

People

North Carolina FOLKTALES

In the Beginning

What if a tale had no exclamation points and no words in all capital letters? Think about a story with no interesting or colorful words like "gumption" or "fiddle-dee-dee." Imagine a giant saying, "Fe, fi, fo, fum," in a squeaky voice instead of bellowing "FE! FI! FO! FUM!"

When stories were first told, people couldn't read or write. They gathered around the fire or under a shady tree and told stories to each other. They said, "ONE. STEP. BLOODY. BONES." Eyes grew big! No one breathed! Stories entertained and captivated people. They explained how things came about, taught children how to behave, and related events from history. These stories include folktales, fairy tales, legends, and myths. Folktales are tales of and by folks—people.

Stories Change

Folktales were told for many years before they were written down. It is very hard to tell a story exactly the same way twice, so every time a storyteller tells a story, the story changes just a little. When someone else tells the story, it changes a little more. This is why there are many different versions of most stories. The European folktale "Jack in the Beanstalk" became "Jack and the Bean Tree" in the mountains of North Carolina. You will have to read "Jack and the Bean Tree" in the book *The Jack Tales* by Ray Hicks to see how the stories are different yet the same.

Gestures Add Meaning

Body language adds to a story's words. Body language consists of gestures. Using gestures



means moving parts of the body, especially the arms and hands. Body language is also using long or short pauses, speaking more softly or more loudly, making faces, speaking higher or lower, and changing the voice to suit the character talking in the story.

If you are telling someone about a fight, you don't whisper, "Bam." You almost shout the word. You also don't stand there all droopy as if your cat just died. Your eyes grow wide and your whole face lights up with excitement! Your back is straight, your arms are tense, and your legs are apart. You are ready for action! With a lot of meaning you shout, "BAM!" at the same time your right fist hits your left palm. That's body language.

Story History

Folktales of North Carolina arrived with the people who have lived there. Each group of people who came to live in North Carolina brought stories.

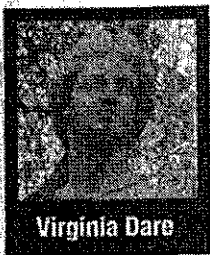
Native Americans

The first people to live in what is now North Carolina were the Native Americans. Native American and North Carolina websites list several large tribes who spoke languages called Algonquian, Iroquoian, or Siouan. A Creek tribe living in southern North Carolina spoke Muskogee Creek. Cherokee is an Iroquoian language. There are eight recognized Native American tribes living in North Carolina now. They speak mostly English.

Every tribe had at least one storyteller. They told the tales in their own languages. Many of these stories have been translated into English. Sometimes when folktales were translated they seemed simple. It is possible the translator, the person who changed the words to English, might not have understood the Native American words. Now the stories are usually told in English. When you read translated stories you have to imagine what it must have been like to listen to the native storyteller.

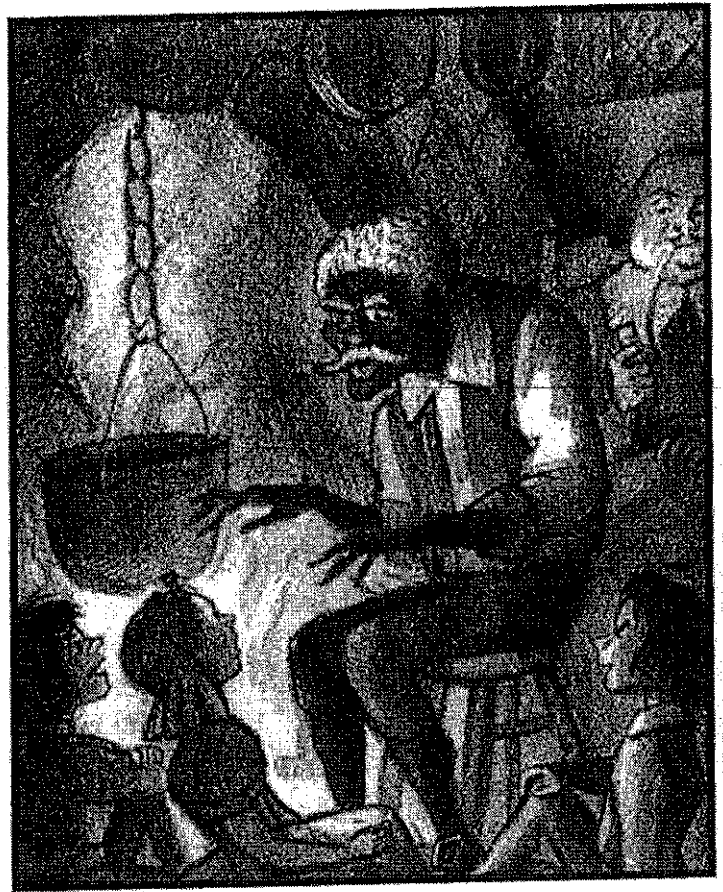
Early English Settlers

The first settlers in the North Carolina area were English men. Their settlements had hard times, especially in the winter. Many settlers got sick, starved, and died. The survivors returned to England. In 1587, 110 English settlers, including women and children, settled on Roanoke Island. For entertainment they brought their stories and games.



Virginia Dare

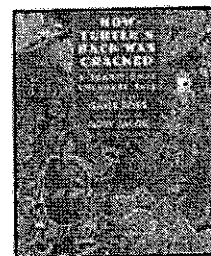
Virginia Dare was born there. She was the first baby born to English-speaking parents in the New World. When the settlement ran low on food, a ship went back to England for more. When the ship returned, the settlement had been abandoned. No one knows what happened to the people. Some believe the Algonquian-speaking Native American tribe, the Croatans, helped them during the hard winter and the settlers joined their tribe. Some think the Croatans and the English settlers are now the Lumbee tribe.



European Settlers

Europeans, mostly from England, Scotland, and Germany, came to settle in the New World. They brought their folktales when they arrived. Slaves from Africa also brought their folktales. Sometimes it is hard to say if a story is European American, Native American, or African-American as the storytellers passed the tales from one group to another. Trickster stories are usually Native American or African-American. Jack tales can be Scottish or African-American.

Kinds of Stories



Why Stories

Many Native American folktales involving trickery or magic by animals are "why" stories. A Cherokee story explains why the opossum's tail is as naked as a rat's tail. Another story, *How the Turtle's Back Was Cracked*, by Gayle Ross, explains why the shell of a turtle looks the way it does. In a Creek story called *The Great Ball Game*, by Joseph Bruchac, the animals and birds play an Indian game similar to lacrosse to see who is better, animals or birds. The story explains why birds fly south every winter and why bats come out at night.

Crinkles... because Learning makes Crinkles in my Brain!

Another "why" story, "The First Strawberries," is a Cherokee story about First Woman, First Man, and Sun. First Man became angry with First Woman, so she walked down the path through the forest. First Man wanted her to come back, but First Woman kept walking. When Sun saw that First Man was no longer angry and wanted First Woman to come back, Sun decided to help him.

Since Sun was magic, it could cause bushes of delicious blueberries to grow along First Woman's path so she would stop to pick them. She ignored the berries and kept walking. Sun made big, plump blackberries grow in a tangle of shrubs along her path. First Woman kept right on walking. Finally Sun created red, ripe strawberries growing on little short plants along the path. First Woman stopped. She ate a strawberry. It was so sweet! She ate more strawberries. As she ate strawberries she felt better. She picked some strawberries and took them back to First Man.

When you read different versions of this story you might come across the Cherokee word for strawberry, *ani*. You can find this story in a book of many stories, on a website, or as a book all by itself.



Trickster Stories

African-American slaves told trickster stories in the dialect the slaves used before the Civil War. A dialect is a language of a specific region or group. In some African-American stories you will read about a "croaker sack," a burlap bag into which they put frogs when they go frog hunting. You can figure out for yourself what a "scary-crow" is.

Trickster stories are about small animals surviving by being very clever. African-American storytellers used the rabbit as a character because a rabbit, just like the slaves, was helpless but intelligent and clever. The most familiar of these characters is Brer Rabbit. Brer Rabbit is also known as Bruh Rabbit, Buh Rabbit, and B'rabby, according to Virginia Hamilton, who wrote the story *Bruh Rabbit and the Tar Baby Girl* in the dialect of the time of slavery.

Some of these stories have many things in common with the Anansi stories of Africa. In one Anansi story, a fairy gets caught on a gum baby. In the Uncle Remus story by Joel Chandler Harris,

Brer Rabbit gets stuck on a tar baby. Virginia Hamilton's story of *Bruh Rabbit and the Tar Baby Girl* includes a scary-crow, a wolf, and peanuts. Read these stories to see how they are alike and yet very different.



Jack Tales

Jack tales came to the mountains of North Carolina with the Scotch-Irish, English, and German people, who settled there a long time ago. They are very much like the folktales from Germany, Scotland, England, and other countries of Europe.

Jack stories are about Jack, a boy of the Appalachians or Smoky Mountains who is clever and smart, but very often foolish. These folktales are told in North Carolina mountain dialect. You may see words like "caterwampus" (meaning out of kilter or crooked) and "doodly-squat" (meaning not even a tiny bit). In the mountains of North Carolina a "haint" is a ghost, "vittles" are food, and a "piney woods rooter" is a wild piglet.

These stories sometimes use grammar that some people consider incorrect. Just because the storyteller says, "Jack seen it coming," instead of "Jack saw it coming," doesn't mean the storyteller is not intelligent. The people who lived in the rugged mountains of North Carolina were isolated, which means they were far away from other people. This way of speaking was part of their dialect. Stories have color and life when they use these unique words and interesting expressions.

In the European story "The Brave Little Tailor," the tailor swats seven flies with one blow. In the Jack tale "The Lion and the Unicorn," Jack accidentally kills seven bluebottle flies with one whack of a stick he'd whittled into a butter paddle. He befriends a blacksmith who puts metal rivets into Jack's belt to say, "7 in 1 whack." This leads King Botchfit to believe Jack is strong and brave. The king hires Jack to slay a wild boar, a unicorn, and a lion. Jack is neither brave nor strong, so he has to get out of trouble with trickery. Gail E. Haley wrote this folktale the way she would tell it. She says the lion was tracking Jack, "Paddity paddity, walkie, stalker. Crash, bash, gnash." You can read this story in her book *Mountain Jack Tales*.

Fairy Tales

One mountain story about a girl is *Ashpet*, written by Joanne Compton. North Carolina mountain storytellers have changed Cinderella into *Ashpet*, a serving girl working for a widow with two daughters. The prince is the doctor's son. The ball is a church picnic. The fairy godmother is an old woman who lives up the hill. The doctor's son comes around to see if a red party shoe fits anyone. Joanne Compton wrote *Ashpet* using words she uses when she tells the story.

A Funny Tale

The Green Gourd: A North Carolina Story is very funny. An old woman picks a green gourd even

though "she knew for a fact—*Never pull a green gourd afore it's ripe, or it'll witch ye sure.*" The language is in dialect, so you'll find expressions like "commenced churnin' butter" and "comin' to frump me." A boy much like Jack tricks the green gourd and saves the day.

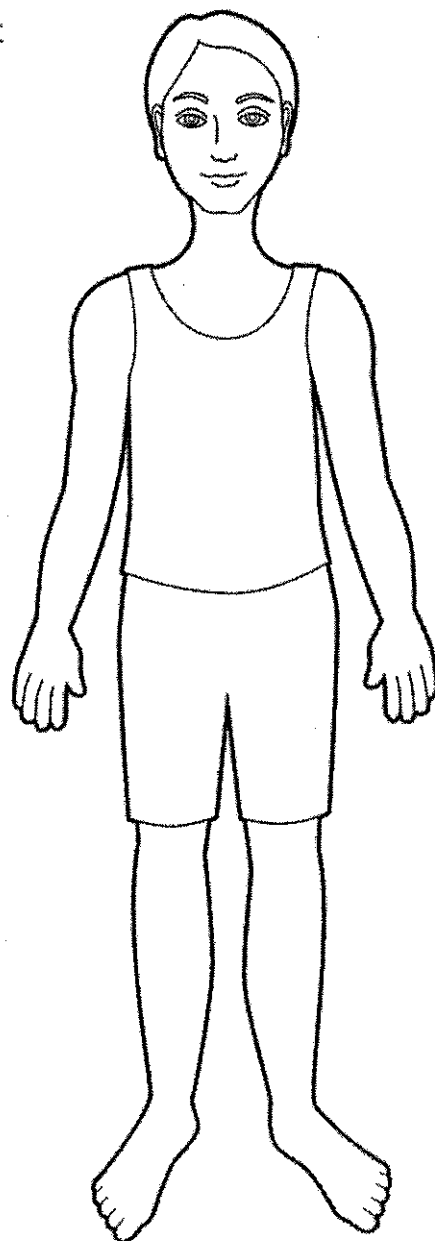
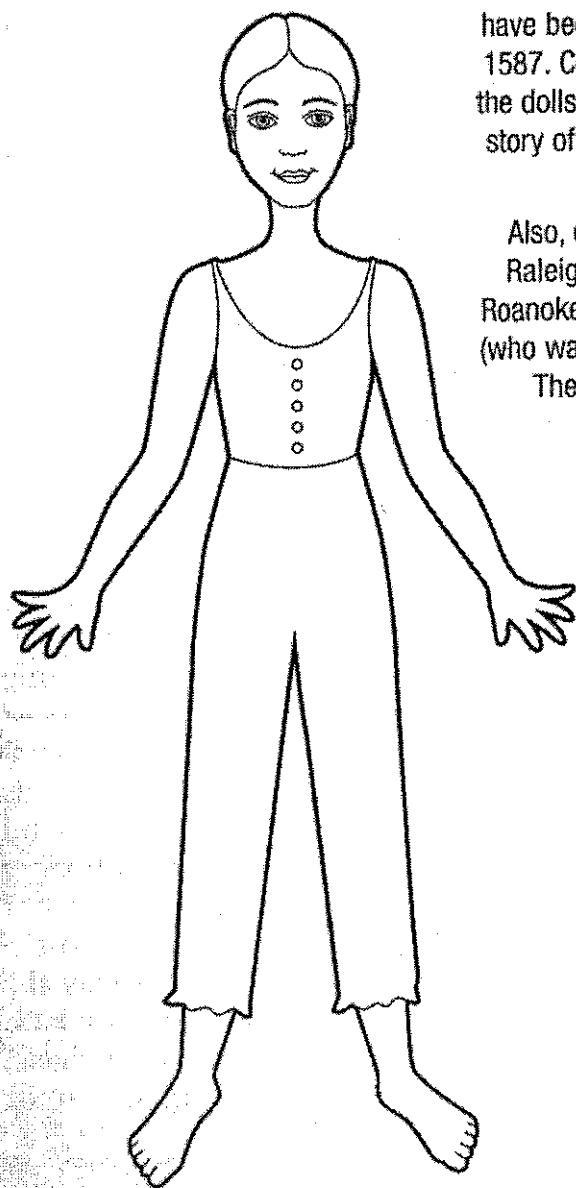
Just Imagine

When you read a folktale, imagine you are sitting on the front porch on a summer evening listening to stories. Or pretend you are sitting by a campfire and the storyteller is close by. Use your imagination to add the storyteller's body language and hear the dialect.

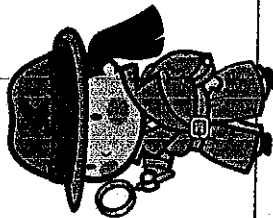
Roanoke Colony Settlers

Dress the paper dolls in clothes that might have been worn by the Roanoke settlers in 1587. Color the clothes in dark colors. Use the dolls to create your own settlement and story of what might have happened to the "lost colony."

Also, dress the paper dolls as Sir Walter Raleigh (the person who organized the Roanoke settlement) and Queen Elizabeth I (who was the head of England at the time). Their outfits can be more colorful.



Ditzee Detective here...and I need help. Your job is to analyze (big word, huh?) the article. Use your best detective skills....Good Luck Investigating!



| | | |
|--|---|---|
| <p>What is the main idea of this article?</p> | <p>Which organizational pattern or patterns did the author use?</p> <p>Cause/Effect Sequence Concept/Definition Compare/Contrast Fact/Opinion Chronology</p> <p>Problem/Solution Steps in a Process Question/Answer Description Other</p> | <p>Which text features did the author use?</p> <p>Bold print Larger font Colored font Italics Bullets Parentheses</p> <p>Headings Titles Numbers Underlined words All Caps Others? (explain)</p> |
| <p>Details that support the main idea....</p> | <p>Source <i>Crinkles</i> (Sept./Oct. 2009)</p> <p>Name of Article <i>North Carolina Folktales</i></p> <p>Author <i>?</i></p> | <p>Which graphics did the author use?</p> <p>Photographs Illustrations Diagrams Graphs Cartoons Maps Keys or legends</p> <p>Painting/Artwork Captions Word bubbles Text boxes Others? (explain) Tables</p> |
| <p>What is probably the purpose of this article?</p> | <p>Write a statement with which the author would probably agree.</p> | <p>Did the author's style include...?</p> <p>Humor Dialogue Quotes from experts Examples Figurative language Similes or metaphors</p> <p>Personification Alliteration Onomatopoeia Urgent language Others (explain)</p> |