

## **WORLD ON A MAPLE LEAF:** Reviews

The USA's assertive proclamation *e pluribus unum* ('out of many, one') is met with a quite different response from its near neighbour Canada which has, at least since the 1970s, developed a 'mosaic' model of multiculturalism. This accords equal respect to different cultures rather than seeking to assimilate them all into a unity. Whether that means the dominance of European cultures has been undermined is open to question, but Canada's policy offers a hopeful approach to the ways in which many cultures can and do co-exist. This collection of 25 folk tales from across the world is apt evidence of the wide range of communities that help to make up modern Canada which, like the US, is essentially a nation of immigrants. It includes stories originating from South and East Asia, Africa, the Middle East, Western and Eastern Europe, Scandinavia, as well central and First Nation American communities. These stories are not about travelling to or finding a new home in Canada but rather a collection of folk tales that express something about the culture in which they originated or have been told over many generations. Nonetheless, at their best, these are universal tales that will prompt signs of recognition from many communities - if not in their specifics, than in the moral they relate or aim to teach. So for all their diverse origins, these tales also suggest common themes across cultures.

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This is a collection aimed at children; it is already being used in some schools in Canada. But it can be also be read with pleasure by adults; like the best fairy tales and folk literature it is the kind of book that parents and grandparents will enjoy reading along with children. The short stories make it easy to dip in and out of this book. I tried some of these stories out on my own son who particularly enjoyed 'Frieda's flute', an engaging Jewish folk tale of a young girl who could not learn to read but is many ways more articulate with her musical instrument. The field of children's literature has expanded considerably in recent decades, but this collection is still a distinctive and valuable addition to it. It can be read and used far beyond Canada and it is to be hoped that it can be distributed and made available to a wider audience than the country in and for which it was produced.

- An American Journal

<http://www.awaazmagazine.com/index.php/component/k2/item/371-world-on-a-maple-leaf-a-treasury-of-canadian-multicultural-folktales>

“What a wonderful, first class collection of stories!”

“The book provides insight into a variety of cultures through the powerful medium of ‘story’ and, thus, will help us all embrace our own wonderfully diverse and culturally rich Edmonton community in a deeper way”.

“I believe the sharing of these stories will open up new conversations about cultural traditions and beliefs while also allowing us to reflect on our similarities and open up our hearts to welcome and respect each other in new ways”

“The title of this book immediately awakens in the mind of the reader the extraordinary achievements of Canada in having the ‘world’ living here in peace and harmony. This output of UCCA’s project is the catalyst that might awaken & inspire more interaction among those who have left behind war-torn countries and are living here in peace. It is indeed a treasury of Canadian Multicultural Folktales & the use of the word treasury further conveys the treasure that exists here as the only place on earth where this exercise is being carried on successfully. This book allows the reader to begin to explore other tales from the countries that are in this work and acquire a greater understanding of the human condition, aspirations and suffering.”

“The need to constantly promote multiculturalism remains central to human beings understanding of each other and these stories in this book can give insight into how to explore our differences and similarities. It is an effective tool to use in promoting multiculturalism because all of the stories present the reader with different aspects of human behaviour. In the story Anansi & the Sky-God we see the importance of having a goal and persevering until one is successful; in the story The Figs and the Golden Whistle the main character succeeds because he stays true to his ideals of kindness & generosity. Many immigrants are tested with all that they must overcome to succeed in a new land and these stories provide a sign-post to remind them that if others have succeeded so can they if they only persevere.”

“My arrival in Canada in the city of Toronto exposed me to many different cultures and I had to change in order to adjust to my new environment. I learned to understand that there are many ways of doing things, eating the same foods but cooked in a different way. I learned to eat foods from the Middle East, India, Japan, Korea, Ethiopia and many more countries. A love of stories leads me to read stories from many cultures and each story became an opening into a different culture. The story of Hanuman the monkey God led me to explore much of the Indian culture which culminated in a visit to India and an enduring love of the music and way of life of the Indian people. Last week I saw Satyagraha, the opera dedicated to the life of M. Gandhi.”

"I feel like multiculturalism is very important to promote in today's global world. The book demonstrates the transmission of stories for the next generation of Canadians."

"I think people should know fairy tales of different nations to understand the soul of the nation. We can do whatever we want in our adult life, but the stories, that our parents and grandparents told us when we were little children, remained with us forever and form the very base of our character and belief. All the stories in the book are different, but they tell about the same: about friendship, help, love, work, community, about good and evil. All the countries can be different, but the base of whole humanity is the same."

"This is an important collection and future volumes would be wonderful. I just received a message from a Greek colleague who read my folktales published in the book. She was excited by the project and commented that there are not enough people writing folktales nowadays. I would agree. The writing down of folktales can be a useful tool for preserving and sharing cultural stories."

"Readers can learn about a variety of cultures through the stories and make connections to their own. Entertainment, including literature, is an important part of opening up minds to the world around them."

"Stories are always effective teaching tools, and folk tales are the grassroots literature of any nation or ethnic group. They help to illustrate how people can be different and alike at the same time."

"I hope that this might be a choice tool to expose and include Canada's multiculturalism."

"I think the book is stellar and will attract the attention of people of many generations and cultures."

"World on a Maple Leaf" is a valuable resource for anyone working with children. Not only is it a source of enjoyment for all who read it, it is a tool for enhancing a child's interest in reading/hearing stories from a wide range of literary heritage."

"Because children accept fantasy more readily than adults, it gives them a sense of hope in a world that is full of cynicism and despair and helps them to look forward to the future. Fantasy from other lands evokes a specialness that moves beyond the cartoon/one dimensional, often stereotyped characters they are exposed to on television."

"Multicultural stories also help children develop insight into the behaviour of others, customs that are different and values that are shared. It is this insight that promotes the understanding and comprehension of others who are different."

"Would a teacher's resource guide with teaching plans be useful? What about the inclusion of some cultural craft ideas related to the story, i.e. a recipe for soup could be included after "The Soup Bone," and directions on how to make a flute out of paper could be included after "The Figs and the Golden Whistle."

"I am sure many of our students and staff will enjoy the book for many years to come."

"It is a great addition to our grade four: Alberta, and grade five: Canada, curriculum topic. It is much appreciated."

"The book could be distributed as part of a professional development program in elementary schools. Not as a handout but as a resource with guidelines as to how it could be used, such as follow-up activities."

"Perhaps groups of authors, or individual authors, could prepare folktale writing or telling workshops to take to schools and libraries and then present the book to the institution afterwards."

"I believe that this book could be of great use in Adult Literacy classes and in high schools. Many adults enter Canada with their rigid ideas & to actually see the opposite of our fixed beliefs working is a life-changing experience. Storytelling & sharing of personal tales can help immigrants to see the similarities that are in stories to their own stories."

"Foreign born Canadians should take a copy of this collection to their home countries to show to their people what a great country we Canadians live in where everyone finds home and where differences are celebrated. Copies of this book should be sold in all the source countries of newcomers, which will be all over the world."

"Stories can lead us into showing empathy for the struggles of other groups; we are all striving on planet earth to find joy and a sense of fulfillment. Multiculturalism is the only hope for our planet, as **Martin Luther King Jr.** has said: **'Learn to live as brothers or perish as fools.'**"