

World Literature Reading B

BEFORE YOU READ

About the Selection

During the settlement of the United States, storytellers entertained people with tall tales—outlandish stories of courage, cunning, or just plain silliness. Many tall tales provided an explanation for a natural event. Pecos Bill and the giant lumberjack Paul Bunyan are two famous characters from traditional American tall tales.

Reader's Dictionary

bronco: wild horse

vicinity: a surrounding area

flapjacks: pancakes

vittles: food

Guided Reading

Note how the actions of Pecos Bill and Paul Bunyan changed the natural landscape. Then answer the questions that follow.

Tall Tales of the American West

Pecos Bill Rides a Tornado

Now everyone in the West knows that Pecos Bill could ride anything. No bronco could throw him, no sir! Fact is, I only heard of Bill gettin' thrown once in his whole career as a cowboy. Yep, it was that time he was up Kansas way and decided to ride him a tornado.

Now Bill wasn't gonna ride jest any tornado, no ma'am. He waited for the biggest durned tornado you ever saw. It was turning the sky black and green, and roaring so loud it woke up the farmers away over in China. Well, Bill jest grabbed that there tornado, pushed it to the ground and jumped on its back. The tornado whipped and whirled and sidewinded and generally cussed its bad luck all the way down to Texas. Tied the rivers into knots, flattened all the forests so bad they had to rename one place the Staked Plains. But Bill jest rode along all calm-like, give it an occasional jab with his spurs.

Finally, that tornado decided it wasn't gettin' this cowboy off its back no-how. So it headed west to California and jest rained itself out. Made so much water it washed out the

Grand Canyon. That tornado was down to practically nothing when Bill finally fell off. He hit the ground so hard it sank below sea level. Folks call the spot Death Valley.

Anyway, that's how rodeo got started. Though most cowboys stick to broncos these days.

Paul Bunyan's Kitchen

One winter, Paul Bunyan came to log along the Little Gimlet in Oregon. Ask any old timer who was logging that winter, and they'll tell you I ain't lying when I say his kitchen covered about ten miles of territory. That stove, now, she were a grand one. An acre long, taller than a scrub pine, and when she was warm, she melted the snow for about twenty miles around. The men logging in the vicinity never had to put on their jackets 'til about noon on a day when Paul Bunyan wanted flapjacks.

It was quite a site to see, them cooks of Paul Bunyan's makin' flapjacks. Cookie would send four of the boys up with a side of hog tied to each of their snowshoes, and they'd skate

World Literature Reading B

continued

around up there keeping the griddle greased while Cookie and seven other men flipped flapjacks for Paul Bunyan. Took them about an hour to make enough flapjacks to fill him up. The rest of us had to wait our turn.

The table we had set up for the camp was about ten miles long. We rigged elevators to the table to bring the vittles to each end, and some of the younger lads in the camp rode bicycles down the path at the center, carryin' cakes and such wherever they were called for.

We had one mishap that winter. Babe the Blue Ox accidentally knocked a bag of dried peas off the countertop when he swished his tail. Well, them peas flew so far and so fast out of the kitchen that they knocked over a dozen loggers comin' home for lunch, clipped the tops off of several pine trees, and landed in the hot spring. We had pea soup to eat for the rest of the season, which was okay by me, but them boys whose Mamas insisted they bathe more than once a year were pretty sore at losing their swimming hole.

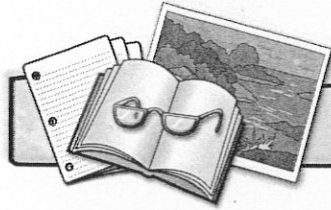
Literary Response and Analysis

1. **Explaining** How did Pecos Bill change the landscape of the Southwest?

2. **Identifying** What examples of exaggeration are evident in Paul Bunyan's tale?

3. **Analyzing** Based on these two stories, name at least four characteristics of a tall tale.

4. **Drawing Conclusions** When American pioneers created tall tales such as these, what were they trying to say about themselves and their lives? Explain your answer.



Primary Source Reading A

BEFORE YOU READ

Interpreting the Source

Sir Wilfrid Laurier (1841–1919) was the prime minister of Canada from 1896 to 1911. Often called the “Father of Modern Canada,” Sir Laurier worked toward establishing a strong identity for his country. He worked with the governments of other nations to help develop good policies and laws for the Canadian people.

Reader’s Dictionary

annexation: to connect one country with another politically

check: to slow down with caution

reciprocity: shared, felt, or shown by both sides

vestige: the smallest sign or trace

harbour (harbor): to hold a thought in mind (British spelling)

republic: referring to the United States

Guided Reading

On March 7, 1911, in a speech before the Canadian House of Commons, Laurier addressed the idea of annexation with the United States. The excerpt below describes Laurier’s belief that annexation would not be to either country’s advantage. Read the passage, and then answer the questions that follow.

From Sir Wilfrid Laurier’s “Speech Before the House of Commons, March 7, 1911”

Once upon a time there was a very strong annexationist movement in this country, and it received its first check when Lord Elgin brought back from Washington the reciprocity treaty of 1856. From that day to this the desire for annexation has dwindled and swindled, until there is not a vestige of it left in any part of this country.

Once upon a time—this is also a matter of history—the Canadian confederation should become a part of the American union. Recent events have shown that there are still men in the United States who harbour that hope. But there are also men who are beginning to perceive that the republic, though its career has been glorious, has yet many questions to solve

and many dangers to face; and many of them are beginning to recognize that the solution of their difficult problems would be seriously complicated, perhaps fatally impaired, if, in the territory of the republic, was to be included another territory as large as their own, with a people not yet as numerous, but destined to be as numerous as their own, with problems of their own also to solve, and whose union with the United States would only add to the complications which the American people have to meet.

Source: Sir Wilfrid Laurier. “Speech Before the House of Commons, March 7, 1911.” www.collectionscanada.ca/primeministers/h4-4062-e.html.

Primary Source Reading A

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Document-Based Questions

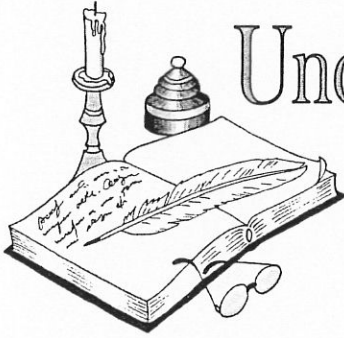
Directions: Use information from the primary source to answer the questions below.

1. Naming Canadian interest in annexation with the United States dwindled as a result of what treaty?

2. Describing How did some people in the United States feel about joining with Canada?

3. Identifying What two factors did Laurier say would cause problems if the United States and Canada combined?

4. Expressing What are two reasons you believe annexation would have been a good idea, and two reasons it would not have been a good idea?



Understanding Primary Sources

DIRECTIONS: Primary sources can be hard to understand because they use “old time” or hard-to-read words. It can help if you take time to think through the primary source and why it was written.

1. What kind of primary source is it? _____
2. Date of the source: _____
3. Author (or creator): _____
4. Why do you think the author wrote (or the creator made) this source?

5. Who did the author (creator) think would see or read the source?

6. List FIVE things from the source that you think are important:

7. Write at least TWO questions you would ask the author (or creator) if you could. _____

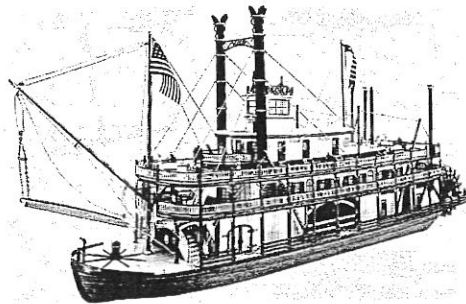
From Life on the Mississippi by Mark Twain, 1863

CHAPTER I



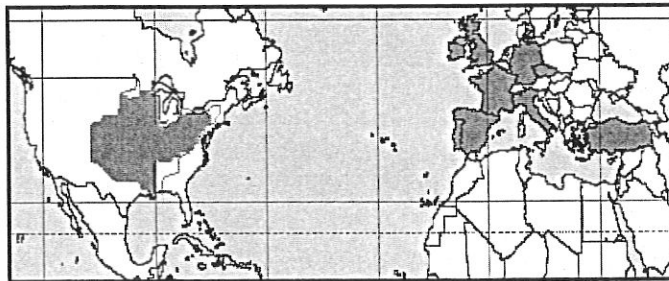
“The Mississippi is well worth reading about. It is not a commonplace river, but on the contrary is in all ways remarkable. Considering the Missouri its main branch, it is the longest river in the world -- four thousand three hundred miles. It seems safe to say that it is also the crookedest river in the world, since in one part of its journey it uses up one thousand three hundred miles to cover the same ground that the crow would fly over in

six hundred and seventy-five. ... No other river has so vast a drainage-basin: it draws its water supply from twenty-eight States and Territories; from Delaware, on the Atlantic seaboard, and from all the country between that and Idaho on the Pacific slope -- a spread of forty-five degrees of longitude. The Mississippi receives and carries to the Gulf water from fifty-four rivers that are



navigable by steamboats (above), and from some hundreds that are navigable by flats and keels (left).

The area of its drainage-basin is as great as the combined areas of England, Scotland, Wales, Ireland, France, Germany, Austria, Italy, Spain, Portugal, and Turkey (right); almost all this wide region is fertile...



It is a remarkable river in this: that instead of widening toward its mouth, it grows narrower; grows narrower and deeper. From the ... Ohio to a point half way down to the sea, the width averages a mile in high water: thence to the sea the width steadily diminishes (gets smaller), until, above the mouth, it is but little over half a mile. At the ... Ohio the Mississippi's depth is eighty-seven feet; the depth increases gradually, reaching one hundred and twenty-nine just above the mouth... Although the Mississippi's mud builds land but slowly, down at the mouth ... it builds fast enough in better protected regions higher up: for instance, Prophet's Island ... the river has added seven hundred acres to it...”