

**Milbre Burch:
Theatre of the Spoken Word
Presented by Kind Crone Productions**

**Study Guide
for K-12 grades**

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Section 1: Introduction

About the Performances

Ruth B. Brown, consultant in curriculum design for The Music Center Education Division in Los Angeles, wrote:

“Milbre introduces students to stories and poems from around the world in a program which includes folk tales, original stories and poetry. Students have an opportunity to guess the answers to riddles, and to participate as a group in telling familiar stories. Different styles are used in presenting stories and student may learn how an old story can be told in a rap version. Ms. Burch mentions the authors and names the books the stories are drawn from and encourages students to explore reading and telling stories for their own entertainment.”

About the Artist

Raised in a family of persuasive talkers and passionate readers, storyteller Milbre Burch has been called “one of the most important voices in the American storytelling revival.” She draws from a vast repertoire of folktales; literary stories and original monologues to create developmentally appropriate performances, workshops and residencies tailored to students from Pre-K to 12th grades.

Milbre has been an artist-in-residence since 1978, working for the local and state arts councils in Utah, North Carolina, South Carolina, Georgia, Rhode Island and California. Between 1988-1999, she toured or taught for the Lincoln Center Institute in New York; the Music Center on Tour, the Performing Tree, and the University of Phoenix in Los Angeles; the National Endowment for the Humanities’ National Conversations Project; Wasco State Prison and the California Rehabilitation Center at Norco, CA. She was twice awarded artist fellowships by the City of Pasadena Arts Division, and was the lead artist for several of its multi-artist community outreach programs with school age and senior populations. From 1995-1998 she conducted a three-year California Arts Council (CAC) residency at the Walden School in Pasadena. Her work in designing and implementing that residency has been featured as a national model at education conferences across the country. The residency marks its tenth year in 2005.

Her award-winning audio-recordings include a 2004 Storytelling World Award and a 2003 Film Advisory Board Award of Excellence for *Sop Doll and Other Tales of Mystery and Mayhem*; 2002 Parents’ Choice Classic Award for *The World is the Storyteller’s Village*; 2000 Parents’ Choice Classic Award for *Touch Magic...Pass It On! Jane Yolen Stories*; 2000 NAPPA Gold Award and a 2000 Parents’ Choice Approved Honor for *Treasure on the Tongue*; 2000 Storytelling

World Honor Award for *Mom's the Word: A Journey in Meter and Centimeters*; 1995 Parent's Choice Gold Award for *The Ready Heart*. She has twice been an INDIE Award Finalist.

A native of Georgia and a graduate of Duke University, Milbre has appeared six times at the National Storytelling Festival in Jonesborough, TN, and received a 1999 Circle of Excellence Award from the National Storytelling Network. A veteran of storytelling, theatre and spoken word festivals across the US and in 12 European cities, Burch lives with her husband, two daughters and a Border terrier under the huge blue sky of Columbia, Missouri. She is currently working (with Gay Ducey) on a book and CD entitled **Because I Said So: Stories of Moms and Kids**, a collection of global folktales for August House Publishers.

Artist's Mission Statement

I have been a professional performer for thirty years and a teaching artist for twenty-seven. In the course of those years, I have come to view the spoken word as the starting place not only for literacy but also for many of the interpersonal skills we need to survive in the world. Listening to the sound of the human voice, taking in the body language of the speaker, imagining the story along with the teller, and hearing the many life choices and consequences available through oral stories all help us to process and interpret language, sense the unspoken information that passes between human beings, appreciate our own cultural references and those of others, learn to co-create, sequence and predict outcomes in narrative, and muse on options for "authoring" our own life stories.

As a mid-career performing and teaching artist, though I enjoy giving assembly performances in schools, I am committed to building relationships and offering creative and educational experiences that deepen and last over time. A life-long learner myself, I have earned a reputation as a flexible, intuitive, clever, hard-working community-builder by nature, by training and by experience. I firmly believe that storytelling can touch, teach, entertain, inspire and motivate children and adults in school and community settings. I'd like the opportunity to serve the people in your community, and to further my own ongoing education as a teaching artist.

Instructional Objectives for In-School Performances

1. By listening to oral stories shared in a "spoken word chamber concert," students will be introduced to storytelling as a cultural, educational, and artistic tool of expression.
2. The focused listening experience alone enhances the students' oral comprehension skills, and examining the stories afterward in class increases both their sense of narrative structure and their appreciation of a multitude of cultural values.

3. Following exposure to a variety of types of stories and storytelling, students may reflect on and begin to apply what they have experienced in making and presenting stories through both oral and written exercises.

Curriculum Connections

In "Strong Arts, Strong Schools," his article for *Educational Leadership Magazine* (November, 1994), Charles Fowler writes:

We need every possible way to represent, interpret, and convey our world for a very simple but powerful reason: No one of these ways offers a full picture. Individually, mathematics, science and history convey only part of the reality of the world. Nor do the arts alone suffice...The arts complement the sciences because they nurture different modes of reasoning. The arts teach divergent rather than convergent thinking. They ask students to come up with different, rather than similar, solutions. Unlike many other subjects students study, the arts usually do not demand one correct response. In this way, the arts break through the true-false, name-this, memorize that confines of public education. This kind of reasoning is far more the case in the real world, where there are often many ways to do any one thing well. An effective work force needs both kinds of reasoning, not just the standardized answer.

On the question "why add storytelling to the language arts curriculum," the National Council of Teachers of English has said:

Listeners encounter both familiar and new language patterns through stories. They learn new words or new contexts for already familiar word. Those who regularly hear stories subconsciously acquire familiarity with narrative patterns and begin to predict upcoming events. Both beginning and experienced readers call on their understanding of patterns as they tackle unfamiliar texts. Then they re-create those patterns as both oral and written communications. Learners who regularly tell stories become aware of how an audience affects a telling, and they carry that awareness into their writing.

Show-Me Standards and Other Curricular Ties

Story-listening, storytelling and story-making activities have ties to curricular and instructional goals at every grade level, including those found in the Show-Me Standards of the Missouri Department of Elementary and Secondary Education, approved by the Missouri State Board of Education:

Communication Arts

Oral stories engage students through active listening, enhance language acquisition and comprehension and motivate reading, all of which stimulate literacy skills. Storytelling in the classroom can be a jumping off place for examining narrative structure, reflecting on Standard English and its variants, and for follow-up writing exercises.

Social Studies

Exposure to folk stories from one's own and other cultures immerses the listener in social studies, offering opportunities to examine change over time and the roles of individuals in family and community and to compare the lifestyles and beliefs of different groups. Looking at a folktale variants helps trace the movement of peoples around the globe through the stories they took with them. Anansi, the Spider Man, whose stories are popular throughout Africa and other cultures influenced by the African Diaspora, often show the trickster wrestling with issues of productivity and economics in ways that are entertaining and memorable.

Science and Mathematics

Traditional peoples have always had to be astute to their surroundings in order to survive. How and why stories were early attempts by so-called pre-literate people to explain the scientific and mathematical properties of the world around them. A selection of stories about "bugs" can introduce the characteristics of living organisms; traditional stories set in the grasslands of Africa or other biomes can begin an examination of ecosystems. Earth-based legends or personal stories about living through earthquakes, hurricanes, the dust bowl or other "natural disasters" can initiate a study of the earth's processes like plate movement, water flow, air flow, etc. Folktales and folklore contain information about traditional remedies, customs and practical knowledge that has translated into modern medicine, mathematics and physics.

Health and Physical Education

The human body is the primary instrument on which oral storytelling is "played." For that instrument to function properly, it must be properly fuelled by good hydration and nutritional habits. Emerging tellers learn quickly that their "staying power" as performers is based not only on memory and interpersonal skills, but also on physical stamina. These concepts, along with the conscious use of breathing and vocal techniques and the coordination of large and small muscle groups to act out or embellish the telling with gesture, provide opportunities to link the art form to health and physical education. A folktale in which the parts of the body argue over who is the most important to the smooth running of the whole (the traditional answer: the stomach) could be used to introduce the

relationship among human body systems. A workshop on stillness and movement in storytelling can enhance the study of principles of movement and physical fitness. Chicken Little's conviction that "the sky is falling" echoes today's concerns about the effect of mass media and technologies on safety and health.

Fine Arts

With its interweaving of rhyme, chant and song, rhythm and gesture, narrative and performance, oral storytelling resonates throughout the performing arts curriculum. Additionally, author and performer Donald Davis has said that the storyteller strives to move pictures from the inside of her own head into the head of the listener." Within the storytelling trance, the listener's "mind's eye" is fully engaged in creating visual imagery to accompany the told story. Those images can be translated into a drawing or a visual design as well as a descriptive writing experience afterward.

Expectations of Teachers and Students

The success of any performance or residency activity depends on the shared commitment of teachers, staff and visiting or resident artist. Once the school administration has decided to engage an artist within its community, it is vital that the teaching staff be enrolled in the idea that exposure to the art form is a positive and significant use of instructional time.

Human beings aren't born knowing how to be an audience for live performance. A storytelling concert is a living, breathing conversation between the teller and the listener because the oral story "takes place" in the group's imagination somewhere between the teller's mouth and the listener's ear. It is very helpful for teachers to encourage their students' best and most attentive behavior, and to model it for them as well. Therefore, the artist respectfully requests that teachers decline to grade papers or chat among themselves during an assembly program.

For a residency to reach its fullest potential, the teaching staff and teaching artist need early access to one another to plan the joint use of their class time. The presence and participation of the teacher during residency activities not only provide a necessary and efficient continuity to the classroom environment, but also offer the best insurance that storytelling ties to the curriculum will be on-going.

The appropriate etiquette during a storytelling session in the classroom may be slightly different from during other instructional time. Students are likely to lean forward toward the teller, to make active listening sounds, to let out a rush of enthusiastic response when the story is done. By communicating their expectations about classroom behavior to one another beforehand, the visiting artist and the teacher can discern the difference between a group of excited listeners and potential individual discipline problems that may arise. Obviously,

the teacher will know the group better than a classroom visitor and may anticipate certain reactions from some students. But interaction with the art form of storytelling may also draw out unexpected positive behaviors by individuals within the group. When teachers or staff members witness these unexpected responses, they can help to reflect the positive behaviors back to the students over the long-term even after the end of a residency or a performance.

Section 2: Programs

Pre- and Post-Show Exercises

Prior to a visit by Milbre Burch, classroom teachers may want to engage their students with the following questions and activities. Feel free to adapt any of the exercises, which could speak effectively to your students' interests and needs:

Pre-Show Activities for pre K-2nd Grades

1. Find out what your students' expectations of a storytelling performance are. Have they had any previous experience with storytelling? When? With whom?
2. The spoken word and the written word are two different "animals." Talk about the experience of reading silently to yourself, of reading aloud to a group, of listening collectively to a story being told. How are these experiences the same? How are they different?
3. Do you know the game "Gossip"? To play, you whisper a sentence or phrase from person to person and note at the end how the sentence or phrase has changed in the passing. This is similar to the process that a story in the oral tradition, a folktale, undergoes. Try this game in your classroom.

Pre-Show Activities for 3rd-5th Grades

1. Stories take many different forms. Folk tales are traditional oral stories, often populated with animals. Fairy tales weave fanciful worlds of magic and romance. Fables are short, cautionary stories. Myths describe the exploits of supernatural beings, heroes and heroines of long ago. Ballads are narrative poems, intended to be sung. Ask your librarian for examples of these and other story-forms (legends, tall tales, etc.) to share in class.
2. A contemporary writer whose fiction is very much based on her vast knowledge of stories in the oral tradition, Jane Yolen has been called the American Hans Christian Andersen. As a class, read the traditional fairytale of Sleeping Beauty and then Yolen's picture book Sleeping Ugly. Compare and contrast the two tales.

3. Make a search of the school and the local library for "updated" fairy tales written in recent years. Compare them to the traditional tales from which they sprang. Once you are familiar with both the original oral stories, and their modern-day contemporaries, try writing your own version of a folktale that you liked, giving it your own particular twist.

Pre-Show Activities for 6th-8th Grades

1. Before writing, memory was the library. How do you think the invention of an alphabet and written language affected this ancient art form? What about the printing press? Radio? Television? Movies? VCR's? Computers? CD-ROMs? DVD's?

2. When cultures come together, stories are often exchanged. Have you come across similar stories from countries a world apart? How do you account for this? Try collecting versions of "Cinderella" and mark on a world map all the places that variants of this, the world's most oft-told tale, can be found.

3. Folktales reveal much about the culture of the people who tell them. After reading a folktale, discuss what it tells about the times, the flora (plants) and fauna (animals) of the area, and the beliefs of the people who originally told it.

Pre-Show Activities for 9th-12th Grades

1. Through time and retelling, our own lives become the stuff of story. Many a well-known fairy tale has its beginnings in an individual writer's very good or very bad day. Think about something memorable in your own life and try wrapping it in the language of a fairy tale. Don't be surprised if your personal anecdote begins to take on a life of its own through repeated retellings.

2. Take a look at some literary fairy tales from centuries past and make your own guess as to what real-life experience may have inspired that particular tale. Role-play a press conference in your classroom so that you can interview Hans Christian Andersen, Charles Perrault or Marie de France to get the scoop behind the stories they wrote down.

3. Investigate the local storytelling resources in your area. The local library and children's bookstores are a good place to start your inquiry. Or contact the National Storytelling Network at 1-800-525-4514, and ask for information about storytellers, monthly story swap groups or festivals in your area. Can you plan a field trip to a swap group or festival, participate in a workshop, or visit local tellers to interview them about their work?

Following a visit by Milbre Burch, classroom teachers may want to engage their students with the following questions and activities. Some are more suitable for general discussion with a class, others more appropriate for small groups. Pick and choose the exercises that are best for your students, regardless of grade level listed below:

Post-Show Activities for Pre-K-2nd Grades

1. Which story really stuck in your mind? Why do you think that is? Try telling someone at home or at school about that story. Invite them to tell it to still another listener. That's how oral stories are spread.
2. Is there a picture in your mind from one of the stories that you would like to try to draw on paper? Do so. Did anyone else draw the same scene you did? How are your pictures alike? How are they different?
3. You may have pictures from several different stories represented in the class. Sort them according to story. Look at all the pictures from any one story and put the scenes in order as best you remember. If an important scene is missing, a volunteer can draw the needed picture. That way you will have a complete visual retelling of an individual tale.
4. Using your sequenced pictures as the "text," let each student tell about her or his part of the story. When each person tells only part of the tale, it is called a round robin.
5. Can you find any of the stories you heard in the school library so that you can revisit them in print?

Post-Show Activities for 3rd -5th Grade

1. Did any of the stories you heard remind you of another story you know? What was similar between the two stories? What was different?
2. Choose a story you heard to retell to a partner. If you can't remember it all, tell "about" the story; the heart of the story is what matters. What did you find out by this first rough telling?
3. Tell a second person "about" the story. What happens when you repeat the story more than once in quick succession?
4. With a partner or within a small group, make a list of the cast of characters in one of the stories you heard. Remember to include a "narrator" -- the one who

tells the story without necessarily being involved -- if there was one. Share your list with the whole class, compiling a final cast list from everyone's contribution.

5. Using your complete cast list, assign parts to class members and ask them to improvise for a few minutes before acting a scene from the story out. How is this "story theatre" experience different from a single speaker telling the story alone?

Post-Show Activities for 6th-8th Grades

1. What kind of stories appeal to you? Folk tales? Literary stories? "Pour quoi" or "How and Why" tales? Ghost stories? Myths? Legends? Tall tales? Urban legends? Personal stories? Fairy tales -- either fractured or traditional? What draws you to these kinds of stories? Of the tales you heard today, which ones fit into which of these categories?

2. Think of one of the stories the teller told today that you particularly liked. Use it as a jumping-off place for a story of your own, by writing either a sequel or a "pre-quel" to it. Trade first drafts with a partner and ask for feedback: What in your story interests or surprises or amuses or confuses your reader? You may learn new things about your story in talking about it.

3. Edit your sequel or "prequel" based on the feedback you've gotten. Next, try reading it aloud to a listener. Notice what engages that person in the spoken word version of your story. Does it work as well "on the tongue" as it does on the page? If not, what changes can you make to create an effective spoken word story?

4. When you are satisfied with your written stories, compile them in a print anthology. When you are satisfied with your spoken word versions, have a classroom reading or learn them by heart and share them out loud at a classroom tell-a-thon.

Post-Show Activities for 9th-12th Grades

1. Think about one of the stories you heard. Did it seem to take place in the past? What did the storyteller say to give the tale a place in time? Would it make a difference to the events of the story if they happened in a different epoch? Take a story set "long ago" and try retelling it during modern times. Consider what kind of changes you will have to make to bring that story forward in time.

2. Focus on another of the tales the storyteller told. What did you learn about the culture and/or the locale in which the story is set? Talk about how place and cultural perspective impact the story itself. For instance, does it matter that a particular story is set in the mountains? How would it be different if it were set in the desert? What are the cultural references important to the story? How does it change the tale if those references are removed?

3. Select still another story that you heard and look over its cast of characters. Choose a character whose point of view might give the story a whole new slant and try re-writing or retelling the story from “inside” that character. This form is called a character monologue. Share your monologues in small groups and explore what happens to the events of the story as each new character tells it.
4. Assemble a panel of your characters, all of whom want to “set the record straight.” After the audience has heard the various speakers, let the listeners ask questions to clear up any questions they may have about the credibility of each one.

Sample Performance Repertoire

Many of the stories, tales and poems Milbre Burch presents in her performances are selected or adapted from the following list of sources. Folktales, especially, appeal to a wide variety of ages and so several of these titles may be enjoyed beyond the grade levels listed below.

Pre-K-2nd Grade

Verna Aardema	Why Mosquitoes Buzz in People’s Ears
_____	Borreguita and Coyote
Eileen Colwell, Ed.	“Lazy Tok” from A Storyteller’s Choice
Richard Lewis, Ed.	Miracles – Poems by English-Speaking Children
_____	Journeys – Prose by English-Speaking Children
Rosemary Minard, Ed.	“Clever Grethel” from Womenfolk and Fairytales
Bethany Roberts	“The Wishing Star” from Waiting for Spring Stories
Marilyn Sachs	Fleet-Footed Florence
Shel Silverstein	“The Early Bird” from Where the Sidewalk Ends
Valerie Worth	All the Small Poems

3rd-5th Grade

Milbre Burch	“Little Burnt Face” from Ready to Tell Tales
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_____	“Pine Trees for Sale” from More Ready to Tell Tales
_____	“Tom Tit Tot” from Treasure on the Tongue (cassette)
Jan Carew	The Third Gift
Tomie de Paola	The Legend of the Bluebonnets
_____	The Legend of Old Befana
Elizabeth Ellis	“How Grandmother Spider Stitched the Earth and Sky Together” from Like Meat loves Salt (cassette)
Virginia Haviland, Ed.	“Indian Cinderella” and “The Stepchild that Was Treated Mighty Bad” from North American Legends
Margaret Read MacDonald	“The Elk and the Wren” from Look Back and See
_____	“The Magic Garden of the Poor” from Earth Care
_____	“Papa God and the Pintard Birds” and “The Little Snot-Faced Boy” from Celebrate the World
_____	“A Blind Man Catches a Bird,” “Two Goats on a Bridge” and “Strength,” from Peace Tales
Betty Miles	“Atalanta” from Free to Be...You and Me
Joan Lowery Nixon	If You Say So, Claude
Ethel Johnston Phelps	Tatterhood and Other Tales
Chris Van Allsburg	The Polar Express
Oscar Wilde	The Selfish Giant
Diane Wolkstein	“Bye Bye,” “One, My Darling, Come to Mama,” “The Sad Story of Owl,” “Sweet Misery” from The Magic Orange Tree
Jane Yolen	Sleeping Ugly

6th - 8th Grade

Sue Alexander

Nadia the Willful

Milbre Burch

“Djuha and the Figs” adapted from **Arab Folktales**

“Morgan and the Pot O’Brains” from **Best-Loved Stories Told at the National Storytelling Festival**

“Three Soldiers Returning Home” adapted from **Folktales from Afghanistan**

Ellen Pugh

More Tales from the Welsh Hills

Nancy Schimmel

“The Woodcutter’s Story” from **Plum Pudding** (cassette)

Isaac Bashevis Singer

“The Devil’s Trick” from **Stories for Children**

James Thurber

“The Little Girl and the Wolf” from **A Thurber Carnival**

Jane Yolen

The Boy Who Had Wings

“The King’s Dragon”

“The Lady and the Merman” from **Neptune Rising**

9th -12th Grade

Joan Aiken

“She was Afraid of Upstairs” from **A Touch of Chill**

Hans Christian Andersen

“The Wild Swans”

Milbre Burch

“A Girl and Her Stepmother” adapted from **The Wonderful Wooden Peacock Flying Machine**

“Abe Zaccheus” from **Saints and Other Sinners** (cassette)

“The Lady of Liberty” from **Mom’s the Word** (cassette)

“Meeting Martin” from **Saints and Other Sinners** (cassette)

_____	“Metamorphosis” from Metamorphosis and Dragonfield (cassette)
_____	“Mr. Fox” from Mama Gone (cassette)
_____	“The Rabbi Spoke in Stories” from Saints and Other Sinners (cassette)
_____	“Wilbern’s Story” from Saints and Other Sinners (cassette)
Helen Eustis	Mr. Death and the Redheaded Woman
Alan Garner	“The Salmon Cariatid” from A Bag Full of Moonshine
Rumer Godden	“The Mousewife” from A Storyteller’s Choice , edited by Eileen Colwell
Gwyn Jones	“Prince Lindworm” from Scandinavian Legends and Folk-Tales
Ethel Johnston Phelps	“Gawain and Lady Ragnell” from The Maid of the North
Ursula Sygne	“Odilia and Aldaric from Giant at the Ford and Other Legends of the Saints
James Thurber	“The Moth and the Star” from Fables for Our Time

Section 3: Evaluation Forms and Resources

Teacher Evaluation

Audience (grades): Date (please include year): Time:

1. Please give this presentation an overall score by circling one of the numbers below. Key: 1 (lowest) to 10 (highest):

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

2. Did this program sustain your students’ interest? Yes No Not Applicable

3. Was the material and length of the program appropriate for your grade? Yes No Not Applicable

4. Was the group size/grade split appropriate? Yes No Not Applicable

5. Did this performance/presentation capture your attention? Yes No Not Applicable

6. Did you find the Study Guide useful? Yes No Not Applicable

7. Did the experience generate further interest in the topic? Did the children express a desire to learn more about this subject/art form? Yes No Not Applicable

8. Did the performance/presentation improve the children's knowledge and/or perception of the art form/subject? Yes No Not Applicable

9. How could the presentation be improved?

10. General Comments:

Student Evaluation

School: _____ Date: _____ (please include year)

Performer: _____

Your Grade: _____ Your Teacher: _____

1. Please circle the number (or grade) that you would give this presentation:

Key: 1 (lowest) to 10 (highest):

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

F D D+ C C+ B B+ A A+

2. Did you enjoy the show?

Why? (Give some examples of things you enjoyed.)

3. Is there anything you didn't like about the show?

4. Did you and your classmates want to talk about the show afterwards?

5. Did you learn anything new about the subject?

6. Would you invite the presenter back again?

Resource Materials and Handouts

Recommended Videotape Series

American Storytelling Series (eight 30-minute videotapes) from Morgan Adams Publishing, Inc., 200 Old Palisade Road, Fort Lee, NJ 07024, Attn: Judy Garodnick (201) 461-9684. About \$200.00 for the series.

Tell Me a Story Series (three 60-minute and one 20-minute videotapes) from Hometown Entertainment, 401 Ash St., Suite #8, Mill Valley, CA 94941. Call toll free 1-800-786-7983 or fax (415) 388-6091. About \$50.00 for the series.

Stories From Around the World Series (twelve 30-minute videotapes) from Curriculum Associates, Inc., 5 Esquire Road, P.O./Box 2001, North Billerica, MA 01862-0901. Call toll free 1-800-225-0248 or fax toll free 1-800-366-1158. About \$700.00 for the series through Curriculum Associates, but the individual tellers (Olga Loya, Jackie Torrence, Johnny Moses and Eth-Noh-Tec) also sell the tapes for a reduced price (\$20-40 per tape, instead of \$60). Contact them through the National Storytelling Network at 1-800-525-4514.

Recommended Spanish/English Bilingual Books

The following books along with other pertinent titles are published by Children's Book Press (CBP). CBP publishes children's literature featuring both traditional and contemporary stories from minority and new immigrant cultures in America today. For a complimentary catalog, write Children's Book Press, 246 First St., Suite 101, San Francisco, CA 94105.

1. **The Harvest Birds/
Los pajaros de la cosecha** (1995)

story by Blanca Lopez de Mariscal

2. Uncle Nacho's Hat/

El sombrero de Tio Nacho (1989)

adapted by Harriet Rohmer

3. The Invisible Hunters

/Los cazadores Invisibles (1987)

adapted by Harriet Rohmer

4. The Woman Who Outshone the Sun/

La mujer que brillaba aun mas que el sol (1991)

story by Rosalma Zubizarreta, Harriet Rohmer, David Schechter

from a poem by Alejandro Cruz Martinez

Family Story Sharing: A Handout from Milbre Burch

Holiday breaks from school often offer families a chance to visit with relatives and friends whom they see all too rarely. If you are planning to see someone you love over the school break, plan to spend a little time sharing stories with him or her. There is no time like the present to start collecting and treasuring family stories, especially if you are lucky enough to have elders in your extended family unit. Here are a few ideas to help promote unstilted story sharing as a holiday tradition at your house.

1. Sharing stories and sharing food are perfect partners. Make a pot of hot chocolate and linger at the dinner table after a meal to talk about the best (or worst) holiday or family gathering each diner remembers.
2. Invite impending houseguests to bring along a few old photographs when they come to visit. Set aside an afternoon to sit together on the living room floor and look at the photos and talk about who's depicted and what kind of time they were having in the snapshot.
3. Play a game of "I remember when..." on the car or plane trip to visit old friends or relatives. Upon your return to your own neighborhood, elicit some "I remember when..." stories from your own youngsters.
4. When everyone is gathered, ask each one to tell what he or she knows about his or her name: who had that name first? who thought up a particular nickname? who knows the meaning of their names (available in Baby Books in bookstores and libraries everywhere.) Don't leave the kids out; they may have some interesting ideas -- accurate or not -- about the origin of their names.
5. If you have a cookie trade with family members or friends, encourage them to bring along the recipe and a "first time I ever..." food-related story to share. These may include the one about the first turkey you shared with your in-laws

(the one that fell on the floor on the way to the table); or the tale of the beans your brother got stuck up his nose (first trip to the emergency room); or the courting story in which your grandmother was audacious enough to buy a chocolate malted for your grandfather (first inkling of love).

6. Different people celebrate different holidays, sometimes even within the same family. Be sure to invite all the members of your gathering to contribute favorite recipes and dishes, and to talk about how they celebrate and why.

Your stories may be humorous or poignant so keep a hankie handy. We teach kids that it's okay to express feelings, yet we adults are often embarrassed to admit we are moved by something. Pass your stories on. No one else can.