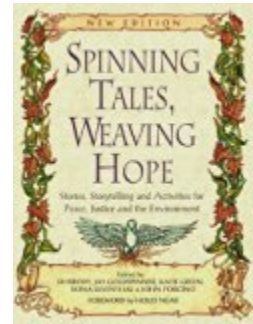


H-Net Reviews

in the Humanities & Social Sciences

Ed Brody, Jay Goldspinner, Katie Green, Rona Leventhal, John Porcino, eds. *Spinning Tales, Weaving Hope: Stories, Storytelling and Activities for Peace, Justice and the Environment*. Gabriola Island: New Society Publishers, 2002. x + 281 pp. \$24.95 (paper), ISBN 978-0-86571-447-2.

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Published on H-Nilas (December, 2003)



A Return to *Spinning Tales, Weaving Hope*

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The first edition of *Spinning Tales, Weaving Hope: Stories, Storytelling and Activities for Peace, Justice and the Environment* once was a “must-have” for any storyteller, and for many instructors. At the time there were few books available that offered a well-organized selection of stories and activities for teaching about the environment and human rights issues. And even though the years have seen a wealth of new material this second edition will again be a welcome addition to the bookshelves of instructors and new storytellers.

The book is divided into five sections: introduction, “Living with Ourselves,” “Living with Each Other: Working Together to Solve Problems,” “Living with Each Other: The Problems of Working Together,” and “Living with the Earth.” The introduction may well be one of the most valuable sections in the book, particularly for teachers, who sometimes lack confidence in their abilities to be storytellers. Jay Goldspinner’s “Telling Stories: Bringing a Tale to Life” is also a vital article, since it offers teachers solid information on how to be a storyteller. John Porcino’s “Stories the Teaching Tool: Using and Creating Follow-Up Activities” also has some helpful information.

But the real meat of *Spinning Tales, Weaving Hope* is the many stories it gathers together. The section on “Living With Ourselves” offers the following stories: “Chew Your Rock Candy,” by Doug Lipman; “Connor and the Leprechaun,” by Jay O’Callahan; “The Image Maker,”

by Katie Green; “Half-Boy,” by Michael Punzak; “The Snowflake Story”; and “The Artist’s Search,” by Peninnah Schram.

The second section, “Living with Each Other: Working Together to Solve Problems,” contains these stories: “The Stubborn Turnip,” by Beauty and the Beast Storytellers; “Amaterasu: The Sun Goddess,” by Jay Goldspinner; “Maushop and the Porpoises,” by Medicine Story; “The Archduke and the Wizards,” by Michael Parent; “The Difference between Heaven and Hell,” by John Porcino; “The Rainbow Child,” by Brother Blue; and “Nyangara,” by Peter Amidon.

“Living with Each Other: The Problems of Working Together” offers the following selection of stories: “Showdown at Pangaea Creek,” by Michael R. Evans; “The Gossip,” by Marcia Lane; “The Four Wise People,” by Gail Neary Herman; “The Sixth Day,” by Hanna Bandes Geshelin; “Why People Speak Many Languages,” by Joseph Bruchac; “The Doko,” by Barbara Lipke; “King Solomon and the Otter,” by Heather Forest; and “A Tree Planting in South Africa,” by Gavin Harrison.

“Living with the Earth” includes the following stories: “The Cricket Story,” by Rona Leventhal; “The Tailor,” by Nancy Schimmel; “What Now, Cloacina? !!” by Diane Edgcomb; “New Pots for Old,” by Papa Joe; “Gaura Devi Saves the Trees,” by David H. Albert; “Coyote and the Sleeping Monster,” by Cheryl Savageau; and “Talking without Words,” by Sarah Pirtle.

I found that many of the story choices and activities in *Spinning Tales, Weaving Hope* stood the test of time. However, now that I am rereading the book after all of these years, I found myself wishing that in some cases the authors had used the second edition as an opportunity to make some different story choices. The stories that I found least effective were two of the stories from the first edition, “The Archduke and the Wizard” by Michael Parent and “The Rainbow Child” by Brother Blue. I have no doubts that these fine performers could do beautiful renditions of their tales, but on paper the tales make better short stories than material for other tellers.

The two stories that most caught my eye were also original pieces; these were “What Now, Cloacina? !!” by Diane Edgecomb and “New Pots for Old” by Papa Joe. These two stories handled environmental issues with verve and wit, and would be fun stories to learn—both for the storyteller and for their audiences.

All of the stories were well-supported by their activities sections, which offer not only activities but also other source material; pronunciation guides were also offered when needed. The only activities section that I found outdated and inappropriate was the one for “The Stubborn Turnip” by the Beauty and the Beast Storytellers. While “The Stubborn Turnip” could have been used as an opportunity for a fine discussion on cooperation, the authors decided instead to tackle the issue of Russian stereotypes, since they were using a Russian version of the tale.

Overall *Spinning Tales, Weaving Hope* stands up to the test of time, though more for teachers and nature interpreters than for storytellers. In the intervening years the number of books for storytellers has blossomed, but *Spinning Tales, Weaving Hope* can still offer some quick reference material and is a nice addition to the library. Its true value, however, lies in offering solid storytelling “how-to’s,” stories, and class material for often-overworked instructors and interpreters.

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Citation: Cathy Mosely. Review of Brody, Ed; Goldspinner, Jay; Green, Katie; Leventhal, Rona; Porcino, John, eds., *Spinning Tales, Weaving Hope: Stories, Storytelling and Activities for Peace, Justice and the Environment*. H-Nilas, H-Net Reviews. December, 2003.

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