

Book Notes

for

The Truth about Stories: A Native Narrative

Thomas King, 2003

The Massey Lecture Series

Notes compiled by Jim Force Enterprises Inc.

The purpose of these notes is to provide an overview of the content of this important book. *The Truth about Stories* can be purchased online from Anansi @ <http://www.anansi.ca/> or Chapters @ <http://www.chapters.indigo.ca/> or Amazon @ <http://www.amazon.com>

"The truth about stories is that that's all we are" (p. 2).

"I tell the stories not to play on your sympathies but to suggest how stories can control our lives, for there is a part of me that has never been able to move past these stories, a part of me that will be chained to these stories as long as I live" (p. 9).

"Stories are wondrous things. And they are dangerous" (p. 9).

"[O]nce a story is told, it cannot be called back. Once told, it is loose in the world. So you have to be careful with the stories you tell. Any you have to watch out for the stories that you are told" (p. 10).

"Tell a story, she told me. Don't preach. Don't try to sound profound. It's unbecoming, and you do it poorly. Don't show them your mind. Show them you imagination" (p. 26).

"What if the creation story in Genesis had featured a flawed deity who was understanding and sympathetic rather than autocratic and rigid?" (p. 27)

"'You can't understand the world without telling a story,' the Anishinabe writer Gerald Vizenor tells us. 'There isn't any center to the world but a story'" (p. 32).

"What the camera allows you to do is to invent, to create. That's really what photographs are. Not records of moments, but rather imaginative acts. . . . And when we look at his [Curtis'] photographs, we see what we expect to see" (p. 43).

"We see race. Never mind that race is a construction and an illusion. Never mind that it does not exist in either biology or theology, though both have, from time to time, been enlisted in the cause of racism. Never mind that we can't hear it or smell it or taste it or feel it. The important thing is that we believe we can see it." (p. 44).

"What's important are the stories I've heard along the way. And the stories I've told. Stories we make up to try to set the world straight (p. 60).

"But don't say in years to come that you would have lived your life differently if only you had heard this story. You've heard it now" (p. 89).

"Laguna storyteller, Leslie Silko reminds us, . . . 'You don't have anything / If you don't have the stories'" (p. 92).

"We both knew that stories were medicine, that a story told one way could cure, that the same story told another way could injure (p. 92).

"Did you ever wonder how it is we imagine the world in the way we do, how it is we imagine ourselves, if not through our stories" (p. 95).

"Here is the essence of racism. 'Skin makes the man'" (p. 103).

"[U]nderstanding is shaped by cultural paradigms" (p. 113).

"The Nigerian storyteller Ben Okri says that . . . 'If we change the stories we live by, quite possibly we change our lives'" (p. 153).

"Sanctioned Addictive Drugs and Banned Addictive Drugs. And the only real difference between them are the stories we tell. . . . But great stories. Very effective. Very enticing. Very hard to resist" (pp. 157-158).

"Want a different ethic? Tell a different story" (p. 164).