

# Program 11

# Darion McCloud

## Description of the Program

Have you ever told a story? It can be difficult because you have to create a world with interesting characters by just using words. Words can be powerful if used correctly. Darion McCloud uses words to create pictures in your imagination. He is a storyteller who currently works in the children's section at the public library. He is also an artist who does paintings and drawings. Listen as his words spin pictures in your mind as he tells you a story. Mr. McCloud's story originally comes from Africa but he found it in a book entitled **How Many Spots Does A Leopard Have** by Julius Lester. The original name was "The Woman and the Tree Children" but he like to call it "Children of the Tree".

Think back to all the stories you've read that you really enjoyed. Now imagine telling these stories aloud. It could be difficult. But telling stories aloud has dated back to the beginning of time. Words are powerful whether written or said aloud. Listen once more as Darion McCloud uses words to create images in our mind.

## The Storyteller's Story

Once there was a old, old woman who wondered why she was still alive because all she had in her life was pain. She decided that a husband and children would make her life better so she asked the root doctor for them. He said it was up to her to get them. He told her to go home and shine her pots until they were bright, then take them into the forest and put them around the fruit bearing sycamore tree. She did as she was told, climbed up in the tree, picked some fruit and dropped them in the pots. She was to take the pots home and leave them alone for awhile. As she walked home, she heard the laughter of children and the smells of good things associated with children and she was so happy. She and the children lived happily and the hut was full of joy and good things.

Then one day some of the children did something that made her angry and she said to them, you are nothing more than tree children and that's all you are. That night the children all ran away. The next morning she searched for them and asked the root doctor to help. He did not know what to do so she took her pots, shinned them bright and returned to the fruit bearing sychamore tree deep in the forest hoping that her children would return. When she climbed the tree and picked the fruit, the covering came off and there was a brown fruit the color of the children's eyes and it was full of tears. She climbed down, returned home alone and lived the rest of her life alone and sad.

## Questions and Answers

### 1. *Do you tell most of your stories with dialect?*

I try to tell stories with dialects even if the dialect isn't exact for the region from which the story came. I think dialects give a story a flavor that is very important to the story.

### 2. *How did you become interested in storytelling?*

I've always been interested in stories. I loved Greek mythology, comic books, films and all of them are different kinds of storytelling. Everyone in the neighborhood told stories. When I started to work at the library, I had to tell stories in the Children's Room and I was a little afraid. Once I found out what storytelling really was, I realized this was something I had done all my life. I love it.

### 3. *How is telling stories different from reading stories out loud?*

The stories I tell are folk tales, when you read you read only the words that are written on the page, Folk tales are oral traditions and everyone who tells the story adds something of themselves to the story. They are made to be told. Folk tales are my favorite type of story because a folk tale is a little bit different every time you tell the story. Everyone who tells the story tells it a little differently. This is the way it is supposed to be as long as you stay true to the story.

### 4. *How many stories do you tell?*

I have thirteen to fourteen stories that I usually tell, but seven or eight of them are probably the ones I tell best.

### 5. *Do you memorize stories?*

Yes, I memorize the events in the correct order so that I can tell it correctly and still be able to add myself to the story.

### 6. *What do you think is the most important thing in your mind when telling a story?*

Just pick good stories and enjoy the story. If you enjoy the story then you can share it better and that's what storytelling is all about.

## Suggested Activities

1. "Children of the Tree" was told in wonderful dialect. Did the dialect help or distract from the story? Why would dialect be important to a story? Ask the students to think of other types of stories that need dialect to be most effective. South Carolina Gullah tales are good examples of dialect stories.

2. Share some Greek mythology with the students. Discuss the stories and the characters in them. Why would these have influenced Mr. McCloud? Show Grecian art depicting these mythology characters. Be careful of the illustrations you chose to use with your class. Let your students draw their own illustrations.