
Reviewed by Sylvia Grider

The Storyteller's Sourcebook is an excellent example of how the antiquated Aarne-Thompson system of folktale classification can be made accessible to a special interest group without formal, graduate-level training. As the author clearly states in the Preface, the book "is designed primarily as a finding tool for storytellers, and only secondarily as a reference tool for folklore scholars." The classification system has been modified accordingly to meet the needs of the non-folklorist. Nevertheless, the author continues, "these adaptations may be initially disturbing to the folklorist, but they serve to make this a more useful tool for its intended audience. Every effort has been made to create a tool that is folklorically accurate, yet particularly suited to the needs of school and public children's librarians and teachers." With these caveats firmly in mind, interested folklorists should appreciate this reference book for what it does have to offer rather than criticize it for what it lacks.

To quote from the publisher's news release, "this is the first reference tool to bring together from children's collections variants of each folktale, and to supply descriptions of them. Users of the book may now access folktale by title, subject, motif, and ethnic or geographic region, as well as locate variants of a tale." In other words, the purpose of this book is to enable teachers, librarians, and the like to locate specific examples or variants of folktales which are published in children's books on a particular theme or from a particular culture area. The Sourcebook is a straight reference work containing no descriptive narrative and expounding no theoretical bias or position regarding the overall appropriateness of the generic approach to oral tradition. Its 818 pages are divided into six major parts: Motif Index, Tale Title Index, Subject Index, Ethnic and Geographic Index,
Key Motifs for Aarne-Thompson Types 300-1199, and Bibliography of Collections and Single Editions Indexed. Five hundred and fifty-six folktale collections and 389 picture books are indexed, including all of the titles that appeared in the *Children’s Catalog*, 1961-1981. The author has omitted most epic, romance, and tall tale hero materials, collections devoted entirely to historical or supernatural legend, and modern or fabricated tales that are the invention of an author. The front matter contains, in addition to the Preface and a Bibliography of Works Consulted in the Preparation of the Sourcebook, a remarkably lucid explanation of How to Use This Book: Quick and Easy Guide to the Use of the Sourcebook. These instructions are a model of clarity and would be instructive to any beginning folklorist who is mystified by the pre-computer, non-digital vagaries of the Aarne-Thompson prototype.

Dr. MacDonald’s adroit adaptation of the tale-type index model for a non-folklorist audience is apparently the result of her graduate training in both folklore and library science at Indiana University. *The Storyteller’s Sourcebook* is based, in part, on her 1979 dissertation chaired by Dr. Richard Dorson, “An Analysis of Children's Folktale Collections.”


Reviewed by John H. McDowell

Blessed are the bibliographers! Their stalwart efforts in rounding up the recalcitrant references, in imposing order on the motley crew, and in making each reference accessible to the interested scholar, surely are deserving of our eternal gratitude. A bibliography like the present one, well-prepared, intelligently annotated, and fortuitously falling in the area of this reviewer’s research interests, is truly a gift of the gods.

Susan Niles has created a research tool that has much to offer novice and expert alike in the fields of South