

## REVIEWS

Marshall, Bonnie C., trans. Van Deusen, Kira, ed. *Far North Tales: Stories of the Peoples of the Arctic Circle* (World Folklore Series). Santa Barbara, CA: Libraries Unlimited, 2011. Notes, Glossary, Bibliography, Index, 290pp. \$40 (cloth). ISBN 978-1-59158-761-3.

*Far North Tales: Stories from the Peoples of the Arctic Circle* is an impressive collection of folktales from the understudied but culturally vibrant Arctic region. The volume contains a wealth of information on the belief systems, daily life, and customs of many of the Arctic peoples, with many of these folktales appearing for the first time in English. The folktales themselves are broken up into seven parts, including Tales of Daily Life, Creation Stories and Myths, Tricksters and Fools, Legends and Pourquoi Tales, Stories about Animals and Marriages with Animals, Spirits, Shamans, and Shape Shifters, and Heroes and Heroines. This book is a great resource for teachers of folklore, folklorists interested in learning more about this region of the world, and general lovers of storytelling.

The Introduction is well-researched and gives the reader an extensive amount of detailed information about many of the peoples whose tales are included in this volume. However, its organization and length make it somewhat unwieldy when searching for particular facts on any given people. Despite the fact that it is split into sections, there is no table of contents to find specific topics, and its length (33 pages) compounds the difficulty. Since this material is essential to an understanding of the tales, perhaps dividing each section into its own chapter would help one more easily navigate through it. The general reader not thinking of the book as a course text and unaware of the nature of oral folktales might find the Introduction a bit tedious, owing to the identical wording and repetitive descriptions for each of the indigenous peoples. Footnotes instead of endnotes might also be useful since the 184 notes at the end of the book render searching for and locating the amplifying material somewhat laborious.

The tales themselves are expertly translated into English by Bonnie Marshall. It is helpful that specific terms such as *yaranga* [a type of Arctic dwelling] are always defined the first time they are mentioned in each tale to help the reader better understand them no matter in which order they are read. The tales are written in a style that lends itself to reading aloud, rendering them more authentic and making the book a great resource to storytellers and parents who want to expose their children to folktales of the world. While the phrasing may at times seem

a bit awkward to those not familiar with the oral folk tradition, the rhythm and repetition of the original is carefully and painstakingly preserved.

Although the organization of the tales into sections is well done, especially for use in a class, some of the tales would seem to be misplaced. "The Creation of Fog" seems to be a creation tale but is nevertheless found in the "Legends and Pourquoi Tales" section. Many individual tales could in fact be placed in multiple chapters. For example, nearly every tale in the book employs an animal as the main character, so it might be possible to locate all of them in the "Animals and People Marrying Animals" section. The organization is an excellent idea if a teacher wants the class to read an example of a legend or an animal tale, but if one wants to examine how legends are constructed among different peoples or the role a particular animal plays in the life of the Arctic people, it falls somewhat short.

These minor criticisms should not detract, however, from the great value of this volume; it would be a perfect textbook for a range of culture and folklore courses. If one were to use this book in a folklore class, the Introduction would be a good preparatory device for students reading these tales as it provides comprehensive background information on the people who created them. The labeling and organization of the individual tales would also be useful should an instructor plan to separate the folktales by specific ethnic groups, such as the Inuit, to examine how each interprets a specific genre. Photographs of various groups and artifacts plus a map of the entire Arctic add substantial value to the collection.

Overall, what is most notable about this book is its versatility. It can be used by Slavic folklorists as a reference, by teachers of folklore or culture, by parents, or the storyteller who wants fresh inspiration. All in all, it is an impressive volume which is splendidly researched by Bonnie Marshall and Karen Van Deusen. The effort they expended collecting, collating, and translating these tales is laudable, and the result is a wonderful addition to the library of anyone interested in folklore, culture, or storytelling.

Meghan Murphy-Lee  
University of Wisconsin – Milwaukee  
Milwaukee, WI  
USA