry him - but she turned away sadly. She sorely missed her father - he must be very old and she so wanted to see him. The Beast agreed that she could go, for two weeks, but if she was any longer, then, he said, he would die of a broken heart. She agreed and departed the next day.

When she arrived home looking healthy and happy, in fine clothes, the father was overjoyed but the sisters were deeply jealous of her fortune. With so little money they had been unable to find the rich husbands they wanted. They did their best to detain Beauty, lying to her that their father had pined for her, spending his time in bed and that he would die if she left. However, a night after Beauty should have started the return journey, she dreamed that the Beast lay writhing in pain outside on the cold ground - and immediately, she got up and set off. She found him lying under the rose bush from which her father had picked the rose. He was indeed dying and in a weak voice he said that he had starved himself as he could not live without her. She knelt by his side and kissed him and whispered to him that she would marry him for his kindness and gentleness. Before her eyes, the ugliness of the beast dissolved and a fine and handsome prince lay before

her. A wicked witch, who had a score to settle with his parents, had cast a spell on him at birth that would only be lifted if a beautiful young girl agreed to marry him.

The wedding was joyous indeed. Beauty's father could not have been happier and he came to live in a cottage near the mansion. It was not long before the sisters met and married men who, like them, valued wealth above all else and they were sometimes happy. Beauty and her prince, however, led the happier lives with simple pleasures.

Traditional story, rewritten by Jenny Moon

## 7. Internet sites for stories

<http://www.surlalunefairytales.com> (accessed Feb 2010) – large number of stories, and resources

<http://www.pitara.com/talespin/folktales.asp> (accessed Feb 2010) - short stories

<http://www.folkloreandmyth.net/firms.com> (accessed Feb 2010) good variety of worldwide stories, some are long

<http://www.americanfolklore.net> (accessed Feb 2010) - a range of American stories rewritten in short format

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