### The Mystery of Story and the
### Education Mission of Mythic Imagination

by Jeanna Collins
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As a retired 8th grade language arts teacher, I often remember fondly my students' reaction to my oral telling of stories in class. Because I understood that they fancied themselves too old for storytelling, I always began humorously by announcing (in a 1st grade teacher voice), "Okay, boys and girls. It's story time!" They would laugh and respond, "Oh boy, Mrs. Collins, a story!" They felt secure that I understood they were merely playing along and were willing to indulge me in this storytelling idea. Certainly they had no real interest in story!

The fascinating part, of course, was the change that inevitably occurred after the story began. Regardless of whether it was a picture book, an ancient myth, a historical event, or even a personal sharing of one of my own life experiences, the change in the students was always the same. Their bodies began to speak a different response than their words. They would turn directly toward me, leaning forward as if to get closer. Their faces became rapt with attention. Their eyes centered fully on me, yet had a distant look as if they were seeing both me and something beyond me as well. I knew then that the mystery of story had opened and allowed us to enter. It was as if there were three *living* things being joined: the students, the story teller, and the story itself. I found these moments of union in story to be truly spiritual moments.

The Mythic Imagination Institute honors this mysterious power of story and calls for an educational perspective that nurtures all three components in this mystery. For this reason, we do not wish to develop a traditional education track that will pull educators away from the major events of the Mythic Journeys Conference. **We believe that the Mythic Journeys Conference *is* education**. We do plan, however, to have an **Education Pre-conference on Friday, June 9**, before the main conference begins that evening. Educators will be able to get together and do what educators love to do — get to know each other, network, and share ideas for lesson plans, teaching strategies, etc. before the *real* journey begins. Knowing your companions on the journey enriches the story!

The pre-conference is currently outlined as follows:

**Friday, June 9, 2006**

*Morning*

- General session for all educators with a speaker or performer
- Three breakout workshop sessions offered by Education Committee Members
- Lunch

*Afternoon*

- Three breakout workshop sessions offered by Education Committee Members
- General session for all educators with a presenter, performer, or storyteller

In addition to the Mythic Journeys Conference, Mythic Imagination is also in a partner relationship with Creating Pride, an organization devoted to arts and creativity in the schools. As Anne Ostholthoff , founder of Creating Pride, related in her article in the June issue of *Mythic Passages*, Creating Pride has offered us an opportunity to collaborate within the area of teacher development, particularly involving storytelling and activities related to storytelling in Creative Pride workshop settings. We are very grateful to Creating Pride for offering us this opportunity to share with them in taking our similar missions into the world of educators.

The ideas for the educational opportunities at the Mythic Journeys Conference and for the story workshop with Creating Pride come from members of the Mythic Imagination Education Committee. We communicate primarily through an online discussion group. There are over thirty members from throughout the United States. Any educator or person interested in education is welcome to participate on this committee.

Contact Jeanna Collins, Chair of the MII Education Committee
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