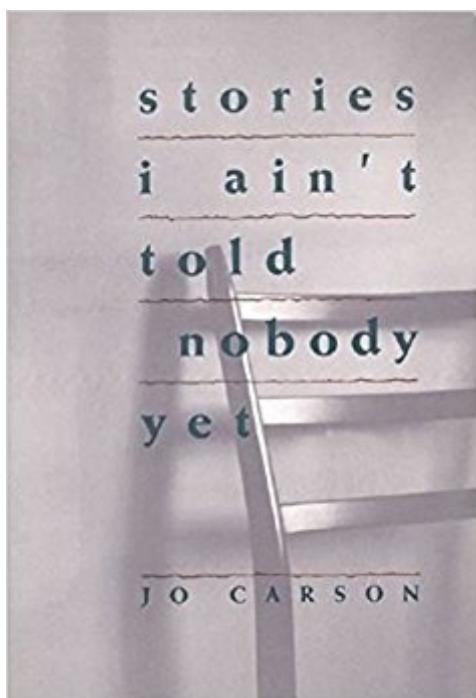


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# **Stories I Ain't Told Nobody Yet: Selections From The People Pieces**



## Synopsis

§ Haunting and funny, full of folk wisdom and unflinching honesty. • Publishers WeeklyPlaywright and poet Jo Carson has long been mining the rich field of everyday life in her native Appalachia region and East Tennessee. Collecting found stories as part of her ongoing &#xA7;People Piecesâ • series, she has created a remarkable distillation of the rhythms and nuances of a specific landscape that proves common to us all. These fifty-four monologues and dialogues are statements of life from the region of the heart.§The pieces all come from people. I never sat my desk and made them up. I heard the heart of each of them somewhere. A grocery store line. A beauty shop. The emergency room. A neighbor across her clothesline to another neighbor. I am an eavesdropper and I practiced being invisible to get them.â • &#150; Jo Carson, from the Preface.JO CARSON is an author of poems, plays, short stories and essays who lives and works in Johnson City, Tennessee. She has toured internationally with Stories I Ainâ TMt Told Nobody Yet and her play, Daytrips, has been widely produced. Ms. Carson has been a regular commentator on National Public Radioâ TM's &#xA7;All Things Considered.â •

## Book Information

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## Customer Reviews

In one of the most powerful poems in this 96-page collection, a mother asks her grown child to come home while she is still alive: "I could fill you up with stories, stories I ain't told nobody yet. . . . When I am dead, it will not matter / how hard you press your ear to the ground." Like the voices in the oral histories collected by Studs Terkel, these monologues and dialogues from east Tennessee

and the Appalachian region "all come from people," and while the poems "remain true to the speaker's thoughts and rhythms of speech," they are Carson's "distillations." Haunting and funny, full of folk wisdom and unflinching honesty, the characters seem spotlighted on a stage. Many poems presume an adult perspective and understanding, but all reflect Carson's sensitive and unsentimental awareness of her characters' lives and language. A Richard Jackson Book. Ages 12-up. Copyright 1989 Reed Business Information, Inc. --This text refers to an out of print or unavailable edition of this title.

Grade 9 Up-- As Carson points out, the 49 poems in this collection are "distillations," reconstructions of monologues and dialogues from east Tennessee and the Appalachian region. The pieces, written in colloquial English, are short and untitled and appear in broad groupings. The designation "juvenile poetry" seems a misnomer since most of the pieces deal with adults and their concerns: a woman describes being beaten by her husband; a dyer worries about toxins in the factory; a newly married man throws his mother-in-law out of the house. Not only is the subject matter adult; so is the language, which is strong yet appropriate in context. Nonetheless, some young adult readers would respond to their wry humor and authentic "down home" tone. A speaker describes a neighbor as "tryin' to slip Jesus Christ a couple of dollar bills/ for the free gift of salvation." A terminated worker notes that some "will not look at me/ because somehow fired and failed/ are too close together." And the denizen of a small town observes that everyone there "made their decision/ once or twice/ about whether you was right/ or wrong." A few poems sound preachy. About a third of the selections appeared previously in literary magazines. --Ellen D. Warwick, Robbins Junior Library, Arlington, Mass. Copyright 1989 Reed Business Information, Inc. --This text refers to an out of print or unavailable edition of this title.

As a teenager in high school I stumbled across the library binding of this in my school library when working on an assignment. I fell in love at the first poem and (after tracking the not-in-print-at-the-time volume down for my own) have been going to it again and again over the years. The voice is different in every poem- some old, some young, some educated, some not- but each one has a story worth listening to and more often than not a pearl of wisdom as well. Each voice is treated respectfully, no matter that background, so that sometimes the most unlikely of "people" become convincing poets and their stories something profound.

Stories I Ain't Told Nobody Yet, is enlightening to read stories of people from different parts of the

country whose expressions make their stories very funny. I loved this book so much I bought one for a friend and gave it as a thank you gift.

Jo Carson's poetry is funny, touching and thought provoking, honoring folks that are too frequently overlooked. She refines our humanity into succinct poetry and that is a priceless gift. Within this book you'll find the voices of friends and relatives that you never knew before but will never soon forget.

I am so glad to have discovered this author. This one and several more of her books and stories will be used in our volunteer senior story telling group. We're from the South, so the accent is not difficult for us!

Jo Carson is a storyteller without compare. If you like a good story...country style...then this book is for you! Carson is a talented writer!

Jo Carson lives and works in East Tennessee, and her work, in this book, has been taking overhard conversations around her, modifying the language into something that approximates folk poetry, and writing it down. Normally, this is a recipe for disaster. However, Carson's ear is finely-tuned enough that what comes out more often than not does resemble both rural dialect and poetry. And that in itself is more than enough reason to consider this a noteworthy book. But every once in a while, the stories she tells are the kind that tug at the heart without the naked appeal of obvious emotional manipulation (though there's certainly some of that here, too; if you go into this not expecting to find the cliched "boy, I wish people wouldn't treat East Tennessee folk like hicks," you're going to be disappointed-- but Carson does amnage to keep it to a minimum). A good, solid volume that's worth a quick read. \*\*\*

This has been my favorite book of poems ever since I heard the author read from it, 18 years ago. I keep giving away my own treasured copy and buying another.

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