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Barbara Johnstone combines theoretical and methodological awareness with detailed analysis to explore connections between stories, communities, and places. Her book evokes and rewards our consideration of narrative language in everyday life. The subtitle identifies the limits and focus of the book's subject matter, "Narratives from Middle America."

Johnstone chooses both personal experience stories and publicly produced stories from Fort Wayne, Indiana, to emphasize that telling stories depends on individual variation and social convention. Most studies on communication and narration in the United States focus on ethnic minorities and urban Northeasterners. The storytelling of the white, middle class residents of Fort Wayne shows how they construct and maintain personal roles and prevailing community standards. These standards create and reflect the ethos of America's heartland. Recognizing both the distinctive and commonly held narrative conventions and styles of these people contributes detailed information about "mainstream" Americans that many studies overlook.

Johnstone's corpus of stories comes from student collecting assignments and from newspapers and public records. The students tape recorded typical conversations at home, work, school, or recreation where storytelling took place. The transcribed personal experience stories are told in a variety of ways while also sharing conventions that Johnstone identifies. The public documents show how the influence of city spokespeople (reporters, civic leaders) recedes in stories about the flood of 1982, creating the appearance that the city itself tells the story. The story unites with place to create and reinforce a sense of community pride.

Johnstone's analysis of the traditional and emergent aspects of private and public storytelling should appeal to most folklorists. She also considers how newspapers, public documents and statements, novels, magazines, and advertising campaigns draw from and contribute to the conventional narrative processes that folklorists are familiar with studying. Johnstone combines theoretical understanding of sociolinguistics with references to important works in anthropology, folklore, and literary studies. She writes appealingly to a diverse audience.

The book offers straightforward organization and succinct explanation of theoretical and practical insights on storytelling, community, and place. An excellent text for introductory courses in American folklore or American
studies, the book also clearly introduces key concepts in sociolinguistics and narratology. Johnstone also discusses rhetorical implications of using everyday language to tell stories in a specific place for a certain community; writing instructors could use this to help students expand their compositional abilities.

Barbara Johnstone's *Stories, Community, and Place: Narratives from Middle America* explores the narrative conventions and inventions of white, middle class Americans—an underconsidered group in terms of much folkloristic study. The book expands the possibilities of folkloristic research and methodology by allowing "mainstream" subject matter and public documentation as sources. However, the book also offers to readers from other fields a folklorist's perspective on individual and social concerns in relation to traditional and innovative expressions. *Stories, Community, and Place* invites its readers, from any place and of many communities, to consider and appreciate the possibilities and continuities involved in storytelling.


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*Singing the Master* examines a ritual festive performance on the plantations in the South, rooted in deference, spectacle, and sub-Saharan aesthetics, which became an important site for and emblematizes the development of African American performance culture.

In the antebellum South, the neighborly harvest junket for corn, a Husking or Cornshucking, functioned importantly both in agriculture and community. Former slaves often recalled them as "good times." The spectacle and celebration of the cornshucking likewise inspired written anecdotes before and after the War Between the States.

The Southern cornshucking evolved from the English harvest home and reproduced its basic features. After the corn sat in a huge pile, the archetypal plantation cornshucking included shucking the corn—arranged often as a competition—vibrant antiphonal singing led by a "Captain," capturing and carrying the master to the house, a feast, and frequently an all night dance; consumption of whiskey, brandy, or beer familiarly accompanied the evening. The essence of the cornshucking, though, moved in its festival mien. During the shucking, its participants changed from