

TM
AMERICAN
STORYTELLING
SERIES

A STORYTEL ENTERPRISES™ PRODUCTION

JACKSON
GILLMAN



HOW THE
WHALE GOT HIS
THROAT

GAYLE
ROSS



MOSQUITOES

MAGGI
PEIRCE



WHY THE DOG
HAS A
COLD, WET NOSE

VOLUME ONE

VIEWER'S GUIDE



The H. W. Wilson Company

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AMERICAN STORYTELLING SERIES

THE SERIES presents 21 colorful, compelling stories told by some of America's finest storytellers, gifted performers who make their tales come alive in the telling. Myths and legends, folk tales and fairy tales, literary classics and personal reminiscences, these stories from around the world will entertain and enrich audiences of all ages. Each Volume in the Series is introduced by popular storyteller David Holt.

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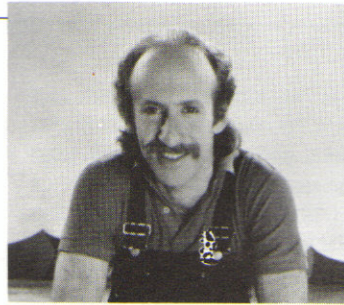
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ABOUT THE MUSIC FOR THE
AMERICAN STORYTELLING SERIES™

The background and theme music that accompanies the stories was composed especially for the *American Storytelling Series*.™ It is performed on a wide range of instruments, including those of a traditional orchestra; the bansuri, the bamboo flute of India; acoustic, electric, and steel-strip guitars; the synclavier, a computer music device; the drone box; the jaw harp; the hurdy-gurdy; ship's bells; the penny whistle; the concertina; the harmonium; and assorted percussion instruments.



JACKSON
GILLMAN



How the Whale
Got His Throat

About the Storyteller: Born in 1954, Jackson Gillman grew up in Middletown, New York, the son of a doctor and a nurse. His only early training in the arts was twelve years of piano lessons, and he remembers being terrified at his recitals. Of his current storytelling performances, however, Mr. Gillman observes in the *Maine Sunday Telegram*, "Now it's different. Once a character or a story is part of you, there's very little stage fright or butterflies. I think I'm still a shy person, but performing has helped me to be more outgoing. I really do feel very much myself on stage."

His theatrical career began unexpectedly, taking him far afield from his agricultural pursuits (Mr. Gillman was a licensed Maine arborist and has apple cidring and maple sugaring businesses). After graduating in 1978 with a degree in human ecology from the College of the Atlantic in Bar Harbor, Maine, he decided to do something completely different for the summer. He took a job as a singing waiter in a cabaret restaurant, the Deck House, in Bass Harbor, Maine, and found that he enjoyed performing. In subsequent summers he returned to the cabaret, where he took a leading role in the musical ensemble's choreography and direction and developed a solo act that became a nightly feature.

From 1978 until 1982, he spent his winters in Boston studying dance and movement, ranging from jazz to gymnastics. During this period he was also performing in cafes and coffeehouses throughout the city and expanding his skills as a storyteller.

Mr. Gillman now lives in Portland, Maine, where he is currently on the advisory theater panel for the

Maine Commission on the Arts and Humanities and is a member of the state's Touring Artists Program. He has performed before a wide range of audiences in nightclubs, churches and synagogues, prisons, schools, and festivals. In 1985 he was a featured storyteller at the National Storytelling Festival in Jonesborough, Tennessee. Combining mime, dance, song, and sign language in a highly personalized style, his programs range from "An Evening of Rudyard Kipling" to a diverse repertoire of original Maine humor.

About storytelling Mr. Gillman says, "There are several reasons to tell stories, the first of which is to bring life to the story itself (which is what a story lives for). Secondly, in telling the story, one's individuality is brought out as we add our own personal associations and creativity to the stories. And lastly, as listeners whom the story affects on any number of different levels, we are bound together in the universality of our psyches. Stories real or fictionalized are experiences—which both entertain and help us grow in ourselves (which is what we live for)."

About the Story: "How the Whale Got His Throat" is the first story in Rudyard Kipling's *Just So Stories*, which were created for the author's daughter Josephine. Kipling always began these stories with the words "O My Best Beloved."

Comments Mr. Gillman, "If I were to single out one catalyst in my becoming a storyteller, I would have to credit Rudyard Kipling and specifically his *Just So Stories*. 'How the Whale Got His Throat' is the first story I ever performed at the Deck House cabaret in Maine. As a specialty act, I started to present solo mime, drawing on previous study with master mime Tony Montanaro. With some pressure to come up with new mime routines for the nightly show, I hit upon the idea of adding movement to the recitation of my favorite Kipling tales.

"This, I reasoned, might be effective on nights when there were more children in the audience. It was immediately apparent that the adults loved the stories

too. And they relished them so much that I proceeded to offer up other *Just So* fare to keep the returning customers happy. By the end of the summer, my storytelling repertoire consisted entirely of these wonderful Kipling tales.

"It wasn't until another summer of working up other new stories every week or so that I realized that there was such a thing as a 'storyteller' and that I was one. And that, O My Best Beloved, is how this storyteller found his calling."

According to Mr. Gillman, the *Just So Stories* were very much designed to be read aloud. Kipling himself noted, "There is no line of my verse or prose which has not been mouthed till the tongue has made all smooth, and memory, after many recitals, has mechanically skipped the grosser superfluities."

"A good storyteller makes the stories his own," says Jackson Gillman. "People have to see you in among the characters. My favorite stories are the ones like Kipling's that have parts for characters and a narrator, so I can jump into the characters and then back out to contact the audience."

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GAYLE ROSS



Mosquitoes

About the Storyteller: Gayle Ross, a storyteller of Cherokee descent, was raised outside the small Texas town of Lewisville "in a sprawling country house with an assortment of horses, dogs, cats, raccoons, snakes, etc." She attributes her love of stories and storytelling to her grandmother, Anne Ross Piburn. "I grew up hearing my grandmother tell Cherokee tales and legends," Ms. Ross recalls, "especially about the time of the 'Trail of Tears' in 1838 when the Cherokees were forced from their homes in the Southeast and marched to Indian territory in what is now Oklahoma. My great-great-great-grandfather, John Ross, was principal chief of the Cherokee nation throughout that troubled time."

For two years Ms. Ross attended the University of Texas at Arlington, majoring in radio/television and theater. College "fell by the wayside," though, when she landed a job at a Dallas radio station. She worked in radio and television in Dallas and Austin for several years, but folklore, especially native legends, remained a much-loved hobby. In 1978 she and a friend, Elizabeth Ellis [see Volume 7, the *American Storytelling Series*TM], attended the National Storytelling Festival in Jonesborough, Tennessee. This trip, says Ms. Ross, "changed our lives. Hearing other storytellers for whom storytelling was not just a hobby but a way of life impressed us deeply. We shared some of our stories with some other tellers, and the support and encouragement we received convinced us that this was what we wanted to do ourselves."

As a storytelling duo called The Twelve Moons, she and Ms. Ellis have performed at schools, libraries,

festivals, and craft fairs around the country. In 1981 *Twelve Moons* was featured at the National Storytelling Festival, and in 1983 the two storytellers traveled to Canada to perform at folk festivals in Winnipeg and Vancouver. They continue to tell stories together several times a year, but now they also tell solo. Ms. Ross performs in and around San Antonio, where she lives with her husband and young son.

Gayle Ross says she considers storytelling "much more than just a profession, as I'm sure it is to many others who make it their way of life. In its highest forms, it is no less than a calling, a life's work. Throughout history, storytellers have sought to entertain, educate, and enlighten, preferably simultaneously. Stories have a life and a power of their own, and they work their magic in people's lives in many ways. If I had to pinpoint one specific goal in my storytelling, I would have to say that by telling the legends and myths of the native people of this continent, I am hoping to convey some of the sacred feeling, love, and respect which those people held for the land and its inhabitants."

About the Story: Ms. Ross got the idea for "Mosquitoes" from a friend and storyteller, Bruce "Utah" Phillips. "I had just told a story about hornets, and Bruce said he had heard a story in which a monster got burned up and the ashes turned into mosquitoes. That was all he could give me, but it was enough! The idea fascinated me, and I began to take what I knew of Cree stories and try to apply it to this premise. Anyone who has ever spent time in Minnesota or Manitoba and experienced those mosquitoes would know that a story like this would have to come from the North, and that the monster must be the legendary 'windigo,' the cannibal of the north woods. I had had the good fortune to become friends with Ron Evans, the remarkable Chippewa-Cree storyteller, and I had heard many windigo stories from him.

"So bit by bit, over quite some time, this story grew and came together into its present form. Every time I told it, something new would come out or a rough

edge would soften until I felt the story was more or less complete. Interestingly enough, when I finally had the chance to see Ron and tell it to him, he told me that the story I had come up with was, in fact, very much like the actual Cree version, except that the insects in that story are biting black flies."

For another story garnered from Native American legend, see Ron Evans's "Why the Leaves Change Color" in Volume 2, the *American Storytelling Series*.™

Recommended Sources:

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MAGGI PEIRCE



Why the Dog Has a
Cold, Wet Nose

About the Storyteller: Born in Northern Ireland in 1931, Maggi Peirce was raised in Belfast. From the age of fourteen until she was in her thirties, she held a variety of jobs there, in Amsterdam, and in Edinburgh. During these years she collected sayings, songs, and stories and was a member of the Folksong Society in both Belfast and Edinburgh. In 1959 she began performing as a folksinger. It was by chance in 1972 that she was asked to fill in for an absent storyteller at a festival in Massachusetts. The next year, now billed as a "singer and storyteller," she performed at the Festival of American Folk Life at the Smithsonian Institution.

Since then, drawing from her fund of Northern Irish material—stories, recitations, songs, and rhymes—she has appeared at many festivals, conferences, and symposia in the United States and Canada, including four National Storytelling Festivals in Jonesborough, Tennessee. Married, a mother of two, and a resident of Fairhaven, Massachusetts, she is the author of *Keep the Kettle Boiling*, *Storyteller's Guide*, and *Christmas Mince*. She has released two audiocassettes, *Maggi Peirce—Live* and *Cream of the Crop*.

"I am a carrier of the story," Ms. Peirce says. "I always keep the core of the story as it was, but I do like to embellish, fabricate, 'lay it on thick,' in whatever particular way the story strikes me at that particular telling. With my knowledge of sayings, dialect, and mountainy places, I add all of these to give credence to my tale. But I never change the core of the story; that would be sacrilege. I never 'learned' storytelling, but I imbibed it from my two huge clans,

the Walkers (my mother's family) and the Kerrs (Daddy's family), so therefore my facial expressions are those I saw on my Aunt Aileen's or Mammy's face, the pauses I learned from Uncle Jack, the country accent with almost glottal stops from Aunt Minnie McKibbin, my gestures from Daddy—there's hardly any of me there at all!

"I do not tell jolly stories all the time. Some of the stories I tell are hurtful or thoughtful or macabre, but I do like to throw in asides, and these usually lighten the soberest story.

"Most of all I look upon my way of storytelling as a gift. I am filled with the wonder of it and am grateful for it being passed on."

About the Story: "Why the Dog Has a Cold, Wet Nose" is a unique version of the story of Noah. It is what Maggi Peirce says was called a "throw-away story" in her home.

"It was told to me by my father, and I think also mentioned to me by Aunt Minnie McKibbin of Tyrrell, County Down. There was no flesh on the story and this is what I added.

"You will notice that the core of the story is that the dog sticks its nose into the side of the ark to keep everyone from drowning. That was the way I'd been told it when I was a little girl, but because I wanted to emphasize other points, I added the fact that Noah kept chasing the dog away. Adults are always chasing children away—'Can't you see I'm busy?', 'Don't annoy me now!', etc.—so I felt that Noah's attitude would strike a response in the listening child. I felt also having God remind Noah that 'dog is man's best friend' would encourage kindness in the listening child. I guess you could call me a moralist, but I feel strongly that this is a part of my Ulster background: you slip in little lessons with a sugarcoated pill; the children learn kindness and understanding, and they have a giggle along the way."

Ms. Peirce says she has heard this tale told only in Ireland and only came across it in a collection once.

She knows of no variants, but notes, "It is extremely reminiscent of the little Dutch boy who stuck his finger in the dyke and saved the townspeople. The Dutch say this is nothing but a fable, but what a nice one."

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STORYTELLER

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