

“We [should] try to comprehend the richness of the southern Appalachian region, past and present, raising the question of how the culture of that region, as presented in art and other forms, differs from the larger, more familiar, mainstream American culture. In the process, we should learn something of the power of oral tradition, of regional folklore, of community, isolation, and the human spirit.”

-**Robert Love Taylor**

“What is less well-known are the circumstances basic to survival in the mountains through generations of hardship that have produced particular strengths of character and an identity rooted in place and family that are unique to its culture.”

“Appalachia passes through a small corner of South Western Virginia.”

“The Mountain culture has a strong storytelling tradition, both oral and written, going back to the earliest settlers.”

“This is the sound of Appalachia; this is the voice of all the hardship, struggle, heartache, hard work, and determination that comes from living in these mountains. This is the voice of Appalachia that needs to be heard.”

“One characteristic trait that has been a strength in dealing with hardship has been an awareness that is not so much an intellectual as it is a subconsciously integrated response to the environment, an intuitive relationship with the natural world reinforced by skills passed on for generations that has allowed (Appalachians) to survive in impoverished circumstances. Thus much of their creativity in meeting the challenges of daily life springs from their resourcefulness. Isolation has been unmistakable in the region.”

“The Appalachians have enormous pride and an intact sense of self.”

“Another characteristic of the region-it seems to be in the atmosphere itself but can only be subjectively verified-is that time flows differently here.”

“I strongly believe regional literature is possible for Appalachia because Appalachia exists in the mind, memory, imagination, and even the life of its writers in very powerful ways.”

-**Marita Garin**

“If a Southern Appalachian theme does exist-it is the telescoping of cultural change within the region in the 20th century and the confusion, irony, and, more often than not, trauma which come with it.”

-**Gregory Dykes**

From> **Southern Appalachian Poetry: An Anthology of Works   
by 37 Poets (Contributions to Southern Appalachian Studies)**

Index of Folktales, Stories, Plays, Poems and Songs in AppLit

<http://www2.ferrum.edu/applit/>

**Folklore**

**“Appalachian folklore has a strong mixture of European, Native American (especially Cherokee), and Biblical influences. The Cherokee taught the region's early European pioneers how to plant and cultivate crops such as corn and squash and how to find edible plants such as ramps. The Cherokee also passed along their knowledge of the medicinal properties of hundreds of native herbs and roots, and how to prepare tonics from such plants. Before the introduction of modern agricultural techniques in the region in the 1930s and 1940s, many Appalchian farmers followed the Biblical tradition of planting by "the signs," such as the phases of the moon, or when certain weather conditions occurred.**

**Appalachian folk tales are rooted in English, Scottish, and Irish fairy tales, as well as regional heroic figures and events. Jack tales, which tend to revolve around the exploits of a simple-but-dedicated figure named "Jack," are popular at story-telling festivals. Other stories involve wild animals, such as hunting tales. In the industrial areas of Western Pennsylvania and northern West Virginia the composite Joe Magarac steelworker story has been handed down. Regional folk heroes such as the railroad worker John Henry and frontiersmen Davy Crockett, Mike Fink and Johnny Appleseed are examples of real-life figures that evolved into popular folk tale subjects. Murder stories, such as Omie Wise and John Hardy, are popular subjects for Appalachian ballads. Ghost stories, or "haint tales" in regional English, are a common feature of southern oral and literary tradition. Ghost stories native to the region include the story of the Greenbrier Ghost, which is rooted in a Greenbrier County,West Virginia murder.”**

**Literature**

**Early Appalachian literature typically centered on the observations of people from outside the region, such as Henry Timberlake's *Memoirs* (1765) and Thomas Jefferson's *Notes on the State of Virginia* (1784), although there are notable exceptions, including Davy Crockett's *A Narrative of the Life of Davy Crockett* (1834). Travellers' accounts published in 19th-century magazines gave rise to Appalachian local color, which reached its height with George Washington Harris's Sut Lovingood character of the 1860s and native novelists such as Mary Noailles Murfree. Works such as Rebecca Harding Davis's *Life in the Iron Mills* (1861), Emma Bell Miles' *The Spirit of the Mountains* (1905), and Horace Kephart's *Our Southern Highlanders* (1913) marked a shift in the region's literature from local color to realism. The transition from an agrarian society to an industrial society and its effects on Appalachia are captured in works such as Olive Tilford Dargan's *Call Home to the Heart* (1932), James Still's *The River of Earth* (1940), Harriette Simpson Arnow's *The Dollmaker* (1954), and Harry Caudill's *Night Comes to the Cumberlands* (1962). In the 1970s and 1980s, the rise of authors like Breece D'J Pancake, Dorothy Allison, and Lisa Alther brought greater literary diversity to the region.**

**Along with the above-mentioned, some of Appalachia's best known writers include James Agee (*A Death in the Family*), Anne W. Armstrong (*This Day and Time*), Wendell Berry (*Hannah Coulter*, *The Unforeseen Wilderness: An Essay on Kentucky's Red River Gorge*, *Selected Poems of Wendell Berry*), Jesse Stuart (*Taps for Private Tussie*, *The Thread That Runs So True*), Denise Giardina (*The Unquiet Earth*, *Storming Heaven*), Lee Smith (*Fair and Tender Ladies*, *On Agate Hill*), Silas House (*Clay's Quilt*, *A Parchment of Leaves*), Wilma Dykeman (*The Far Family*, *The Tall Woman*), Maurice Manning (*Bucolics*, *A Companion for Owls*), Anne Shelby (*Appalachian Studies*, *We Keep a Store*), George Ella Lyon (*Borrowed Children*, *Don't You Remember?*), Pamela Duncan (*Moon Women*, *The Big Beautiful*), Chris Offutt (*No Heroes*, *The Good Brother*), Charles Frazier (*Cold Mountain*, *Thirteen Moons*), Sharyn McCrumb (*The Hangman's Beautiful Daughter*), Robert Morgan (*Gap Creek*), Jim Wayne Miller (*The Brier Poems*), Gurney Norman (*Divine Right's Trip*, *Kinfolks*), Ron Rash (*Serena*), Elizabeth Madox Roberts ("The Great Meadow, "The Time of Man"), Thomas Wolfe (*Look Homeward Angel*, *You Can't Go Home Again*), Rachel Carson (*The Sea Around Us*, *Silent Spring*; Presidential Medal of Freedom), and Jeannette Walls (*The Glass Castle*).**

**Appalachian literature crosses with the larger genre of Southern literature. Internationally renowned writers such as William Faulkner and Cormac McCarthy have made notable contributions to the American canon with tales set within Appalachia. McCarthy's *Suttree* (1979) is an intense vision of the squalidness and brutality of life along the Tennessee River, in the heart of Appalachia. Other McCarthy novels set in Appalachia include *The Orchard Keeper* (1968) and *Child of God* (1973). Appalachia also serves as the origin point for the kid, the protagonist of McCarthy's Western masterpiece, *Blood Meridian*. Faulkner's hometown of Oxford, Mississippi is on the borderlands of what is considered Appalachia, but his fictional Yoknapatawpha should be considered part of the region. Almost all of the fiction which earned him the Nobel Prize is set there, including *Light in August* and *Absalom, Absalom*.**

[**http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Appalachia**](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Appalachia)