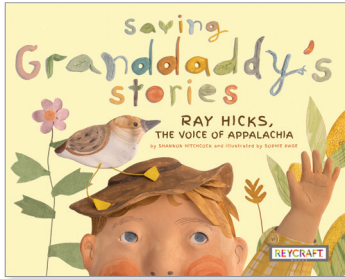


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*Saving Granddaddy's Stories:
Ray Hicks, the Voice of Appalachia*
by Shannon Hitchcock
illustrated by Sophie Page

SUMMARY

As a young boy living in the Appalachian Mountains, Ray Hicks loved his grandfather's stories because he told them "the mountain way." After his grandfather's death, Ray continued to tell these stories to anyone who would listen. Years later, his storytelling became so famous that he was known as the "Voice of Appalachia." The illustrations in this book are made from clay, paper, fabric, wire, and a handful of Jack's magic beans.

CULTURAL PERSPECTIVES

- Appalachian native Ray Hicks was a renowned storyteller. He was born in 1922, near Boone, North Carolina, on the same Beech Mountain farm where his grandfather and father were raised. He lived a simple life at the Beech Mountain farm with his wife, Rosa. He is most famous for his retellings of Jack Tales. Ray passed away in 2003.
- For photos and additional information about Ray Hicks, please visit: <https://www.rayhicks.com/>.
- For a map of the Appalachian Region, please visit: <https://www.arc.gov/about-the-appalachian-region/>.

For a read-aloud video of this book, visit <http://www.reycraftbooks.com/videos.html>

Book Talk Blurb

Do you like reading books about real people? If so, you'll enjoy this biography about a man named Ray Hicks. Ray lived in a region of the United States called Appalachia. (Display the Appalachian Region on a map.) As you read *Saving Granddaddy's Stories*, you'll visit this area of the United States and discover why they call Ray the "Voice of Appalachia." I can't wait to hear what you think about the unique illustrations in this book.

Set Purpose: Invitation to Readers

Have you ever heard of a man named Ray Hicks? If not, I have great news! We're going to read a biography about him. Remember, a biography is a true story about a person's life. Let's think about the title of this biography, *Saving Granddaddy's Stories: Ray Hicks, the Voice of Appalachia*. What can you infer from this title? (That Ray was a storyteller from the Appalachian Mountains.) I'm excited to learn more about Ray Hicks. Let's get started.

During Reading

Read-Aloud Conversation Starters

(Note: It may be helpful to number the pages of this book for reference, where the first spread of the story is pages 2-3.)

- Page 3: *Ray often went hungry.* What do you think the author means when she writes, "Mountain folks said their bellies were eatin' their backbones." (They were starving.) Instead of just writing "They were starving," Shannon Hitchcock painted a picture with her words. How did that help you as a reader?
- Page 5: *He told stories—Jack Tales. . . Jack Tales are different versions of the fairy tale "Jack and the Beanstalk."* Have you heard that fairy tale before? What do you remember about the version you know?
- Page 10: *Ray imitated Granddaddy and spread his arms wide.* How was Ray's retelling the same as or different than the one you remember? Talk about it with a friend.
- Page 17: *He would never tell another Jack tale, but Ray vowed the stories would live on.* Remember the title of this book, *Saving Granddaddy's Stories*. What might Ray do to keep his vow?
- Page 29: *Lived in the same house he was born in.* Did Ray keep his vow? What was the most interesting thing you learned about Ray Hicks?

Respond, Reflect, or Research


- Reflect on SEL Competency—Self-Awareness (Self-Confidence):**
 Ray used the skills he learned from his granddaddy to get better and better at telling stories. He practiced often, until he was self-confident enough to tell them in public. Being self-confident means that you believe in yourself and know that, with practice, you can do things on your own. Think about activities that have taken you a lot of practice before you felt self-confident. How did you feel once you could do that activity?
- Respond—Read Like a Writer (Similes):** Shannon Hitchcock chose her words carefully to help us imagine what was happening in Ray’s life. She used similes like “as wide as a creek” to describe Ray’s britches and “as tall and thin as a cornstalk” to explain his height. Think about objects or people in your writing. Could you use similes to describe them? (Provide writers with opportunities to practice creating similes by showing them different objects or photos and inviting them to describe items using a simile.)
- Reflect on Comprehension—Compare and Contrast Traditional Tales:**
 There are many different versions of folk and fairy tales like “Jack and the Beanstalk.” Just like Ray’s retelling, they often reflect the background of the person writing or telling the story. We’re going to read a few of these tales to notice how they are alike and what makes them unique. (Use this book to launch a multiday study of different versions of a traditional tale like “Little Red Riding Hood,” “The Great Big Enormous Turnip,” or “The Little Red Hen.” Use an anchor chart like the one below to gather your findings.)

Title of Traditional Tale	Characters	Setting	Problem	Solution

Sample chart

Real World Action

In this book, Ray learned to tell stories by listening to his granddaddy’s tales. Discuss with students how they can learn a lot about their family members by asking them to share and retell their favorite stories. Encourage students to ask a family member to tell them a story about when they were their age, different places they’ve lived or visited, or events that they remember. Invite students to keep that story tucked in their memory to tell to someone else, just as Ray did.

 If your students liked this book . . .

Planting Stories:
The Life of Librarian and Storyteller Pura Belpré
 by Anika Aldamuy Denise
 illustrated by Paola Escobar
 New York: HarperCollins, 2019

Pura Belpré loved listening to stories told by her grandmother. She grew up in Puerto Rico and moved to New York City, where she became a librarian and storyteller herself. Working for the New York Public Library as a bilingual assistant, Pura turned her stories into books and spread her story seeds to young readers.

I Am Hua Mulan
 by Qin Wenjun
 illustrated by Yu Rong
 New York: Reycraft, 2019

A girl retells the story of the legendary female warrior she admires, who long ago fought bravely to protect her people. Hua Mulan learned from her father to ride horses and fight with a spear. When her people were under attack, the army needed more men. To spare her ailing father, Mulan disguised herself as a man and rode off to war. Mulan’s bravery and skills won her wide acclaim, but her true identity was never revealed. When the war ended, Mulan returned home to find her family safe and happy.

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