



## The Serpent's Tale: Snakes in Folklore and Literature

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“We travel the world,” writes Gregory McNamee, “and wherever we go there are snake stories to entertain us.” Here are some fifty diverse and unusual accounts of serpents from cultures across time and around the globe: snakes that talk, jump, and dance; snakes that transform into other creatures; snakes that just . . . watch.

Many selections are drawn from the rich oral traditions of peoples in every clime that supports reptiles, from the Akimel O’odham of North America to the Mensa Bet-Abrahe of Africa to the Mungkjan of Australia. Included as well are such writings as prayers from the *Egyptian Book of the Dead*, fairy tales collected by the Brothers Grimm, a poem by Emily Dickinson, and a journal entry by Charles Darwin.

What we read about snakes in *The Serpent’s Tale* is just as fascinating for what it says about us, for there always will be something primordial about our connection to them. That bond is evident in these stories: in how we associate snakes with nature’s elemental forces, how we attribute special qualities to their eyes and skin, and how they preside over all phases of our existence, from creation to death to resurrection.

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