



Dear Family Member,

Today, your child heard the tall tale “Paul Bunyan,” a story about a fictional logger on the American frontier. Over the next few days, your child will hear three more tall tales about other larger-than-life characters on the American frontier—Pecos Bill, John Henry, and Casey Jones. Each tall tale will expose your child to the use of exaggeration. Below are some suggestions for activities that you may do at home to reinforce what your child is learning about tall tales.

1. Telling a Tall Tale

Ask your child what elements make a tall tale. (larger-than-life characters; exaggerations; amazing childhoods; unbelievable adventures; inventions of things in nature; humor) Ask your child to retell a tall tale. Then create your own tall tale with your child, asking him/her what kinds of characters and settings you will need. Ask him/her to provide ideas for your larger-than-life character’s adventures.

2. Exaggerations

Have your child share some of the exaggerations s/he has heard from the tall tales. (Paul Bunyon straightened the Mississippi River and dug the Grand Canyon; Casey Jones drove a train and was known for always being on time; Pecos Bill rode a mountain lion and squeezed the meanness out of a rattlesnake; John Henry was born with a hammer in his hand and could swing a ten-pound hammer all day without getting tired.) Share with your child any literary exaggerations you know of.

3. Draw and Write

Have your child draw and write about what s/he has learned about any of the tall tale characters—Paul Bunyan, Pecos Bill, John Henry, or Casey Jones—and then have him/her share his/her drawing and writing with you. Ask questions to keep your child using the vocabulary learned at school.

4. Song: The Ballad of John Henry

Find a recording of “The Ballad of John Henry” from the public library or on the internet, and listen to it with your child. As you listen, have your child explain the tall tale of John Henry in his or her own words.

5. Words to Use

Below is a list of some of the words that your child will be using and learning about. Try to use these words as they come up in everyday speech with your child.

- *legendary*—Paul Bunyan was a legendary figure among real lumbermen on the frontier.
- *feat*—Tall tale characters always have adventures where they accomplish one amazing feat after another.
- *admiration*—Pecos Bill had a great deal of admiration for his horse, Lightning.
- *tame*—Tall tale characters rarely lead tame and unexciting lives.

6. Read Aloud Each Day

It is very important that you read with your child every day. There should be time to read to your child and also time to listen to your child read to you. I have attached a list of recommended trade books related to tall tales that may be found at the library.

Be sure to let your child know how much you enjoy hearing about what s/he has learned at school.