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**“English Mouth Literature: A Traditional Culture and Knowledge.”**

**Abstract:**

The paper primarily focuses on English Mouth Literature: A Traditional Culture and Knowledge. Even from the old oral tradition to modern culture the study want to focus on the origin of folk lore and its origin, meaning, characteristics, examples, tradition and culture of English Folk literature. Even the paper described how English Oral Mouth literature has a traditional culture and global asset. English Folk literature is a full of traditional and cultural knowledge and with the help of written print today’s modern generation of a globe can be read and studied these oral literature.

The lore (traditional knowledge and beliefs) of cultures having no written language. It is transmitted by word of mouth and consists, as does written literature, of both prose and verse narratives, poems and songs, myths, dramas, rituals, proverbs, riddles, and the like. Until about 4000 BCE all literature was oral, but, beginning in the years between 4000 and 3000 BCE, writing developed both in Egypt and in the Mesopotamian civilization at Sumer. Nearly all known peoples, now or in the past, have produced it.

But finally, there is urgent need of a time to think seriously over the preservation of Mouth literature in written form.

**Introduction:**

The term "oral literature" is sometimes used interchangeably with "folklore," but it usually has a broader focus. Oral literature shares with written literature the use of heightened language in various genres (narrative, lyric, epic, etc) William Wordsworth, in his Preface to Lyrical Ballads (1798), claimed to have found in the oral discourse of unlettered rustic people the source of literary spontaneity, sincerity and integral unity.

### The nature of oral traditions

Nor can any evolution in folk literature or any overall developments be spoken of explicitly. Each group of people, no matter how small or large, has handled its folk literature in its own way.

The beginnings of written literature in Sumer and Egypt 5,000 or 6,000 years ago took place in a world that knew only folk literature. Nearly everywhere else the oral storyteller or epic singer was dominant, and all of what is called literary expression was carried in the memory of the folk, and especially of gifted narrators.

All societies have produced some men and women of great natural endowments—shamans, priests, rulers, and warriors—and from these has come the greatest stimulus everywhere toward producing and listening to myths, tales, and songs.

### Cultural exchange in written and oral traditions

This folk literature has affected the later written word profoundly. The Homeric hymns, undoubtedly oral in origin and retaining many of the usual characteristics of folk literature

Not everywhere has the oral literature impinged so directly on the written as in the works of Homer, which almost presents a transition from the preliterate to the literate world. But many folktales have found their place in literature. The medieval romances, especially the Breton lays, drew freely on these folk sources, sometimes directly. As the Middle Ages lead into the Renaissance, the influence of folk literature on the work of writers increases in importance, so that it is sometimes difficult to draw a sharp line of distinction between them. In literary forms such as the fabliau, many anecdotes may have come ultimately from tales current among unlettered storytellers, but these have usually been reworked by writers, some of them belonging in the main stream of literature, like Boccaccio or Chaucer. Only later, in the 16th and 17th centuries, in such works as those of Gianfrancesco Straparola and Giambattista Basile, did writers go directly to folk literature itself for much of their material.

Since Classical times composers of written literature have borrowed tales and motifs from oral narratives, and their folk origin has been forgotten. Examples abound in Homer and *Beowulf*. In their literary form these stories have often lived on side by side with tellings and retellings by oral storytellers. Modern examples of traditions so used are found in Ibsen's *Peer Gynt* and Gerhart Hauptmann's *The Sunken Bell*. Particularly frequent in all literature are proverbs, many of them certainly of folk origin.

Writers and song makers have always used themes taken from oral legends and folk songs and in their turn have affected the traditions themselves. In recent years the cinema has presented old folktales to an appreciative public, and interest in folk songs especially has been stimulated by the radio and television.

Within urbanized Western culture it is clear that folk literature has been gradually displaced by books and newspapers, radio, and television. Persons interested in hearing authentic oral tales, traditions, or songs must make special efforts to discover them. Children are also important for the carrying on of certain kinds of oral traditions such as singing games, riddles, and dance songs. These go on from generation to generation and are added to continually, always within an oral tradition.

During the past few generations folk festivals have flourished. These have become almost worldwide and of the greatest variety. They are likely to revive older dances or bring in new ones from other countries, but they also have some singing and occasionally tale telling. Usually a genuine attempt is made to keep them within the authentic local tradition, and they have been a stimulus to the preservation of a disappearing phase of modern life.

## Characteristics of folk literature

The most obvious characteristic of folk literature is its orality.

Folk literature is but a part of what is generally known as folklore: customs and beliefs, ritualistic behaviour, dances, folk music, and other nonliterary manifestations. These are often considered a part of the larger study of ethnology, but they are also the business of the folklorist.

Of special importance is the relation of all kinds of folk literature to mythology.

## Techniques of folk literature

Since in essence all folk literature is oral and subject to its survival in the human mind, it is full of devices to aid memory. Perhaps most common of all is mere repetition. Especially in folktales and epics it is common to hear the same episode repeated with little or no verbal change. Aside from repetition of entire episodes, folk literature of all kinds is filled with formulaic expressions. It may be the beginning or the ending of a folktale—the “once upon a time” or the “married and lived happily ever after” or sometimes quite meaningless expressions—or standard epithets attached to certain persons or places. These formulas are matters not only of words but of structure. The storyteller or singer has at his disposal a large variety of conventional motifs and episodes and may use them freely.

### Festival art

A major folk category is festival art, which owes its genesis and much of its content to ancient seasonal celebrations. Harvest figures invoked or celebrated a good crop yield. Special foods in symbolic shapes were prepared and consumed. Varying according to the culture, many other appurtenances were created—decorated trees and poles, lanterns, banners, processional vehicles, sculptured figures and dolls, household and shrine adornments—all bearing their motifs of life symbolism.

### Other sources of folk motifs

Some aspects of Classical mythology fed into folk art, partly by way of later European sophisticated art, and many medieval themEarly Renaissance conceptions of paradise and landscapes with stylized trees and towered towns oddly recur in 19th-century folk painting, Account must also be taken of the folk capacity for satire.

**Conclusion:**

Oral tradition and oral lore is cultural material and tradition transmitted orally from one generation to another. The messages or testimony are verbally transmitted in speech or song and may take the form, for example, of folktales, sayings, ballads, songs, or chants. In this way, it is possible for a society to transmit oral history, oral literature, oral law and other knowledge’s across generations without a writing system. A narrower definition of oral tradition is sometimes appropriate. Sociologists might also emphasize a requirement that the material is held in common by a group of people, over several generations, and might distinguish oral tradition from testimony or oral history. In a general sense, "oral tradition" refers to the transmission of cultural material through vocal utterance, and was long held to be a key descriptor of folklore (a criterion no longer rigidly held by all folklorists). As an academic discipline, it refers both to a set of objects of study and a method by which they are studied—the method may be called variously "oral traditional theory", " The study of oral tradition is distinct from the academic discipline of oral history, which is the recording of personal memories and histories of those who experienced historical eras or events. It is also distinct from the study of morality, which can be defined as thought and its verbal expression in societies where the technologies of literacy (especially writing and print) are unfamiliar to most of the population.

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