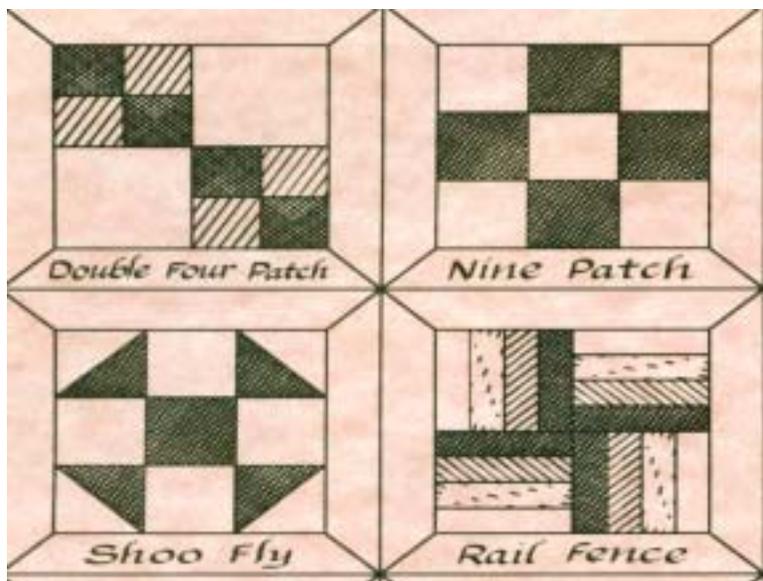


**STUDY GUIDE FOR  
PERFORMANCES  
PIONEER APPALACHIAN  
FOLKTALES**

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### **ABOUT THE ARTIST**

#### **MICHAEL "BADHAIR" WILLIAMS**

Storytelling is as old as the Appalachian hills. Children take to it like Jack takes to the bean stalk, but it's an adult tradition, a product of long sessions around the kitchen table or in front porch rockers.

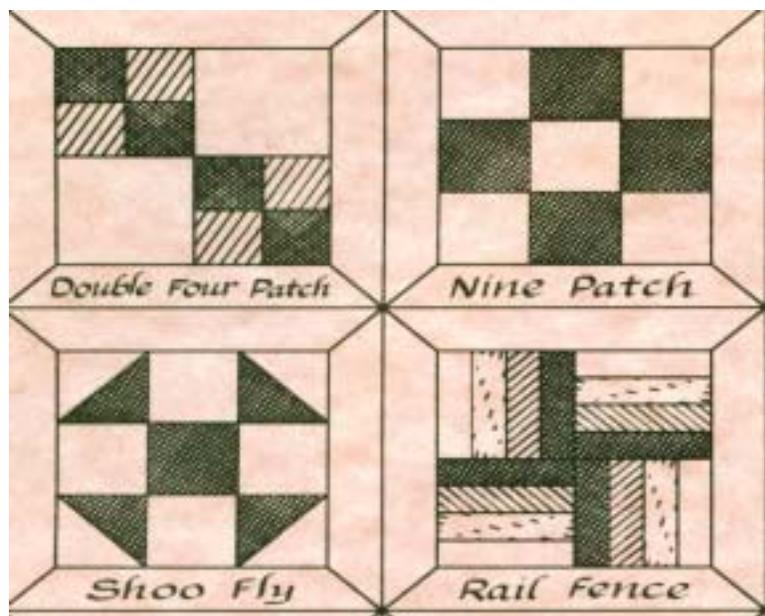
Michael "Badhair" is from the North Carolina Mountains, the heart of Appalachia. He has been telling Appalachian folk tales on stage since 1975. Television, radio and rock videos have pushed storytelling into the corners with the cobwebs. "Badhair" sweeps it back out, pulling from his Appalachian heritage the tales that delighted our grandparents, and now delight our children and ourselves.

Michael "Badhair" Williams has been telling stories in schools and at festivals across the country for almost two decades. He has delighted audiences from rural Appalachia to the Smithsonian Institute in Washington, D.C. and across the nation in school libraries and auditoriums.

Michael "Badhair" says about storytelling, "My goals are, first, to educate students, to give them an idea of what Appalachian culture is. I try to dispel the stereotype of the 'Beverly Hillbillies' and 'Green Acres.' I hope that through

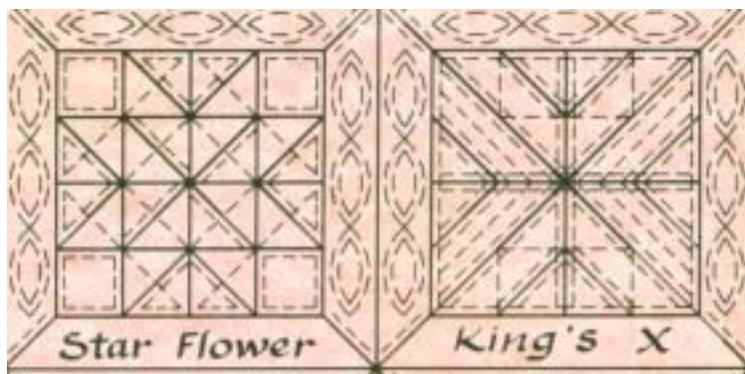
exposure to my stories they may also discover their own cultural heritage in the folk tale section of their library or in classroom follow-up. My second goal is to entertain the students. This facilitates learning. I believe these have been the goals of storytellers throughout history.

## II. ABOUT THE PERFORMANCE



Michael "Badhair" performs a medley of Appalachian folk tales and songs from the tradition of "Jack and the Bean Stalk." Appalachian tales come from Scottish, Irish, Welsh, English, African and Native American cultures. These stories mixed together in the Appalachian mountains as the cultures intermingled together. Performances last approximately 35 - 40 minutes for Kindergarten through the third grades and 45 - 50 minutes for the fourth through the twelfth grades. There is student participation in some of the stories, especially the sets for K - 3. "Badhair" has different performances for each of the K -

3,  
4 - 6, 7 - 9 and 10 - 12.



Michael "Badhair's" workshops, which examine the art of traditional Appalachian storytelling, entertain as well as educate. Just as each story in the oral tradition varies with each telling, "Badhair's" performances and workshops vary to fit his audience.

"Michael 'Badhair' ..... appeals to the kid in everybody" "..... Diamond gem of a performance by a gem of a storyteller." Las Vegas Sun.

### **III. BACKGROUND INFORMATION**

#### **APPALACHIAN STORYTELLING AND FOLKLORE**

Storytelling is a link to our past. It is one of the oldest art forms. Storytelling has been carried down, generation to generation, by word of mouth since before recorded history. Throughout the centuries it has evolved, branched out, and become categorized, but its basic usage -- the exchange of information -- has remained unchanged.

When radio and later television came along, some aspects of the oral tradition began to die out. The longer stories began to disappear, leaving the joke as a final reminder of a once vast oral tradition. Over the past ten years the longer stories have been reviewed by performing artists who tell

stories in the traditional way. As a result of this and other factors, there has been a recent upswing of interest in cultural heritage and storytelling.

Folk tales, folk crafts and the Appalachian culture are

reflections of the pioneer life of the mountains. All Appalachian crafts and toys were the product of everyday needs and were

created with what was available.

For example, quilts weren't made for show, but to bring beauty and warmth during long winter nights. Baskets were made to carry eggs, fruit, vegetables or even water. Toys were made from what was available. The hoops children used to roll were from barrels or small wagon wheels.

Appalachian folk tales were and are told to teach children and adults how to cope with the difficulty of life with ingenuity, humor and wisdom. Life with no television and no radio created

a situation where folk tales were a primary form of entertainment for making long winter nights cozier or hard jobs go faster.

The central Appalachian area was settled by the Native American, English, Scottish, Welsh, Irish and African cultures. People from these cultures worked together, lived in close proximity and developed social processes that allowed them to live together. Each culture brought their own heritage to the Appalachian mountains.

These cultures and their traditions mixed together in day-to-day life and as they did, the folk tales and folk ways they brought with them also meshed. Banjos and rhythms from Africa, for instance, became part of the traditional Appalachian band.

Some people believe storytelling has literary merit. Some say that it is folk art

or entertainment. Whichever you prefer, storytelling is a wonderful way to communicate. It is used daily by lawyers, preachers, and teachers. No other oral interpretation of events, whether fact or fiction, has served and continues to serve such a vital function in our world today.

#### **IV. PRE-PERFORMANCE ACTIVITIES**

1. Introduce the following vocabulary words to your students before "Badhair's" visit so that they will be familiar with storytelling terms.

Storytelling - telling (talking) other people a story, whether true or false, old or new, that always has a beginning, a middle, and an end.

Tall Tales - funny American stories of exaggeration or impossible feats, told as truth.

Fairy Tale - made-up story set in an indeterminate place, with supernatural events and a sympathy for the underdog.

Legend - stories set in the past which deal with real places and people and which are regarded as true.

Jack Tales - favorite East Tennessee stories that are English in origin and always involve a boy named Jack.

2. Have students read stories from their own cultural heritage as well as other cultures.

A) Do the stories you have read from different cultures show any similarities?

B) Have you heard any similar

stories from your parents, grandparents, friends, or others?

C) Can you tell any stories you have heard?

3. Show students how stories from Europe, Africa, Asia, etc., have been incorporated in stories in the United States.

A) "Jack and the Bull," from Jack Tales by Richard Chase, is a Zulu tale still told in Africa.

B) "Wicked John," from Grandfather Tales by Richard Chase, has been told in Germany, Estonia, Finland, Denmark, the British Isles, Norway, Flanders, Lapland, Russia, Latvia and France. The end of the story "Wicked John" is from an African American folk tale sometimes called "Big 16."

4. Ask your students to find Appalachia on a map of the United States.

A) What is the land like (mountains, flat, lakes)?

B) Are there any big cities?

C) What kinds of jobs might people do there?

D) What is the weather like in Appalachia?

E) What kinds of animals might live there?

F) What would it have been like to have settled this land?

G) What kinds of stories might people tell about this land?

5. Cartoon and television shows often depict a character of a 'mountain man' or 'hillbilly.'

A) What is he like?

B) Do cartoons project a real

version of people or events?

C) Does television portray people realistically?

D) Why or why not?

6. Have students play the "Gossip Game." You start a one sentence story and have your students whisper it from one to another until it has gone full circle. This simulates passing stories from generation to generation as in the oral tradition. Most of the time, the story will change. Go back through the line of students and find the places where the story changed. Why did it change? Sometimes the story doesn't change. Why?

## **V. POST-PERFORMANCE ACTIVITIES GUIDE**

1. Questions for discussion:

A) Do you see a reoccurring theme in "Badhair's" stories?

B) Do you think you would find the same reoccurring themes in other cultures' stories?

C) Where does "Badhair's" accent originate from?

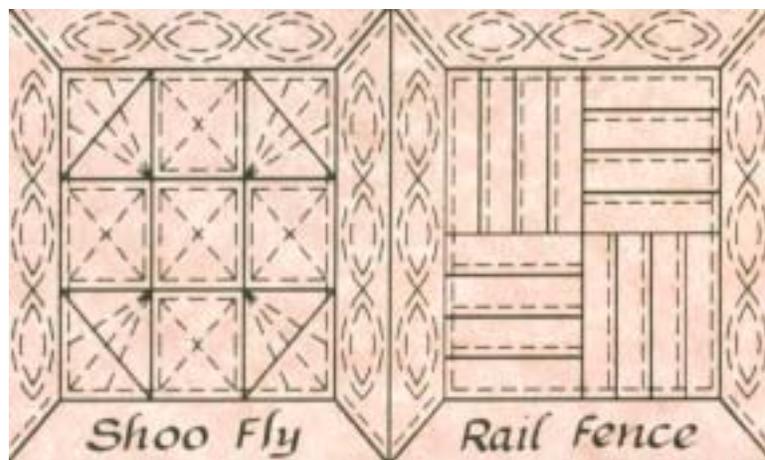
D) Does everyone have an accent?

E) Where do your students' accents originate from?

F) How would these stories shape a person's life?

G) How would the stories "Badhair" told help instruct a person in his or her life?

2. What characters have you seen on television that depict people from the Appalachian region or from the South?



- A) Are these real people?
- B) If not, how do you believe the real people act?
- C) How might their lives be similar to yours?
- D) How might their lives be different from yours?
- E) Do you think life in an urban setting is different from life in a rural one? How?

3. Pinpoint each student's cultural heritage on a map. Then ask each student to read a book about his/her cultural folklore and give a book report. Have the students tell folk tales from their varied cultures.

4. Ask your students to collect folk tales and oral histories from their families and community. Tape players are preferable to collect stories. Edit them and start a story telling troupe and perform the stories for other classes.

5. Print a pamphlet of stories collected from your community and have the book published.

6. Practice developing each student's storytelling tools: his/her face, body, hands, voice and mind. Encourage each student to use his/her tools the same way a carpenter uses his/her tools on the same materials (wood) to create different end products (chairs, shelves, cabinets,

houses, etc.). Like the carpenter, the storyteller uses his/her tools on the material (words) and creates an end product (stories).

#### 7. Exercises For Each Storytelling Tool:

**FACE:** Have a student stand and show everyone a happy Face. Have a second student stand and show a sad Face. Then a third student an angry Face; a fourth a confused Face, etc. End the exercise by asking everyone to stand and go through the exercise again.

**HANDS AND BODY:** This is an additive process -- now add the Hands and Body. Ask the next student to stand. Now ask the class to describe all of the things happy hands and bodies do (clap, dance, jump, hug, wave, etc.). Ask the standing student to demonstrate a happy Face, Hands and Body.

**VOICE:** Ask the class to say 'I'm so happy', now like a big dog; now like a cat; a horse; an old woman; a little yappy dog; a giant; a very small person; etc.

**WHOLE BODY:** Have the next student stand and, with a happy Face, Hands, Body and Voice, say, 'I'm so happy'.

Introduce motivation here. Give the student motivation to be a lot or a little happy (i.e. you won a million dollars or you won ten dollars).

Have the next student stand and, with a sad Face, Hands, Body and Voice, say, 'I'm so happy'. (Motivation: you and your friend were in a five million dollar drawing, with the last two tickets in the bowl; he won one million dollars and you won diddly squat. Tell him you're happy he won.)

Have the next student do the same exercise using a mad Face, Hands, Body

and Voice. (Motivation: he traded the winning ticket 30 seconds before the drawing, for a candy bar.)

Whole Body Exercise - Have the next student stand and say 'It was so big' and show with his Hands and Body how big it was (i.e. mouse, elephant, cantaloupe, ant, wash tub, puppy on the floor, building, wide box, tall box, etc.)

Round Robin Storytelling Exercise  
- You start a story and let the students add a sentence or a paragraph. A helpful hint is to make two rules for telling stories. First, use only proper names, not pronouns. This discourages confusion about whom the storyteller is speaking. You might introduce this by saying: "If you (the students) say 'he hit her and she hit him and then they ran off together', no one knows who did what to whom. Use names or nouns."

Second, the story must be a logical progression. Students have a tendency to "jump" their story from place to place without this rule. To introduce this section, the teacher might once again give an example of what not to do. Take turns acting out one of the stories told or a story everyone knows. Assign parts for each character and the narrator. Be sure each character acts like and talks like the character and not like the student playing the character.

7. Appalachian toys have been made in homes with readily accessible material for years. Make some of the toys which "Badhair" incorporated into his performance.

I. Gee Haw Whimmy Diddle:  
Materials:

1. 1/4" dowel rod; 2 pieces  
6" long.
2. Small finishing nail.
3. 1" long narrow  
"propeller" for the Whimmy Diddle.

Tools:

Hammer; Drill; and Triangular  
File.

Instructions:

1. File 8 to 10 "teeth" on  
one section of your 1/4" dowel rod near  
one end.
2. Drill a hole just a touch  
larger than your finishing nail through the  
propeller so the propeller can turn freely  
on the nail.
3. Place the finishing nail  
through the propeller and nail it to the  
small round end of the dowel rod nearest  
the "teeth."

You're finished!

Now, using the unfiled  
dowel, rub the "teeth" on the filed dowel.  
Your propeller should go around. Can you  
get the propeller to go around in the  
opposite direction at will?

II. Quilting:

1. Look at books of quilt  
patterns.
2. Why do you think people  
made quilts?
3. Were big pieces of cloth  
readily available? Do you think that old  
clothes and cloth were pieced together to  
make the patterns on the quilt?

4. Do the names of the patterns have a  
relationship to the pattern itself? (i.e. Log  
Cabin, Star and Friendship quilts) How?

III. Bull Roarer:

Materials:

1. Paint stirring stick.
2. Small twine or 30#  
fishing line.

3. 6" piece of 3/8" dowel rod.

Tools:

Knife; and a drill.

Instructions:

1. Drill a hole large enough for your string in one end of each of the dowel and paint stirrer.

2. Tie one end of a 2' long piece of string through each hole.

3. Trim the sides of the paint stirring stick with a knife for a different sound.

You're finished!

Holding the dowel at waist level, twirl the paint stick around in a circle by your side. After a few seconds of twirling, the toy will "roar."

IV. Paddle & Hoop:

Materials:

1. Any round hoop, metal or plastic, heavy enough to roll (a barrel hoop is traditional).

2. A 2' to 3' stick with a small flat wooden pad nailed to the end. Kids used to use the stick to roll the hoop up hills, down hills and everywhere. Bring your paddles and hoops to the school playground. How well can you do it?

## **VI. APPALACHIAN DIALECT**

Appalachian speech patterns are unique. They date back to the British Isles and African speech patterns. The isolation of the region has preserved these colloquialisms through today.

A-fixin'....Getting ready to, as in 'We're a-fixin' to go.'

Aim ....Plan to or intended to, as in 'I aim to go.'

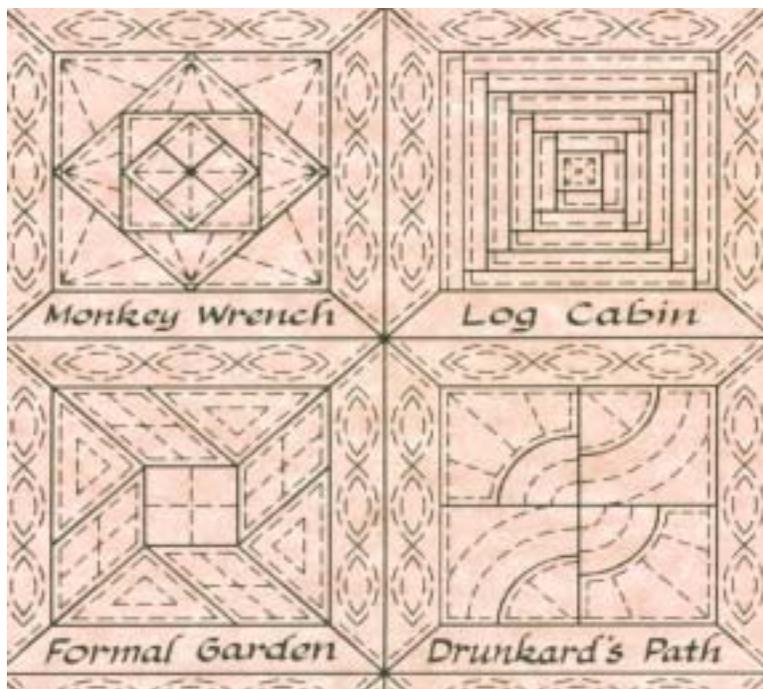
Airish....Breezy or windy, as in

'Shut the window, it's airish in here.'

Cuttin' up....Acting foolish, as in  
'We were cuttin' up in town last night.'

Crick....Stiffen, as in 'I have a crick  
in my neck.'

Crick.....Small stream, as in 'Go get



the milk out of the crick.'

Doin's....Community happenings,  
as in 'There was big doin's at the  
homecoming.'

Et....To have eaten, as in 'Have you  
et?'

Dast ....Dare, as in 'You dast not  
jump that creck.'

Fetch....To bring, as in 'Go fetch  
some wood for the stove.'

Fur piece....Long ways, as in 'It

shore was a fur piece to the ocean.'

Gully washer....Hard rain, as in  
'That shore was a gully washer. It like to  
have drowned the frogs.'

Hant....Ghost, as in 'There's a hant  
in that old house.'

Hollar....Small mountain valley, as  
in 'He lives at the head of the hollar.'

Het up.....Angry, as in 'Don't get so  
het up over it.'

Kivers....Covers, as in 'Kiver up  
good; it's cold.'

Like to have....Almost, as in 'It like  
to have drown the frogs.'

Lollygag....To loaf or go slow, as in  
'He lollygaged at work all day.'  
Naw .....No, as in 'Naw dessert for me.'  
Poke sack....Bag, as in 'Don't forget your  
poke sack full of lunch.'

Peaked....Sick or pale, as in 'He shore  
looks peaked.'

Pizen....Poison, as in 'That  
rattlesnake is pizen.'

Plumb....Completely, as in 'I'm  
plumb tuckered out.'

Shed or Shet of ....To be rid of, as in 'I'm  
shore glad to be shed of that cold.'

Shore....Sure, as in 'I'm shore glad to  
be shed of that cold.'

Smack dab....On the nail or directly,  
as in 'He hit her smack dab on the nose.'

Skittish....Jumpy, nervous, as in  
'Them dogs are shore skittish with that  
panther around.'

Smart....A lot or long, as in 'It's a  
right smart way to the store.'

Smarts.....Hurts, as in 'It smarts a lot  
where I got hit.'

Youn's or Y'all....A group of people, as in

'Y'all come back.'

Vittles....Food, as in 'He et all his vittles.'

Whapped....Whipped or spanked, as in 'He whapped up on the boy.'

## VII. BIBLIOGRAPHY

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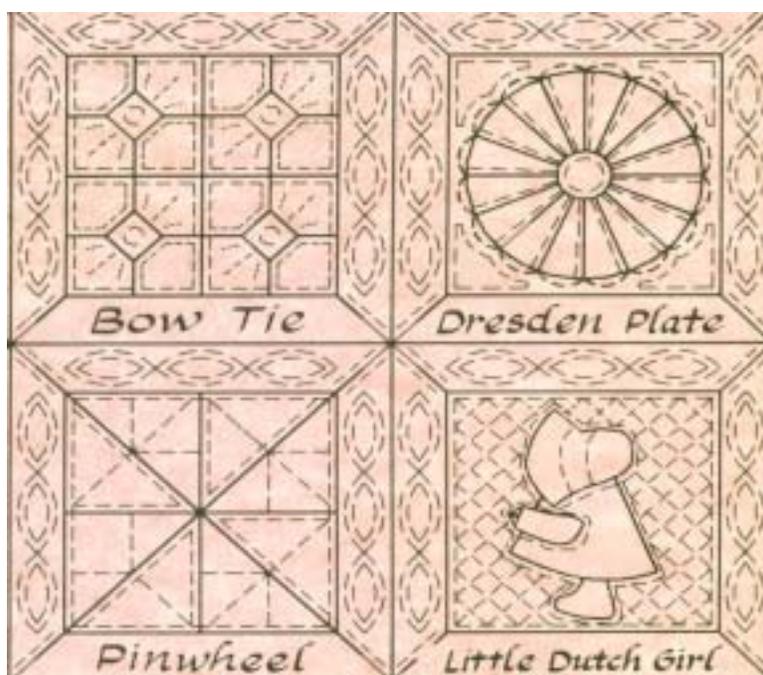
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## **VIII. REPERTOIRE**

### TALES

Wicked John      So Windy

Mutsmag      Jack and the King's Girl

3 Gold Nuts      Wiley the Hairy Man

Soap      The Bewitched Gourd

Old One-Eye      How the Cow Got Her Tail

Big Jack, Little Jack      Fattie (Bubbles)

Gallymanders      Old Dry Fry

Jack and the Heffer Hide      Sweet William

Sodysalaradis      How the Plow Was Invented

Brer Possum and Brer Snake Steve and  
the Snake

Steve and the Tourist Lady Steve and  
the Possum

Steve and the Mule Egg

Steve and the Vienna Sausage

Take Me Back

One Thing and Another Jack and the  
Factor

So Dry So Wet Big 16  
SONGS

Turkey in the Straw Fuba Wuba  
John

Farmer and the Devil's Wife Oh  
Death

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