



Please join us!

In-person: Friday-Saturday, April 12 and 13, 2024

Online viewing: available afterward for 30 days

Information for Teachers

What: The Georgia Mountain Storytelling Festival showcases the art of storytelling with an emphasis on both traditional and contemporary stories. Festival events include two days of outstanding storytelling performances; workshops for students and visitors to learn storytelling, speaking, and performance skills such as how to connect with audiences through humor and how to find your own voice as a speaker; special programming for children; and much more. Each year, the festival brings five nationally known, award-winning storytellers to north Georgia.

The 2024 festival will feature Michael Reno Harrell, an award-winning North Carolina singer-songwriter known for his “Appalachian grit and wit”; Megan Hicks, an internationally acclaimed storyteller at home in an impressive array of stories, from fairy tales to personal narratives; Nestor Gomez, an immigrant who came to the U.S. in the 1980s, learned English, and overcame a stutter before going on to win more than 75 Moth Story Slams; Anne Rutherford, an electric performer whose funny and touching stories, singing, and mandolin playing have enchanted audiences across the country; and Len Cabral, the great grandson of a Cape Verdean whaler whose African, Cape Verdean, and Caribbean folktales take listeners on unforgettable journeys.

When: Festival events will take place at The Ridges Resort on Friday, April 12-Saturday, April 13, from 9AM to 9PM. Recordings of storytelling sessions will also be available online for 30 days after the festival, so teachers will have time to work them into their lesson plans at their convenience. With a festival ticket, you and your class can attend and/or view as many of the events as you like! Your students will benefit from attending, whether you show them one session or many.

Why: The festival’s programming is designed to be both educational and fun. Through viewing performances, students can study theater, speech, history, sociology, art, music, literature, and more in an exciting and memorable way. In the past, teachers have had their students reflect on their festival visit through a variety of assignments, including:

- What did you learn about public speaking from watching the performers? Which one was the most effective speaker, and why?
- Create a work of art inspired by a story that you heard at the festival.
- How did one of the storytellers use sensory details (sight, sound, taste, touch, and smell) in his or her story? What did those details add?
- What message or lesson did you take away from one of the stories? Explain that message, and then analyze how the storyteller conveyed it.
- Write down a story that is important in your family, and then compare and contrast it with a family story told by one of the storytellers.
- Compare and contrast any two stories you heard at the festival.
- How did listening to one of the storytellers affect your understanding of his or her culture? What did you learn?

What's the cost, and how do I get into the festival online? The festival is free to teachers and their classes, so this is the most affordable educational opportunity you'll have all year. You don't need to register each of your students individually. Just sign up for a free teacher ticket, and let us know the number of students in your classes. Go to [2024 Georgia Mountain Storytelling Festival Tickets](#) to register. Prior to the festival, you'll be able to see a full schedule of events on our website, and if you sign up to access the festival online, you will be emailed a link to access the online event after the in-person event has concluded.

Where can I get more information on the Georgia Mountain Storytelling Festival?

Email info@gamountainstoryfest.org, call 828-389-2654, see our website www.gamountainstoryfest.org, or find us on Facebook under Georgia Mountain Storytelling Festival.

Where can I find additional storytelling resources online?

- [Learning Library - International Storytelling Center](#)
- [Circle of Stories . For Educators | PBS](#)
- <https://www.pbslearningmedia.org/resource/echo07.lan.stories.lporaltrad/storytelling-oral-traditions/>
- <https://timpfest.org/a-list-of-storytelling-resources-for-teachers-our-thanks-for-all-you-do/>
- [KWHs Educator Toolkit: The Power of Storytelling](#)
- [Freedom Stories - International Storytelling Center](#) (Unearthing the Black Heritage of Appalachia)
- <https://www.storytellingcenter.net/freedom-stories/resources/>
- [Georgia Standards of Excellence \(GSE\) | Georgia Public Broadcasting \(gpb.org\)](#)
- [Why Storytelling in the Classroom Matters | Edutopia](#)
- [Story Arts | Storytelling Activities & Lesson Ideas](#)

What are people saying about the festival?

"I've been thinking about how much your volunteers have worked to incorporate storytelling (and the storytelling festival!) into an informative multi-ethnic educational environment with a community outreach/storytelling-for-children component; And I'm also tickled to my toenails to be one of your past festival storytellers. I'd do it again anytime!" --Lyn Ford, storyteller and educator

"Being from outside the States, I learned a lot of Appalachian culture and traditions thanks to this festival." --student participant

"I was overwhelmed by the enthusiasm of your volunteers and the story listeners. People were open to all kinds of story; that was lovely. I also loved that you had breaks for people by offering other types of performances, i.e., music, historic character presentations, workshops, and puppetry. That is exceptional and unique for the Storytelling Festivals I have attended. Also, I loved the intimacy with the audience; good conversations abounded." --Sheila Arnold, storyteller and educator

"This kind of culture sharing needs to continue." --student participant

"This was a storytelling festival at its finest. The stories and story songs were authentic, moving, and beautifully told. They touched the audience in a deep way. And even though the audience came from different political, religious, and ethnic backgrounds, they were magically united during the festival due to the incredible power of story." --Geraldine Buckley, storyteller

"The talent was incredible! The storytellers and musicians I saw were engaged with the audience and I loved the pieces they shared, pieces of personal information, like a connection to an instrument, an artist, or another storyteller. I'm so grateful for the opportunity to have shared another festival. Thank you!" --community member

"Overall, I'd give it an A+. Well done." --teacher

Quick and Fun Storytelling Activities for Students

1. Where I'm From (individual)
Have students read or listen to George Ella Lyon's poem "Where I'm From" (<http://georgeellalyon.com/where.html>) and discuss the kinds of people/places/things included in the poem. Then ask them to brainstorm a list for their own "Where I'm From" poem and share it with the class.
2. Where I'm From (family)
Have students share a story about a member (or members) of their family or a story that is important to their family and explain what it shows about their identity.
3. Where I'm From (culture)
Have students research the region/country/group they are from and share a story from the culture of that place.
4. Nasty Food (description activity)
Have students describe a time when they tasted the worst thing they ever ate.
5. Platypus/Camel/Chicken (description activity)
Have students describe one of these animals without saying what it is or what it resembles.
6. Places We Go (description activity)
Have students describe an experience in a place without talking about anything you would see there (focusing instead of what you would hear, taste, smell, and feel). Here are some possibilities: going to the beach, getting a haircut, getting stuck in traffic, eating at a restaurant, visiting a zoo, shopping for groceries, and playing outside at recess. See if others can guess where they are and what is happening.
7. Create Your Own Sound Effects
Have students come up with ways to sound like the wind, an ocean, a seagull, a door being opened/slammed/locked, zooming cars and horns, someone coming closer, something cooking on a grill, a fishing line being cast, something falling, a bubble bursting, or other sounds that may be needed for stories.
8. Aesop's Fables
Have students adapt and tell one of Aesop's Fables in a way that engages the five senses. You can find many versions of these fables online. "The Crow and the Pitcher," "The Tortoise and the Hare," and "The Ant and the Grasshopper" work well.
9. What If?
Have students tell a story in response to a "what if" situation? The situations can be as common or unusual, as personal or as unrelated to your students' current situations, as you like. What if you got lost in a new place? What if a friend invited you to an activity you weren't sure you would enjoy? What if you decided to climb a mountain? What if the universe needed saving from a super villain, and only you could help?

Spotlight on Our 2024 Featured Tellers

Len Cabral is an internationally acclaimed storyteller who has been enchanting audiences with his storytelling performances at schools, libraries, museums, and festivals since 1976. Len is the great grandson of a Cape Verdean whaler whose grandparents immigrated to America from the islands off the coast of West Africa, and his strong Cape Verdean ancestry comes alive in his exuberant retelling of African, Cape Verdean, and Caribbean folktales as well as original stories and tales from around the world.



Len is a popular storyteller at theaters, schools, and festivals throughout the United States and has performed at festivals in Ireland, Belgium, Austria, Holland, and Canada. He is the recipient of the National Storytelling Network's 2001 Circle of Excellence Oracle Award.

The author of a children's book for young readers and a contributor to several folktale collections, Len also has five CD's and audio cassettes featuring a wide range of his favorite stories, several receiving NAPPA and Parents' Choice awards. For teachers, librarians, caregivers, and aspiring storytellers, *Len Cabral's Storytelling Book* is an excellent resource on how to begin telling stories, filled with 22 stories from around the world with telling and teaching guides, storytelling games, and an extensive bibliography.

"There is never a dull moment when Len Cabral is performing." -Amy, 6th grade

To learn more about Len Cabral, go to [Len Cabral Storyteller \(lencabral.com\)](http://lencabral.com).



Nestor "the boss" Gomez was born in Guatemala and traveled to Chicago undocumented in the mid 1980's. He told his first story at a Moth story slam to get over the stuttering that plagued his childhood; since then, he has won more than 80 Moth Slams. Nestor has performed and conducted storytelling workshops in multiple locations around the country.

Photo credit: Lifeline Theater

He also created his own storytelling show, *80 Minutes Around the World*, which features the stories of immigrants and refugees from different parts of the world, their descendants, and allies. *80 Minutes Around the World* is also available as a Podcast. Nestor has also published a collection of stories detailing his experiences driving for ride sharing titled *Your Driver Has Arrived*. To listen and subscribe to Nestor's podcast, to buy his book, and to learn more about him, visit his website: [Nestor \(the Boss\) Gomez \(nestorgomezstoryteller.com\)](http://nestorgomezstoryteller.com)

Nestor "the boss" Gomez nacio en Guatemala y viajo a Chicago sin documentos a mediados de los 80. Nestor conto su primer relato en un evento de la Moth para poder vencer la tartamudez que atormendot su niñez, desde entonces a ganado mas de 80 competencias de la Moth. Sus relatos han sido transmitidos en programas de radio a nivel nacional. Nestor es el creador, director y anfitrión de su propio programa de relatos 80 minutos alrededor del mundo en que se relatan las historias de Immigrantes y refugiados de diferentes partes del mundo, ademas de los relatos de sus descendientes y aliados con el fin de proveer un mayor entendimineto de las realidades, luchas y sueños de la experiencia migratoria. 80 minutos alrededor del mundo tambien esta disponible come Podcast.

Para escuchar y subscribirse al programa y para aprender aun mas sobre Nestor por favor de visitar la pagina de internet: [Nestor \(the Boss\) Gomez \(nestorgomezstoryteller.com\)](http://nestorgomezstoryteller.com).



Michael Reno Harrell is an award-winning songwriter, a published author, a nationally known storyteller, and a visual artist, and he's from the Southern Appalachian Mountains of North Carolina where all those things are as much a part of life as breathing. Michael's talents have taken him to forty-four states and several foreign countries over his over fifty plus year career. His work is based in life experiences that reflect the culture of his mountain roots, which go back eight generations, but Michael's stories, songs, and artworks reflect not only the Southern experience, but also America's story. His work, in whichever form it may take, all comes down to one thing...story. One could compare Michael's performances to his granddaddy's pocketknife: well-worn and familiar feeling, but razor sharp and with a point. His brand of entertainment appeals to a very diverse audience.

Michael's natural knack for storytelling in print, song, and spoken word has earned him praise from not only the music community but from the literary and storytelling worlds as well. He has had the honor of being a Featured Teller at the National Storytelling Festival and a Teller in Residence at the International Storytelling Center, as well as performing at major music events like MerleFest and the Walnut Valley Festival. Along with his performances, Michael often conducts workshops in songwriting and storytelling. His humor and wit and the emotional depth of his work keep his fan base growing and staying tuned in for whatever comes next.

"Michael mesmerized the 4th grade students with his songs and stories and inspired the writers and singers within them. His songs have a quality of truth and an insight into humanity that reminds me of Carl Sandburg's poetry."

-- Lynn White Savage - Librarian Coordinator, Bruce Drysdale School, Hendersonville, NC

To learn more, see: [Michael Reno Harrell. Singer, songwriter, storyteller \(michaelreno.com\)](http://michaelreno.com).

Megan Hicks dives heart-first into every story she tells—fairy tale, personal story, American history, parody, ghost and horror, humor. Her favorite story is whichever one she happens to be telling at the moment. She performs at festivals throughout North America; and her international storytelling credits include tours of libraries and bilingual schools in New Zealand, China, Colombia, Peru, Argentina, and Chile.

Her recordings include fractured fairy tales (*Groundhogs Meet Grimm*), historical fiction (*What was Civil About that War*), personal history (*High School on the Homefront*), fairy tales (*No Tricks. Just Magic*), and a collection of stories recorded live at the National Storytelling Festival (*Like You're Really There*).

With her husband (aptly named Jack), she co-produces a monthly series, Rose Valley Storytelling House Concerts, now in its eighth season.



"I like the way you made you feel like you were really there." —fourth-grade boy

"The program was wonderful... light, heavy, humorous, ...surprising, fulfilling, deeply affecting."
—a surprised linguistics professor.

"You made me happy in my brain!" —Amber Lyn, 3rd grade.

To learn more about Megan Hicks, see: [megan hicks \(meganhicks.com\)](http://meganhicks.com)



Anne Rutherford delights audiences nationwide with funny, touching performances that include tales of personal adventure, West Coast folklore, and prize-winning lies. Her singing and mandolin playing add to the fun, along with vivid vocal and physical characterizations such as her original Wild West alter-ego, the adventurous Clementine Ryder.

A featured teller at the National Storytelling Festival, Anne has also twice been a Teller in Residence at the International Storytelling Center. Rutherford's CDs *The Habit of Joy*, *3 Lies & Some Truth*, and *The Adventures of Clementine Ryder* are Storytelling World Award Winners. However, she is also five-time first place winner of the Northwest Folklife Liar's Contest—so don't believe everything she tells you.

Rutherford performs and leads workshops across the country, often with her husband, storyteller Norm Brecke. Besides telling in festivals, Anne enjoys working as a teaching artist in schools, telling at libraries, and devising new stories.

"Thank you for teaching us how to say something without getting embarrassed." –5th grade student

"Talk on the playground has been nothing but good." –teaching assistant, Lewis Elementary

To learn more, see: [Anne & Norm Storytellers \(anne-norm.com\)](http://anne-norm.com).

Check out the Georgia Mountain Storytelling Festival website for the event schedule and additional information.

www.gamountainstoryfest.org

If you would like to bring a group of students to the festival on Friday, April 12, please contact us ASAP so that we can arrange seating for your group. Friday seating is going fast. Thanks!

info@gamountainstoryfest.org