

Folklore

Definition of Folklore

Folklore is a collection of fictional stories about animals and people, of cultural myths, jokes, songs, tales, and even quotes. It is a description of culture, which has been passed down verbally from generation to generation, though many are now in written form. Folklore is also known as “folk literature,” or “oral traditions.”

Folklore depicts the way main characters manage their everyday life events, including conflicts or crises. Simply, folk literature is about individual experiences from a particular society. The study of folk tradition and knowledge is called folkloristics. Although some folklores depict universal truths, unfounded beliefs and superstitions are also basic elements of folklore tradition.

Types of Folklore

Following are the major forms of folklore:

- Folk song
- Folk tales
- Fairy tales
- Tall tales
- Ballads
- Folk dramas
- Proverbs, charms, and riddles
- Use of Folklore by Children

Examples of Folklore in Literature

Example #1: Rudyard Kipling

Rudyard Kipling was keenly interested in folklore, as he has written many English works based on folklore such as, *Rewards and Fairies* and *Puck of Pook's Hill*. His experiences in Indian environment have led him to create several works about Indian themes and tradition. Since Kipling has lived a great deal of life in Indian regions, he was much familiar with the Indian languages.

Kipling's popular work, *The Jungle Book*, consists of plenty of stories about traditional folktales. He also has Indian themes in his work, *Just So Stories*, in which he has given many characters recognizable names related to Indian languages. Helen Bannerman has also penned an Indian themed folktale, *Little Black Sambo*, during the same period.

Example #2: Patrick Henry

Patrick Henry was a politician, attorney and planter, who gained popularity as an orator when Americans were struggling for independence. He is well known for his speech in the House of Burgesses in 1775 in the church of Saint Joseph. The House was undecided about whether they need to mobilize and take military action against encroaching military forces of England. Henry gave his arguments in favor of American forces' mobilization. After forty-two years, William Wirt, Henry's first biographer, working from different oral histories and stories, reconstructed the sayings of Henry, outlining the folk traditions he inherited and passed on.

Example #3: A. K. Ramanujan

A. K. Ramanujan has written a lot about [context](#) sensitivity as a [theme](#) in many cultural essays, classical poetry, and Indian folklore. For example, in his works *Three Hundred Ramayanas*, and *Where Mirrors are Windows*, he talks about intertextual quality of written and oral Indian literature. His popular [essay](#), *Where Mirrors Are Windows: Toward an [Anthology](#) of Reflections*, and commentaries done on Indian folktales, including *Oral Tales from Twenty Indian Languages*, and *The Interior Landscape: Love Poems from a Classical Tamil Anthology*, present perfect examples of Indian folk literature studies.

Example #4: Alan Garner

Alan Garner is a renowned English novelist popular for writing [fantasy](#) tales and retellings of traditional English folk tales. His works are mainly rooted in history, landscape, and folklore of his native country Cheshire. One of such children's novels is, *The Weirdstone of Brisingamen: A Tale of Alderley*, which took a local [legend](#) from *The Wizard of the Edge*, and described landscapes and folklore of neighboring Alderley Edge, where Alan had grown up. The novel is set in Alderley Edge in Cheshire and Macclesfield. This is a very good example of the use of folktales in literature.

Function of Folklore

The main purpose of folklore is to convey a [moral](#) lesson and present useful information and everyday life lessons in an easy way for the common people to understand. Folk tales sugarcoat the lessons of hard life in order to give the [audience](#) pointers about how they should behave. It is one of the best mediums to pass on living culture or traditions to future generations.

Currently, many forms of folk literature have been transformed into books and manuscripts, which we see in the forms of novels, histories, dramas, stories, [lyric](#) poems, and sermons. Folk literature is, however, not merely a carrier of cultural values; rather, it is also an expression of self-reflection. It serves as a platform to hold high moral ground without any relevance to present day reality. Instead, writers use it as a commentary or [satire](#) on current political and social reality. In the modern academic world, folklores and folktales are studied to understand ancient literature and civilizations.