

PERFORMANCE GUIDE

ABOUT THE ARTIST



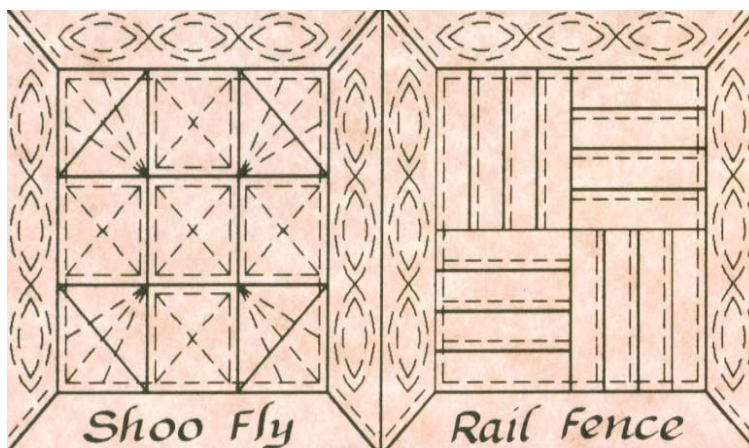
Michael "Badhair" Williams is from the North Carolina Mountains, the heart of Appalachia. He has been telling Appalachian folk tales on stage since 1975. He has performed for audiences from rural Appalachia to the Smithsonian Institute in Washington, D.C. and across the nation in school libraries and auditoriums.

Michael "Badhair" says about storytelling, "My goals are, first, to educate students, to give them an true picture of Appalachian culture. I try to dispel the stereotype of the 'Beverly Hillbillies' and 'Green Acres.' I hope that through exposure to my stories they may also discover more about their own cultural heritage. My second goal is to entertain the students. I believe these have been the goals of storytellers throughout history.

ABOUT THE PERFORMANCE

Michael "Badhair" performs a medley of Appalachian folk tales and songs from the tradition of "Jack and the Bean Stalk." Appalachian tales come from Scottish, Irish, Welsh, English, African and Native American cultures. These stories mixed together in the Appalachian mountains as the cultures intermingled together. Performances last approximately 45 - 55 minutes. There is student participation in some of the stories, especially the sets for K - 3. "Badhair" has different performances for each of the K-3, 4 - 6, 7 - 9 and 10 - 12.

Quilt Square Designs



APPALACHIAN STORYTELLING AND FOLKLORE BACKGROUND INFORMATION



Storytelling is a link to our past, one of our oldest art forms. Storytelling has been carried down, generation to generation, by word of mouth (called the ORAL TRADITION) since before recorded history. Throughout the centuries it has evolved, branched out, and become categorized, but its basic usage -- the exchange of information -- has remained unchanged. When radio and later television came along, some aspects of the oral tradition began to die out. The longer stories began to disappear, leaving the joke as a final reminder of a once vast oral tradition. Over the past ten years the longer stories have been revived by performing artists who tell stories in the traditional way. As a result of this and other factors, there has been a recent upswing of interest in cultural heritage and storytelling.

Folk tales, folk crafts and the Appalachian culture are reflections of the pioneer life of the mountains. Many Appalachian crafts and toys were the product of everyday needs and were created with what was available. For example, quilts weren't made only for show, but to bring beauty and warmth during long winter nights. Baskets were made to carry eggs, fruit, vegetables or even water. Toys were made from what was available. The hoops children used to roll everywhere for fun were from barrels or small wagon wheels.

Appalachian folk tales were and are told to teach children and adults how to cope with the difficulty of life with ingenuity, humor and wisdom. Life with no television and no radio created a situation where folk tales were a primary form of entertainment for making long winter nights cozier or hard jobs go faster.



The central Appalachian area was settled by the Native American, English, Scottish, Welsh, Irish and African cultures. People from these cultures worked together, lived in close proximity and developed social processes that allowed them to live together. Each culture brought their own cultural heritage to the Appalachian mountains. These cultures and their traditions mixed together in day-to-day life and as they did, the folk tales and folk ways they brought with them also meshed. Banjos and rhythms from Africa, for one example, became part of traditional Appalachian music.

Some people believe storytelling has literary merit. Some say that it is folk art or entertainment. Whichever you prefer, storytelling is a wonderful way to communicate. It is used daily by lawyers, preachers, and teachers. No other oral interpretation of events, whether fact or fiction, has served and continues to serve such a vital function in our world today.



STORYTELLING VOCABULARY

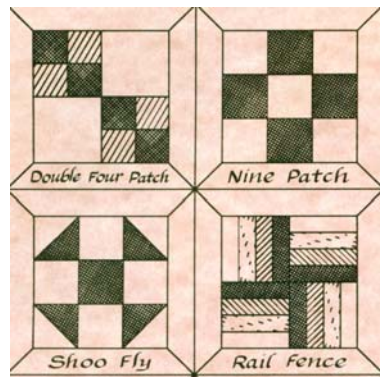
Storytelling - telling (talking) other people a story, whether true or false, old or new, that always has a beginning, a middle, and an end.

Tall Tales - funny American stories of exaggeration or impossible feats, told as truth.

Fairy Tale - made-up story set in an indeterminate place, with supernatural events and a sympathy for the underdog.

Legend - stories set in the past which deal with real places and people and which are regarded as true.

Jack Tales - favorite East Tennessee stories that are English in origin and always involve a boy named Jack.



PRE-PERFORMANCE ACTIVITIES



Read either out loud in class or at home folktales from various cultures.

Do the stories you have read from different cultures show any similarities?

Have you heard any similar stories from your parents, grandparents, friends, or others?

Can you tell any stories you have heard?

Stories from Europe, Africa, Asia, etc., have been incorporated in stories in the United States.

"Jack and the Bull," from Jack Tales by Richard Chase, is a Zulu tale still told in Africa.

"Wicked John," from Grandfather Tales by Richard Chase, has been told in Germany, Esto-

nia, Finland, Denmark, the British Isles, Norway, Flanders, Lapland, Russia, Latvia and France. The end of the story "Wicked John" is from an African American folk tale sometimes called "Big 16."

Find Appalachia on a map of the United States.

What is the land like (mountains, flat, lakes)?

Are there any big cities?

What kinds of jobs might people do there?

What is the weather like in Appalachia?

What kinds of animals might live there?

What would it have been like to have settled this land?

What kinds of stories might people tell about this land?

Cartoon and television shows often depict a character of a 'mountain man' or hillbilly.'

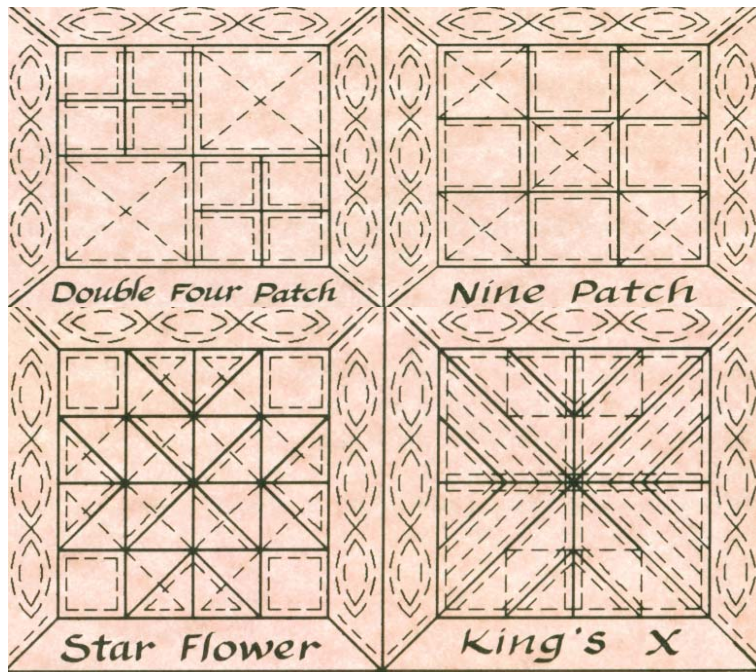
What is he like?

Do cartoons and TV always show a real version of people or events?

Does television portray people realistically?

Why or why not?

Play the "Gossip Game." Someone start a one sentence story whisper it from one student to another until it has gone full circle. This simulates passing stories from generation to generation as in the oral tradition. Most of the time, the story will change. Go back through the line of students and find the places where the story changed. Why did it change? Sometimes the story doesn't change. Why?



QUILT SQUARES BY GEORGIA BONESTEEL