

TALL, TALL, TALL TALES

UNIT OVERVIEW

In this unit, students are taken on a tantalizing trip to the humorous world of tall tales. Part I provides a structured, teacher-centered approach focussing on the general characteristics of tall tales from different cultures and lands. Creative writing activities form the bulk of assignments in this section. Part II consists of optional activities building flexibility into the unit. Part III is a series of comprehension questions relating to the story collection “**American Tall Tales**”. Part IV includes a selection of well-loved tall tales which teachers can use in conjunction with the unit to supplement their own sources of tall tales. A tall tale songbook containing the words to some well-loved children’s songs completes Part V. The net result is a big pile of “baloney”.

PART I - TEACHING LESSONS

In this section, students learn about tall tales and their characteristics. A storyteller approach with creative writing assignments helps students to initially explore tall tales in a structured setting.

- 1) **Introductory Lesson - Mr. Baloney’s Tall Tale Wordsearch**
- 2) **What Are Tall Tales? - Baloney Or Not? - Fact From Fiction Worksheet**
- 3) **Tools For Effective Writing: Adjectives and Alliteration - Gross Menu**
- 4) **Tools For Effective Writing: Exaggeration - A Wild And Crazy Tale**
- 5) **Tools For Effective Writing: Similes - Mr. Baloney’s Comparisons**
- 6) **Tools For Effective Writing: Conversation - Record Breaking Conversation**
- 7) **Original Tall Tale - Tall Tale Writing**

PART II - OPTIONAL LESSONS

- 1) **Tall Tale Crossword**
- 2) **Videos**
- 3) **Bulletin Board Display**
- 4) **Selat Llat - April Fools’ Lesson**
- 5) **Cross Grading Rebus Story**
- 6) **Computer Software**

PART III - COMPREHENSION QUESTIONS: “American Tall Tales”

A series of questions have been prepared for each of the stories in the collection of tall tales entitled “*American Tall Tales*”.

PART IV - SELECTED TALL TALES FROM AROUND THE WORLD

A number of favourite tall tales from various lands have been selected to compliment the unit.

PART V - TALL TALE SONGBOOK

This collection of mostly humorous songs helps to integrate music into this fun unit.

PART VI - TALL TALE COLOURING BOOK

Illustrations of tall tale characters suitable for colouring.

BALONEY OR NOT? - FACT FROM FICTION

Name: _____

Instructions: Read the following stories. Help Mr. Baloney decide whether the story is fact (true) or fiction (untrue) and underline the correct answer. Next, explain the reason for your choice. Remember to Answer In Full Sentences whenever possible. (A.I.F.S.)

1. **THE PARROT (England)**

A bankrupt pet shop was holding a going-out-of-business sale and selling all the pets by auction. Among them was a beautifully coloured parrot, which a man wearing a black hat seemed determined to buy. However, every time the man made an offer, someone else would bid a higher price. The bids went higher and higher until at last the man in the black hat won out. The spectacular parrot was finally his and he walked out of the shop carrying the parrot in its shiny cage. Suddenly, he stopped dead in his tracks and thought with horror. In all the excitement to get the parrot he had forgotten to find out if the parrot was able to talk. Back he ran and holding the cage up to the auctioneer, demanded, "Does this bird talk?" "Who do you think was bidding against you all this time?" squawked the parrot.



(Underline your choice) a) fact b) fiction Explain your answer. (A.I.F.S.)

2. **SPITTING (United States)**

An old timer was telling tall stories. "I remember this young guy from a town called Luling, who could spit a watermelon seed like they was going out of style. Near as I can remember, his best spit was about 35 feet or about 20 meters, if you like to use metric." A little kid who was only nine stood up and said, "That's nothing! I once spit a seed over 30 meters. I just walked onto that tall train bridge over yonder and spit it into the river."



(Underline your choice) a) fact b) fiction Explain your answer. (A.I.F.S.)

THE TALKING CAT

(Quebecois)

Once in another time, my friends, a great change came into Tante Odette's life, although she was already an old woman who thought she had finished with such nonsense as changing one's habits.

It all happened because of a great change that came over Chouchou the cat. The gray cat was a good companion because he seemed quite content to live on bread crusts and cabbage soup. Tante Odette always kept a pot of soup boiling on the back of the stove. She added a little more water and a few more cabbage leaves to it each day. In this way, she always had soup on hand and she never had to throw any of it away.



She baked her own bread in her outdoor oven once a week, on Tuesday. If the bread grew stale by Saturday, she softened it in the cabbage soup. This way, nothing was wasted which suited Tante Odette just fine.

As Tante Odette worked at her loom every evening, Chouchou would lie on the little rug by the stove and steadily stare at her with his big green eyes.

"If only you could talk," Tante Odette would say, "what fine company you would be for me."

One fall evening, Tante Odette was busy at her loom. Her fingers flew among the threads like pigeons. Thump, thump went the loom. Suddenly there was a thump, thump that didn't come from the loom. It came from the door.

The old woman took the lamp from the table and went to the door. She opened it slowly. The light from the lamp shone on a strange old man who had the unmistakable look of the woods. He wore a bright red sash around his waist and a black crow feather in his woolen cap. He had a bushy mustache like a homemade broom and a brown crinkled face.

"Pierre Leblanc at your service," said the old man, making a deep bow.

"What do you want?" asked Tante Odette sharply. "I can't stand here all night with the door open. It wastes heat and firewood."



"I am looking for shelter and work," answered Pierre Leblanc. "I am getting too old to trap for furs or work in the lumber camps. I would like a job on just such a cozy little place as this."

"I don't need any help," snapped Tante Odette. "I am quite able to do everything by myself. And I have my cat."

GROSS MENU

Name: _____

You Are A Winner!

Can you believe your good luck? The accounting firm of Peat, Marvin And Thor has just announced that you have won a brand new restaurant in the Super School Lottery. As manager of the new restaurant, your job will be to choose a name for your new dining place and then prepare a menu. However, the contest rules stipulate that the restaurant can only serve "gross" food - the grosser the better!

Step 1 - Choose A Name

The name for your restaurant should be exciting and descriptive. (No "potty" humour please!)

Alliteration works best to help make the name more interesting. Be sure to think up a name quickly as the best ones will be going fast.

Restaurant Name _____

Step 2 - Layout of the Menu

Decide on the categories of food that your restaurant will serve, such as appetizers, main dishes, beverages, desserts, breakfast, sandwiches, sea food, pizza, kids, etc.

Step 3 - Brainstorm Menu Items

Try and quickly brainstorm as many "gross" foods and beverages as possible. Use of effective describing adjectives and alliteration will help to make your menu more appetizing. Be original, creative and the grosser the better. (Remember - be mature - No potty humour!)

_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____

Step 4 - Final Product

When completing the good copy, be sure that it is attractive and readable. The restaurant name goes on the front of the menu in large, easy-to-read letters.

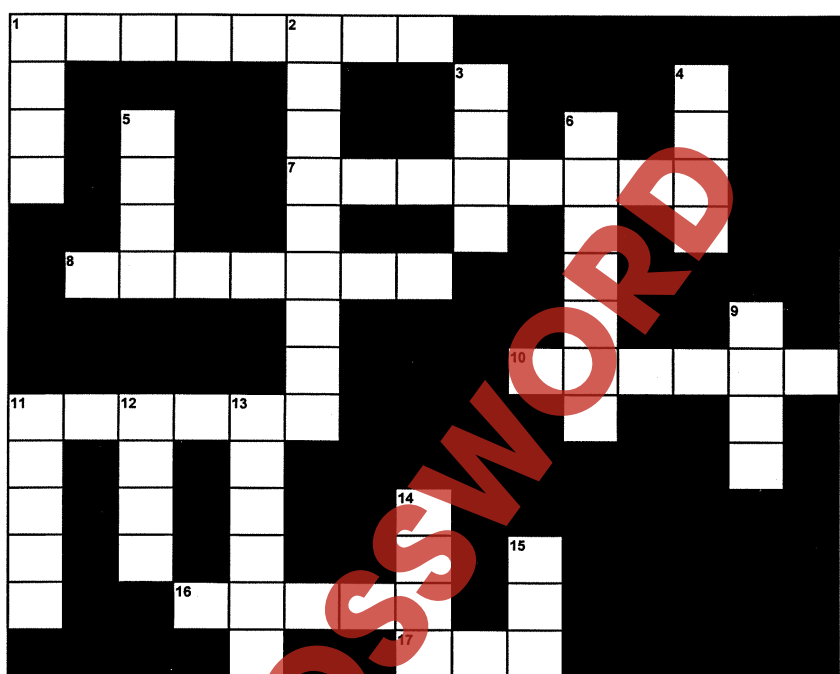
*** **BE CREATIVE!** ***

Title: _____

Name: _____

MR. BALONEY'S TALL TALE CROSSWORD

Name: _____



Across

1. A tall tale is just one of many types of this.
7. This "national" supermarket tabloid is famous for telling tall tales.
8. Tall tales often do this to the truth.
10. People might get this tall tale character on their foot.
11. This kind of comparison uses "like" or "as".
16. A famous tall tale "William".
17. Johnny Applesseed could use this piece of clothing for cooking.

Down

1. Mike _____ - a riverman.
2. Describes a noun.
3. A person, place or thing.
4. An action word.
5. The opposite of fiction.
6. This takes the place of a noun.
9. A blue bovine.
11. John Henry drove this instead of a car.
12. Gentle Annie's "crooked" flame.
13. Alliteration occurs when two or more words in a row begin with the same _____.
14. This type of story is often about the one that got away.
15. "As low as a snake's belly in a wagon _____" is an example of a simile.

PAUL BUNYAN

Name: _____

Instructions: Where possible, answer all questions in full sentences. (A.I.F.S.)

1. Why did Paul decide to move away from Maine?

2. Describe how Paul would chop down trees.

3. Why were Paul and Babe a perfect match for each other?

4. Why did the King of Sweden need Paul's help?

5. Why did Paul decide to go west to the Pacific Ocean?

6. What is a "peavey"?

6. Describe the incident in the story that you thought was the most humorous.

THE BEAR SONG

The other day (the other day)
I saw a bear (I saw a bear)
A great big bear (a great big bear)
A-way up there (a-way up there)
The other day I saw a bear,
A great big bear a-way up there.

He looked at me (he looked at me)
I looked at him (I looked at him)
He sized up me (he sized up me)
I sized up him (I sized up him)
He looked at me, I looked at him,
He sized me up, I sized him up.

He said to me
"Why don't you run?
I see you ain't
Got any gun."
He said to me, "Why don't you run?
I see you ain't got any gun."

And so I ran
Away from there
And right behind
Me was that bear
And so I ran away from there,
And right behind me was that bear.

In front of me
There was a tree
A great big tree
Oh, golly gee
In front of me there was a tree,
A great big tree, oh, golly gee.



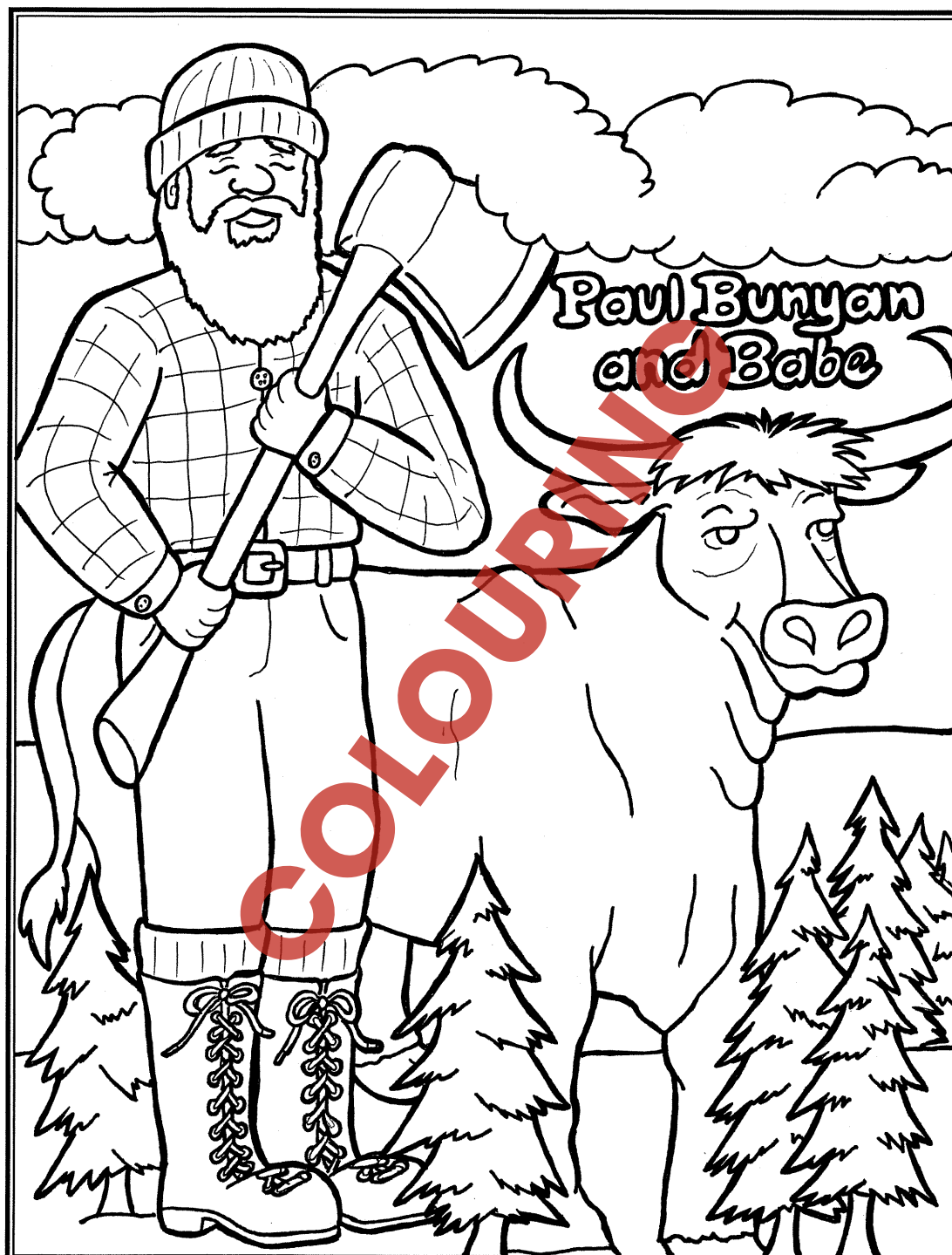
The nearest branch
Was ten feet up
I had to jump
And trust my luck
The nearest branch was ten feet up,
I had to jump and trust my luck.

And so I jumped
Into the air
And missed that branch
Away up there
And so I jumped into the air,
And missed that branch away up there.

Now don't you fret
And don't you frown
I caught that branch
On the way back down
Now don't you fret and don't you frown
I caught that branch on the way down.

That's all there is
There ain't no more
Until I meet
That bear once more
That's all there is, there ain't no more,
Until I meet that bear once more.

The end the end (the end the end)
The end the end (the end the end)
The end the end (the end the end)
The end the end (the end the end)
The end the end the end the end,
This time it really is the end.



MR. BALONEY'S TALL TALE WORDSEARCH

Name: _____

D E E S E L P P A Y N N H O J
 G J L X I P A U L B U N Y A N
 D O F I A M D A L G O Q K F V
 Y E Z O T G I I I X F O Q G U
 K M I Z L L G L T T Y M U E Z
 B U N L D X P E E B H I G N S
 X F X D A V Y C R O C K E T T
 O F R G H O Z T A A B E H L O
 S E L A T L L A T R T F F E R
 C R O O K E D M I C K I Q A M
 C A R A G A M E O J H N O N A
 W W J O H N H E N R Y K Z N L
 L L I B S O C E P Z U E E I O
 H T D V R H P J R D O L P E N
 I Q P N C M C Q W M F U S E G

ANSWER KEY

Find These Words:

Tall Tale
 Paul Bunyan
 Gentle Annie
 Exaggeration

Pecos Bill
 Davy Crockett
 Crooked Mick
 Simile

Joe Magarac
 Mike Fink
 Johnny Apppleseed
 Joe Mufferaw

Stormalong
 John Henry
 Alliteration
 Selat Llat

LESSON #1 - INTRODUCTORY LESSON

Student Objectives and Activities

Students are read the story, "Sky Bright Axe - Paul Bunyan", to establish interest in the tall tale genre of stories.

Students complete a wordsearch pertaining to tall tales.

Suggested Teaching Strategies

Begin by reading the tall tale, "Sky-bright Axe" – Paul Bunyan, from the collection, "American Tall Tales", written by Adrien Stoutenburg (Puffin Books, ISBN 0-14-030928-4). The book is available at many libraries or for purchase online. Or, teachers may choose to begin the unit with any other all tale.

After teachers have read the story, students are given the assignment, "Mr. Baloney's Tall Tale Wordsearch", familiarizing students with many of the tall tale characters they will encounter in the unit.

Students can work on the solution to the wordsearch independently or in pairs.

Note ***

This fun assignment is not difficult and is designed to build student's enthusiasm early in the unit.

Solution

D E E S E L P P A Y N N H O J
 G J L X I P A U L B U N Y A N
 D O F I A M D A L G O Q K F V
 Y E Z O T G I I I X F O Q G U
 K M I Z L L G L T T Y M U E Z
 B U N L D X P E E B H I G N S
 X F X D A V Y C R O C K E T T
 O F R G H O Z T A A B E H L O
 S E L A T L L A T R T F F E R
 C R O O K E D M I C K I Q A M
 C A R A G A M E O J H N O N A
 W W J O H N H E N R Y K Z N L
 L L I B S O C E P Z U E E I O
 H T D V R H P J R D O L P E N
 I Q P N C M C Q W M F U S E G