

# Tell a Ton of Tall Tales

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**Grade Level: 3-5**

**Time Allotment:** Three 45- minute classes

**Overview:** Telling Tall Tales. This lesson will introduce the class to telling tall tales. Using video, internet resources and publishing software students will write and tell a tall tale based on an everyday event. Students will learn how to use gestures, their voice and their imagination to create and tell an exciting tall tale.

**Subject Matter:** English (written and verbal language skills)

## Learning Objectives:

Students will be able to:

- Identify a tall tale
- Write a tall tale
- Tell a tall tale
- Use appropriate language, structure, tone, and voice control in oral communication
- Produce and present oral presentations demonstrating appropriate delivery techniques
- Understand and use vocabulary (see vocabulary attachment):
  - Exaggerate
  - Hyperbole
  - Simile
  - Metaphor
  - Tall tale

## Standards:

The objectives listed may be used in part to address the following Virginia Standards of Learning: Virginia Department of Education

<http://www.pen.k12.va.us/VDOE/Superintendent/Sols/home.shtml>

3.1 The student will use effective communication skills in group activities.

3.2 The student will use strategies to read a variety of fiction and nonfiction materials.

4.1 The student will use effective oral communication skills in a variety of settings.

C/T 5.4 The student will communicate through application software.

C/T 5.3 The student will process, store, retrieve, and transmit electronic information.

## Media Components:

Video:

*Telling Tales, Hardy Hard Head # 101*

### Web Sites:

Use this site as a review if students cannot remember what tall tales are. This site gives an overview of what should be in a tall tale and some examples of tall tales.

<http://www.hasd.org/ges/talltale/talltale.htm>

This site is a slide show of the story of Paul Bunyan. Use it as a review of tall tales or when you do the math lesson in the culminating activity section.

<http://www.paulbunyantrail.com/talltale.html>

This site describes some of the characters from some of the more popular tall tales. Use this site as a review if needed to help students

[http://www.perry-lake.k12.oh.us/pes/clubs/Drama%20Club/character\\_descriptions.htm](http://www.perry-lake.k12.oh.us/pes/clubs/Drama%20Club/character_descriptions.htm)

### Materials for the classroom

- Copies of different Tall Tales for student resource and review
- Computer with word processor (optional)
- Computer with PowerPoint, KidPix or other presentation software. (Optional)
- Cardboard to reproduce the fallen rock sign used for the introduction (see attached)
- Copy of the Fallen Rock Tall tale (see attached)
- Tape recorder
- Video recorder (optional)
- Teacher computer with a projector or connection to a television to use for showing websites or student work.
- TV with VCR and remote
- Vocabulary list (attached)

### Materials for each student

- Paper and pencil
- Construction paper
- Scissors
- Tape or glue

### Prep for Teachers

The teacher should preview and cue the video as indicated in the Learning Activities section. Have all handouts and the sign ready. Read and become familiar with the story of Fallen Rock so you can tell this tall tale during the introductory activity. Add facial expressions and exaggeration as you tell the tale. Students should have a working knowledge of the internet and the word processor and presentation software they will be using.

### Introductory Activity

1. Hold up the sign that you reproduced of Watch for Fallen Rock. **ASK:** “What is this?” (Road sign or road sign for fallen rocks). **ASK:** “Who thinks they know what this sign means?” (Accept answers regarding rocks falling into the road).

- Say** to the class, “You had some good answers but do you want me to tell you what this sign really means?” (The class will say yes). “Before I tell you, who would like to take a guess at what they think this sign could mean if it didn’t mean watch for rocks on the road.” (Allow students to brainstorm ideas, encourage them by saying good idea). **Say to the class:** “Who is ready to know what this sign really means?” Tell the story of Fallen Rock (attached,) as you tell the story make sure you are very animated in your delivery.
2. When you finish telling the tall tale, **ASK:** “Who believes this story of Fallen Rock?” Allow students to respond but as they say no, they do not believe it, **ask:** “What type of story is this?” “(tall tale). “Yes, this was a tall tale. Remember when we read tall tales there were certain things that had to be included in a tall tale. Who remembers?”(This is based on previous learning so you may need to review. Go to the following website: <http://www.hasd.org/ges/talltale/talltale.htm> for a review. Write their ideas on the board as the class tells you. “Yes, a tall tale is a story that has larger than life characters, exaggeration, and some type of problem that is solved in a funny way, characters that use everyday language and characters that seem to be ordinary at first.”

### **Learning Activities:**

1. Tell the class that today we are going to tell a tall tale as a class, and then we will write one. **Ask:** “Who would like to volunteer to tell me something that has happened to them lately, such as missing the bus, playing a ball game, climbing a tree?” When the student is finished, have another student tell the same story, adding exaggerations throughout the tale (ex. the student runs to school faster than the bus and is the first to sit down in class; the basketball team scores 1,000 points; the child eats the biggest ice cream cone in the world in one sitting). Repeat this exercise with a few more students. Instruct the students to make their exaggerations specific, and to use comparisons to other things (similes and metaphors, see attached vocabulary sheet).

2. After they finish this exercise the class should start to understand how to take an everyday event and turn it into a tall tale. If you have students who require extra help continue with the following activity. If they are ready to move on, jump down to the next activity.

**Say:** “I am going to make a statement and I want to see how you can change that statement into the beginning of a tall tale. ‘Today I rode my bike two miles to see my friend’.” **ASK:** “How can you add to or change that statement to make it sound like a tall tale?” (students may increase the miles or speed). **Say:** “Here is another statement. ‘Yesterday all I did was sit outside and watch a robin build her nest’.” **ASK:** “How can you add to or change that statement to make it sound like a tall tale?” (students may change the bird or what the bird was doing).

3. “I think we are ready to write and tell our own tall tale now.” **Say to the class:** “Tall Tales are great fun because it is the only chance we get to tell a big lie and not get into trouble. I want you to think of something that has happened to you and turn it into a tall tale. Afterwards we will learn how to be storytellers and share our tall tales.”

Give students enough time to write their tall tale. It does not have to be in a final form for them to start telling their tale.

4. Next class or after they all have a tale written, **say to the class**, “Today we are going to watch a clip of a video that shows a storyteller telling a tall tale. By watching her we will learn how to be a better storyteller so we can tell our tall tale.”

5. To set a **Focus for Media Interaction** say to the class: “I am going to show you a clip of a woman telling a tall tale and I want you to see if you can tell me who this tall tale is going to be about.” **START**: At the beginning of the tape when you see the title “Hardy Hard Head”. **PAUSE**: when she says, “I would like to tell you a story about Jack, Will and Tom, Jack’s brothers.” **ASK**: “Whom is this tale going to be about?” (Jack, Will and Tom). **Say to the class**: “We want to watch how this storyteller tells her tale about Jack and his brothers. I am going to turn the volume down and I want to see if you can tell what is going on in the story just by the way the storyteller is acting.” **FAST FORWARD** until the storyteller starts to mix something in an imaginary bowl and says, “Will, come on”. **STOP** the tape and turn the sound down. **ASK**: “I want you to see if you can tell what this storyteller is doing?” **Start** the tape from that point and **PAUSE** when you see the little blond-haired girl in a white shirt. **ASK**: “What is the storyteller doing?” (mixing something in a bowl). **ASK**: “What do you think she is making?” (Accept a variety of answers). **ASK**: “When we are telling our story can we use invisible props?” (Yes). **ASK**: “What about gestures (you may need to tell the class what a gesture is); can we use gestures?” (Yes) **Say to class**: “Let’s go back and see what the storyteller was saying while she mixed something in her bowl. Also, I want you find out who that boy is and why is he in this tall tale?” **REWIND** to where the storyteller was beginning to mix something in the bowl and she says “Will come on”. This time **play it with the sound on**. **STOP** when you see the little blond-haired girl in a white shirt and the storytellers says, “...worse than those punk rock and rollers”. **ASK**: “What was the storyteller doing?”(making breakfast). “Who was the little boy and why was he there?” (His name was Will and he wanted to go and try to trick the witch). **ASK**: “Do you think it added to the story when the storyteller was pretending to be making breakfast?” (yes). “Why do you think pretending to do something like making breakfast would make a story better?”(accept answers that relate to helping the audience “see” what is happening and how it may make it more exciting). **Say to the class**: “We know that the storyteller uses pretend props, students, and her hands to gesture. I wonder what else she uses to help tell her story? I want you to listen carefully to this next clip to see what she uses this time to help make her story exciting.” **FAST FORWARD** until you see a little girl with a white shirt come on stage to be a tree and the storyteller says, “...oak tree, yea”. **STOP** when the storyteller says “...selfish, selfish” and walks away. **ASK**: “What did the storyteller use this time to help make her story exciting?” (she changed her voice to sound like an old man).

6. **Say to the class**: “When we are telling our tall tales we have many things that we can use to help make our story more exciting. Let’s see if we can list them all on the board.”

- gestures (pretending to do something using invisible props)
- other students

- our voice
- the type of language we use, exaggerations, hyperboles, similes and metaphors

7. **ASK:** “Is there anything else that we can use that this storyteller didn’t use?” Take time to brainstorm some ideas. Some examples may be costumes and real props.

### **Culminating Activity:**

1. **Say:** “We are going to take turns telling our tall tales. You can use all of the things we discussed earlier to make your tall tale more exciting. We will take about ten minutes to prepare, then we will start. We will also tape record our stories so we can hear our own tall tale later.” If appropriate (make sure you follow your school district policy for video taping students) videotape the students telling their tall tale.

2. Create a rubric to grade the students telling their tall tale (you can have different rubrics based upon students’ present level of performance) and also have the students turn in a written copy of their tall tale. This can be hand written or they can type them on the computer.

### **Cross-Curricular Extensions**

English:

Have one student write a sentence and give it to the next student. They read that sentence and add another sentence to it. After they write their sentence they fold the paper so the first sentence is hidden and only the sentence that they had written is showing. They pass it to the next student where they continue to read the one sentence, write a response and then fold the paper to hide the first two sentences. Continue this until everyone has a chance to add to the tall tale. Before the students start this activity remind them that they are adding to a tall tale so make sure they use everything they learned in writing a tall tale.

Math:

Read the story of Paul Bunyan and figure how tall he was and also how tall Babe the Blue Ox was. Take the measurement and compare them to how tall they are, their parents or even the school.

Technology:

Have the students put their tall tale into PowerPoint or KidPix as a way to present their tall tale.

Art:

Create set designs, costumes and props for telling tall tales. Discuss how bright colors used on a set can enhance or take away from the story.

**Community Connections:**

Have a storyteller come to class to not only tell a story but to talk about how they became a storyteller and what all is involved.

Have someone from the newspaper come to class to talk about the difference between a tall tale and a public-interest article in the paper.

## The Story of Fallen Rock

Many, many years ago Native Americans lived in these mountains. There was one very powerful tribe with a very powerful Chief. Everyone listened to this chief and would bring him the best deer or bear that they killed. This chief had one son, Fallen Rock. He was very proud of his son who even as a small boy was very strong and smart.

One day he sent Fallen Rock with the hunting party so he could learn how to hunt. During the day a big storm blew in over the mountain and the hunting party couldn't see anything around them so they all stopped and waited near a big tree. Thunder exploded over the mountain and raindrops as big as bear paws fell to the earth. The wind howled like thousands of wounded animals. After a few hours the storm was over and everyone looked around for Fallen Rock but they could not find him. They searched the rest of that day and into the night. The next day they went back to the chief to tell him that they could not find Fallen Rock. The chief sent out a huge search party to find Fallen Rock. His best scouts and trackers spent a long time searching, but they could not find the chief's son. Then the chief went out himself, but even he could not find him. The chief would go out looking everyday. He would ask other Native Americans who visited his camp if they had seen him. Some say they caught a glimpse of him in the mountains. That mighty chief never gave up. As the settlers came into the mountains, the chief asked them if they had seen his son Fallen Rock but he got the same answer. They think they may have caught a glimpse of him. So, even to this day they are still looking for Fallen Rock. You might even see the signs on the side of the road that shows how the mighty chief never gave up his search. The signs simply say, Watch For Fallen Rock. And if you look closely, you might just catch a glimpse of him too.

## Vocabulary

### Tall Tales

1. exaggerate: to represent as greater than is actually the case; to overstate.
2. hyperbole: a figure of speech in which exaggeration is used for emphasis or effect.
3. metaphor: a figure of speech in which a word or phrase that ordinarily refers to one thing is used to describe another, as in: "The sky was a blank gray slate" or "Her eyes were deep, blue pools."
4. simile: a figure of speech in which two unlike things are compared, often in a phrase introduced by like or as, as in "she swam like a fish" or "his face was as red as a beet."
5. tall tale: a humorous tale told in a straightforward, believable tone but relating absolutely impossible events or feats of the characters. These tales were commonly told of frontier adventures during the settlement of the western United States.



**WATCH  
FOR  
FALLEN ROCKS**