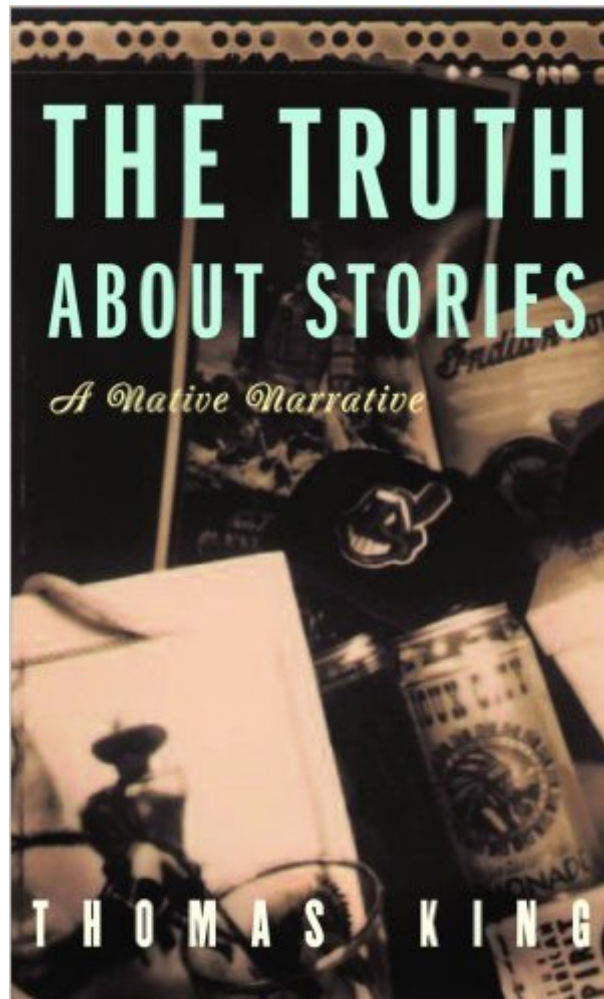


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# The Truth About Stories: A Native Narrative (Indigenous Americas)



## Synopsis

"Stories are wondrous things. And they are dangerous." In *The Truth About Stories*, Native novelist and scholar Thomas King explores how stories shape who we are and how we understand and interact with other people. From creation stories to personal experiences, historical anecdotes to social injustices, racist propaganda to works of contemporary Native literature, King probes Native culture's deep ties to storytelling. With wry humor, King deftly weaves events from his own life as a child in California, an academic in Canada, and a Native North American with a wide-ranging discussion of stories told by and about Indians. So many stories have been told about Indians, King comments, that "there is no reason for the Indian to be real. The Indian simply has to exist in our imaginations." That imaginative Indian that North Americans hold dear has been challenged by Native writers - N. Scott Momaday, Leslie Marmon Silko, Louis Owens, Robert Alexie, and others - who provide alternative narratives of the Native experience that question, create a present, and imagine a future. King reminds the reader, Native and non-Native, that storytelling carries with it social and moral responsibilities. "Don't say in the years to come that you would have lived your life differently if only you had heard this story. You've heard it now."

## Book Information

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## Customer Reviews

The Truth about Stories, a Native Narrative, By Thomas King. U of Minn. Press  
The Truth about Stories by Thomas King is the prestigious Massey Lectures on culture produced on Canada Broadcasting Corporation Radio. King is the writer of many of my favorite works including the very

funny Medicine River that was made into a TV movie with Graham Greene. This book is another honor added to this Cherokee writer's portfolio. I found the book beautifully written and enjoyable as an interweaving of stories both from traditional sources and his personal life. King has a deft way of making fun of himself that resembles the lead character in Medicine River. At the same time he is as obvious in his manipulation of the reader as that character was in creating the situation that trapped the Graham Greene character into coming home. The book is laid out in five sections that begins with the story of "The Girl who fell to earth." King then proceeds through the comparison between native literature that stresses the interconnectedness of life and the authoritarian structure as experienced in the "Alpha Male" version of the Biblical Creation. What he doesn't mention is that this also has its parallel in native life in the Alpha character of Wolf society. But that is quibbling. King takes the listener reader through his life as a non-reservation Indian and as an activist author. He records funny encounters with reporters and journalists who struggle to understand how he could be "Indian." Or even what being Indian entails. He speaks to the problem of suicide amongst a people who are not afraid of death but can't find a reason for living and ends the book with the problem of his failure with a friend and the issue of Fetal Alcohol Syndrome.

The simple truth about stories is that they impart who we are. Whether telling tales or reading/listening to what others have to say. King suggests that not only do stories explain us to ourselves and others, there are often deeper implications - sometimes dangerous ones. In this series of essays derived from the CBC's Massey Lecture series, this talented novelist and social commentator brings a fresh view to telling stories - a Native American outlook. This compelling overview is long overdue, and King manages to cover a great deal of territory in six essays. The questions he raises are a combination of long-standing viewpoints along with modern shifts of emphasis. King starts by contrasting two mythologies - one probably wholly unknown to you and one familiar. The first is the story of the Woman Who Fell From the Sky. Tumbling from the depths of space, "Charm" [for such is her name] arrives on a world completely covered in water. After several attempts, Charm convinces Otter to bring mud from the sea bottom so that there may be land for creatures to walk on. Not all wanted to be on the new land, so the animals divided the world into water creatures and land creatures with the birds able to cope with both. Thus the world was founded on a spirit of cooperation. The other myth is called "Genesis", the Judeo-Christian version of similar events, but with a very different frame of reference. The humans are restricted by One Rule - break it and you will die. The Rule is broken, of course, and King is at pains to avoid pointing the finger of guilt. The point of this comparison is that the Judeo-Christian myth contains the absolute

condition of the One Rule, and the vengeful deity that imposed it.

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