



Storytellers: Folktales and Legends from the South (Brown Thrasher Books)

John Burrison

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Storytellers, a rich collection of more than 250 authentic folktales, confirms the oral tradition of the South. Rising out of a shared rural past, the legends and myths, the jests and trickster tales presented here are as diverse and inventive as the tellers themselves.

Edited and introduced by John A. Burrison and selected from more than twenty years of recorded interviews conducted in the lower Southeast by folklore students, *Storytellers* brings together for the first time in one book a broad variety of tales told in voices of African American, Anglo-Saxon, and Native American heritage. Describing the storytelling communities, the book re-creates the social settings—from a circle of tellers in a small town to three generations of a single family—where folktales circulate like living currency, changed and increased as they pass from person to person. The book visits individuals who give new voice to the oral tradition of their childhoods, telling again how the cricket trimmed the possum's tail, recasting an old tale of Master and John as "John Meets Lester Maddox," and spinning outrageous tall tales from out of the still mysterious frontier of the Okefenokee Swamp.

Ranging from "vulga" tales swapped by men and overheard by women to the adventures of Jack the Rogue, from the unbelievable stupidity of "fool Irishmen" to the horror of witches bounding through the darkened countryside, from instructive tales to illogical jests and puns, the oral record brought together in *Storytellers* speaks of the South—not one South but many, a region whose diversity is revealed and preserved in the telling of tales.

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