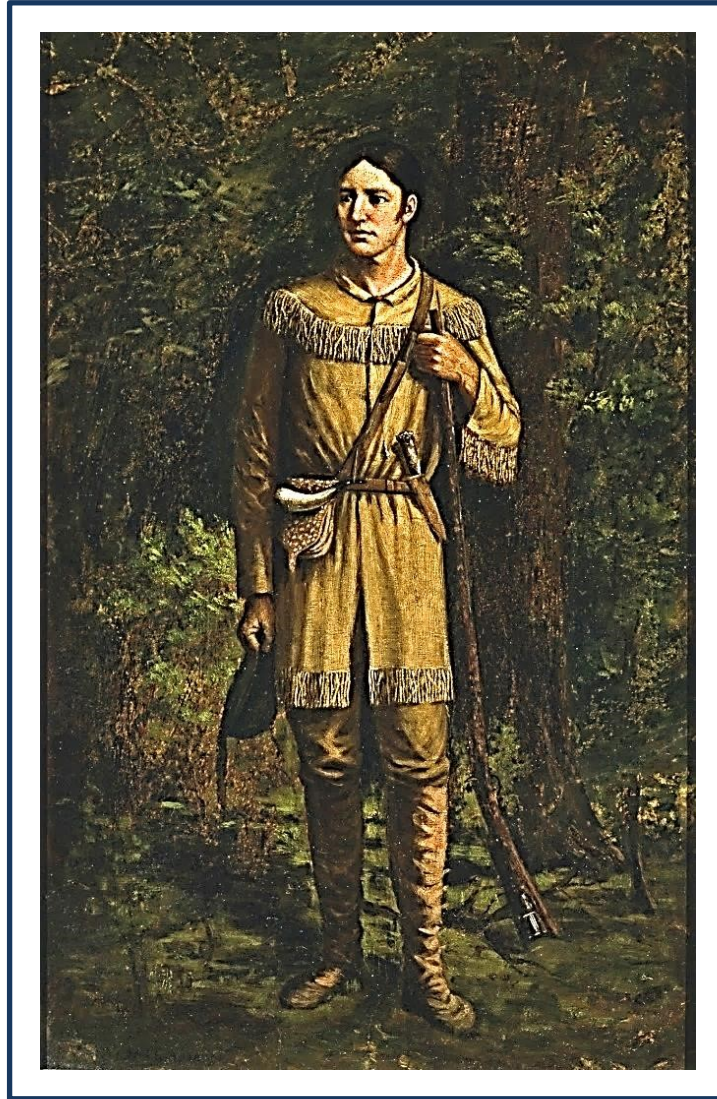


# American Folk Tales



## A Reading Guide by Lisa Kelly

*American Folk Tales: A Reading Guide* is a companion guide for both *American Tall Tales* by Adrien Stoutenburg and *Cut from the Same Cloth* by Robert D. San Souci.



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# Lesson Notes

1. “Connection” questions and prompts were written to bridge the gap between chapter readings. They were designed to bring forth what students already know about a topic so that the new information can be connected to it.
2. Have students define the words listed under “Words to Know” either independently or together orally with the teacher. Teachers and students should locate any listed places, read and discuss any notes included at the beginning of each lesson and discuss the pronunciation of any words, as needed.
3. Students should either have the book read aloud to them or should read each chapter (or reading section) together with the teacher or should read the book independently, whichever best fits.
4. After reading, students should narrate. There are multiple narration suggestions for each chapter.
5. Any lessons in literary terms can be included or omitted as it best fits the needs of your students.

Students will need the following:

- *American Tall Tales* by Adrien Stoutenburg
- *Cut from the Same Cloth* by Robert D. San Souci
- *American Folk Tales: A Guided Study* by Lisa Kelly

## Additional Reading –OPT

*Thunder Rose* by Jerdine Nolen

*Casey Jones* adapted by Stephen Krensky

*Raven: A Trickster Tale from the Pacific Northwest* by Gerald McDermott

*McBroom’s Wonderful One-Acre Farm: Three Tall Tales* by Sid Fleischman

## Literary Elements & Techniques

- hero and heroine
- tall tale, legend & myth
- personification
- setting
- hyperbole
- simile
- onomatopoeia

## Geography Inclusion

A survey study of the states is included with this guide in that students are suggested to mark the general locations and areas where the stories included take place on an outline map of the US. [A printable map of the US is included in the appendix.] It is also suggested that students label the states using postal abbreviations to preserve space and to practice this skill. [A key for these abbreviations is also included in the appendix.] Mapping skills are practiced in that students are asked to create a map key to coordinate with the colors used in marking the map. You may choose to omit this portion of the guide, if you wish. Teachers of students who are much younger may wish to make a family map –one which is shared and worked on together.

## Exam Prompts

- Share a favorite scene. What made this scene memorable?
- Illustrate any scene. Give your picture a title or caption and share it, telling about the scene depicted. Why did you choose to illustrate this scene?

**There are more exam prompts in the complete guide; this is a sample only.**

# Reading 1

- \* Read ½ of “Paul Bunyan” from *American Tall Tales*.

## Before the Reading

- Connection: Use the title and cover illustration to help you predict what this book might be about. What are tall tales? [See notes below.] Have you heard of Paul Bunyan? Have you heard stories in which some things seemed impossible to be true?
- Words to Know: nuisance and gale
- Locate: Maine, Michigan, Wisconsin, Minnesota + Illinois and label each [with postal abbreviations – see appendix for key] on the outline map of the US [see appendix]; color each state **lightly** in blue, with lines going in one direction only. When all the tales have been completed, you will need to create a map key, which indicates which color coordinates with which tale [see appendix]. Find the North Pole on a globe or map.
- Note: Discuss these measurements: 50 ft. and a mile –giving students a sense of their length.
- Review or introduce the following literary element: tall tale [see notes below].
- Read pp. 11-17; stop reading just before the paragraph which begins “There wasn’t much Paul couldn’t do...” (17).

## Literary Elements

A **tall tale** is an exaggerated story, which may or may not be based in truth. Often associated with folklore of the American frontier, tall tales became popular in the 1800s and gave a glimpse of life at that time. Traditionally orally given, tall tales are stories which over time became more and more exaggerated.

Characteristics of tall tales include:

1. Larger-than-life characters, sometimes with incredible abilities
2. Plots which are impossible
3. Typically, the main character overcomes problems
4. Everyday language and dialects used
5. Characters sometimes have a helpful animal companion and/or tool
6. Tend to be locational; sometimes natural phenomenon/geographical features explained

## After the Reading

### Narration Suggestions –Choose One

- Describe Paul Bunyan and his ox, Babe.
- Draw a picture of any scene from this chapter. Give your picture a title or caption and share it with someone, telling of the scene depicted.
- Which scene was your favorite? Retell it comic-strip style.
- What would you have done differently if you had been Paul's parents?
- Create models of Paul and Babe and act out any scene(s).

### Literary Techniques

**Personification** is a literary device that gives human characteristics to nonhuman things or inanimate objects.

Study the quote below:

*The trees marched up mountains and down again. They followed rivers and creeks. They massed up together in purple canyons and shoved each other out of the way on the shores of lakes (13).*

- Describe what is happening in this scene. Which non-human thing is given human characteristics? [Ans. trees] Which human-like attributes are given? [Ans. marching and shoving] What does personification add to this scene?





## Reading 2

- \* Complete Chapter 1: “Paul Bunyan” from *American Tall Tales*.

### Before the Reading

- Connection: Describe Paul’s ox, Babe. How did he come to be blue?
- Words to Know: maul and peavey
- Locate: North Dakota, Oregon + Washington and label each on the outline map of the US [see appendix]; color each one **lightly** with blue, with lines going in one direction only. Additionally, label the Pacific Ocean. Show how Paul went westward across the US by sweeping your finger from east to west. Find Alaska, Lake Superior, the Mississippi River and Sweden on a globe or map. [Extension: Locate the Grand Canyon and the Cascade Mountains.]
- Continue reading from where Reading 1 left until the end of the chapter.

### After the Reading

#### Narration Suggestions –Choose One

- Give an account of Paul Bunyan’s work and adventures.
- Should Paul have cut so many trees?
- Describe the scene which seemed most unlikely. How do you know this?
- Write a newspaper article describing how Paul Bunyan cleared farmland in North Dakota for the King of Sweden.
- Draw a picture of the scene which was most humorous. Give your picture a title or caption and share it with someone, telling of it and what made it so humorous.

## Reading 21

- \* Read “Annie Christmas” [pp. 29-33] from *Cut from the Same Cloth*.

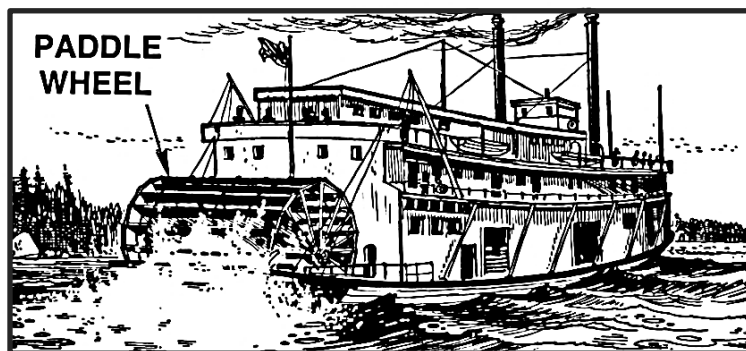
### Before the Reading

- Connection: Would you have trusted Molly Cottontail? What do you know of New Orleans? Our next story takes place here. Which character of whom we’ve already read was good with a keelboat? [Ans. Mike Fink] Annie Christmas is also good with a keelboat.
- Words to Know: keelboat, levee, hull and starboard
- Note: Remove or edit the following phrase [p. 35]: “black as coal”.
- Note: This book includes a map at the beginning. The map marks the general location of the setting of each story with a simple illustration. Be sure to use the map at the beginning of each lesson. For this story, look for “Annie Christmas”.
- Locate: Louisiana and label on the outline map of the US [see appendix]; color it lightly in blue violet. Review the location of the Mississippi River and New Orleans on a globe or map.
- Review the characteristics of a tall tale, as needed.

### After the Reading

#### Narration Suggestions –Choose One

- Tell of Annie Christmas and how she saved the passengers on the *Natchez Belle*.
- Is Annie a heroine? Write a list of qualities that a heroine might have. Which of these does Annie exhibit?
- Think of two new titles for this story and tell how each one fits.
- List the characteristics of this story which make it an example of a tall tale. Which characteristics, if any, are missing?
- Draw a picture of any scene from this story. Give your picture a title or caption and share it with someone, telling of the scene depicted.



## Literary Techniques

**Similes** compare two things that are unlike and use the connecting words like or as.

Find the simile in the following lines:

*...while Annie, in her red satin dress and red hair plumes, hauled them along like some strange bird of passage (40).*

- What is being compared to what? Why?
- Draw a picture to illustrate this simile and copy the simile underneath or above it.
- How does the simile enhance the reading?

[Ans. Annie (in her current state of dress) is compared to a strange bird of passage.]

