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Cultural Unity through Folktales

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Seventh and eighth grade students are a delightful mix of optimism (that anything is possible), willingness (to experience life to its fullest), anticipation (by skipping the growing process and wanting what might happen six or eight years later), and bewilderment (with what they are going through). They have an impatience with anything or anyone that is outside of their quite involved but tightly limited experience. It is this characteristic that I would like to help them with—the characteristic of not understanding any thing that is different. If they don't know what or why something is done the way that it is, they have a tendency to think that it is stupid and therefore will laugh at it or ridicule it. For example, if they hear someone speak with a different accent, they think that it is hilarious. When it is explained to them, they become very interested and will ask insightful and thoughtful questions. They will accept the difference with pride and understanding. Teenagers and pre-teenagers who don't understand differences often will not accept a classmate who wears different clothes, has a different mental capacity, speaks differently from the way they do, looks different, uses different language expressions, has different religious beliefs, or is taught different values at home. It poses a dilemma for all students who want to be accepted by their peers. These same students who are so willing to ostracize the "different" child will also befriend that same child when presented with background for these differences. It is my intent that through the study of folktales of various cultures found in the United States, junior high students will discover not only the joy of reading but also the greater joy that comes from learning acceptance and understanding of one's fellow human beings.

The first unit in the seventh grade *Vistas*, the basal reading book, is about fables and folk tales. I will use a couple of the stories, which are tall tales, and supplement these tales with stories from different cultural groups in the areas of trickster tales, legends, and some of the many forms of the Cinderella story. Even though I have chosen only two or three stories from each of the first three categories, I have worked hard to find many examples of each type, especially of the Cinderella stories. In a way, the extensive annotated bibliographies are the real heart of my unit, for it is in them that I have tried to make fully available to other teachers the results of my efforts. The Students' Bibliography is all tales and collections of tales that are written for the younger person. The Teacher's Bibliography has further collections in addition to some works of scholarship by folklorists.

In order to know who we are, it is essential that we know who and what we have been. Folktales help us out here as they are the oldest accounts which have been shared in the oral tradition. Nowadays, we are very fortunate that many of these stories have been written down and have been preserved in books so that they will be available for years to come. These tales are important for us to understand because they tell us the

way that life was for the common man. They will often tell us something of the history of a particular area, the values of the people, and how they lived and what their behaviors and customs were.

Folk tales are fascinating and entertaining. Levette Davidson in his book *A Guide to American Folklore* suggests that comparative studies in folklore provide a bridge from one folk culture to another. He articulates a fundamental notion that any knowledge or activity that helps us to bridge the chasm between people separated by differences in race, in cultural background, in economic status, and in vocational activity should be utilized to the fullest extent possible. He stresses that democracy rests upon an intelligent and sympathetic recognition of the dignity and the worth of all human beings. I would like to reiterate that the purpose of this unit is to emphasize the essential unity of diverse cultures and to help my seventh and eighth graders understand their own culture and those of their neighbors through studying and comparing the folktales of different groups within the United States. It is my hope that this will bring to my students recognition of their own self-worth, increased sympathetic understanding of their neighbors, and, by breaking down barriers of ignorance and prejudice, ultimately, a peace within themselves.

The unit which I have prepared will take approximately ten days and can be lengthened or abbreviated according to the interests and needs of the students. I will begin with the tall tales which are in the reading book and which are a uniquely American tradition.

Tall Tales

Tall tales are those in which everything, characters, geography, actions, and events are exaggerated. Carolyn S. Brown has done extensive research on the tall tale and her findings are published in her book *The Tall Tale in American Folklore and Literature*. Much of my knowledge of this genre has come from her. It is interesting that the storyteller of this type of story is exclusively white male. White females usually "participated in tall tale sessions as appreciative listeners or deliberate ignorers and scoffers" (p. 14).

"The records of early American tall tales are informal, often incidental. The earliest records are those of tourists and travelers who ran across yarning and tall-talking Americans along the way" (p. 14). Many of these stories were local and were repeated down through the years by talented yarnspinnors. Eventually, they were recorded by the town and are now being recalled and collected by folklorists.

On p. 15, Brown quotes from Mody Boatright on the reasons why frontiersmen were such great yarn spinners:

he observed that the frontiersman lied in order to satirize his betters; he lied to cure others of the swell head; he lied in order to initiate the recruits to his way of life. He lied to amuse himself and his fellows. He was an artist and like all true artists his chief reward was in the exercise of art, however surcharged it might be with social or other significance. The frontier was not the only place where tall tales were a form of entertainment and amusement. They could be heard in barrooms, beside campfires, on stagecoaches and steamboats, and definitely from the loafers bench in front of the general store. Often these were told by rural men whose timetable was governed by the sun and the seasons and left them time for leisurely tale telling. "The rural loafer, the western guide and the frontier farmer fit the stereotype of the tall tale narrator" (p. 32).

This tale is built on the tension that builds up between insider and outsider, old-timer and greenhorn. By exaggerating and making light of an episode, the storyteller attempts to salvage some dignity for the listener

from the humiliation of being a newcomer. The storyteller aligns himself with the witnesses of the event.

The two stories which I have chosen to study for this unit are the ones found in the seventh grade textbook *Vistas*; they are about Pecos Bill of Texas and the Southwest and Paul Bunyan of the great forestlands in the northern states of the U.S. and parts of Canada. Both heroes are larger than life and perform extraordinary feats of strength or heroism at a very young age. These are recounted in the tale of a two-week old Pecos Bill taming a half-grown bear cub and of baby Paul Bunyan knocking down a mile of trees when he rolled over in his sleep. During the course of their lives they invent many useful items that help make life easier for them and for people in succeeding generations. One example of this is Pecos Bill's inventing a lasso from a rattlesnake in order to tame the rattlesnake and also to keep it from biting and poisoning him to death. Pecos Bill was very resourceful in solving his problems and many of the inventions now credited to him are accepted cowboy practices. Paul Bunyan, with the help of his blue ox, Babe, straightened out a crooked road by hitching Babe to it, who strained and grunted and pulled till he pulled the road straight!

Both the stories in the book are retold by Adrien Stoutenburg who makes use of a great deal of hyperbole, as do all tall tale spinners. Junior-high students relate easily to hyperbole, they recognize it as a medium which they frequently use when "cutting" on their classmates. The stories also draw a lot of pictures with words which the children understand and enjoy. The Teacher's Bibliography serves as an additional resource as it lists several collections of tall tales.

Suggested Activities

1. Read each story on separate days.
2. Use the activities in the the textbook which deal with vocabulary, comprehension, and writing skills.
3. Discuss the two stories, eliciting from the students the elements they noted which the two stories had in common and,also, the differences. Have the students formulate reasons why some of the differences occur, e.g. the geography of each place.
4. Have the students write some hyperbole of their own. Use their work to make a bulletin board display. If the students need some help getting started, you might want to start by giving them the beginning of a sentence and then having them finish it. The students usually take off on their own after this!
5. Show videos of either or both stories and have the students look for and write down similarities and contrasts between the story which they read and the video which they watched. Discuss the reasons why some things stayed the same and why changes were made. Possible reasons are that stories change in the retelling, the need to keep the story within the video length of time, the attention span of the viewers, artistic license, etc.
6. Produce a play using either of the stories of Pecos Bill or Paul Bunyan. I am including a play written by Nellie McCaslin and published in the book *Tall Tales and Tall Men* in 1956. See the Appendix.
7. Have the students write a radio play in which Pecos Bill and Paul Bunyan are the main characters, swapping tales about their exploits and trying, in true tall tale fashion, to outdo each other.

Trickster Tales

Trickster tales are great favorites in many cultures. They often use an animal, who represents the underdog, that uses skill and cunning to outwit a superior. Black slaves often used trickster tales in their storytelling. They identified with the small but cunning animal that fooled a more powerful bully such as the plantation owner. People around the world find trickster tales both entertaining and amusing and receive satisfaction from knowing that a smaller, and often weaker, creature has bested a larger and more powerful adversary.

Sometimes the trickster animal is characterized as being himself greedy, imitative, stupid, pretentious and deceitful. In the Native American mythology, he attempts trickery in many forms but very often gets tricked himself. Sometimes, though, the people in the community benefit by the trickster's thievery and deceitfulness. But usually the trickster is clever enough to come out a winner.

In the North Pacific Coast, Trickster may be a Raven, Mink, or Bluejay. In the Plateau, in the Great Basin, in California, in the the Southwest, and in parts of the western Plains, the Coyote is the trickster par excellence. He is the best known of all North American Indian tricksters. Coyote stories also abound in the Hispanic culture. Other animals that are used in these stories are the rabbit along with the hare and Wisakedjak (Whiskey Jack). In South America, a fox plays the major role in many of their stories. The trickster's companions are also very important because they sometimes serve as stooges for the trickster and at other times completely outwit him. These roles are played by the Fox, Wolf, Wildcat, Lynx and other animals such as the alligator.

Black folk tales, including the Trickster tales, were brought to the United States by Africans, who had been captured in their homeland and then brought to this new country where they were sold as slaves. They were separated and isolated from their people. They were not supposed to speak their own languages. They weren't allowed to learn to read and write. They were compelled to do hard labor and were warned never to run away. Out of these dire circumstances arose a spirit that made life bearable. This was often expressed in the riddles and jokes made up and in the tales that were told. The stories were often an expression of the experiences which they underwent. In the introduction to her book *The People Could Fly*, Virginia Hamilton tells us that "the slaves created tales in which various animals—such as the rabbit, fox, bear, wolf, turtle or terrapin, snake, and possum—took on the characteristics of the people found in the new environment of the plantation. (p. x)" Brer or Bruh Rabbit became a favorite of the storytellers. He was "small and apparently helpless compared to the powerful bear, the wily fox, and the ferocious wolf. But the slaveteller made the rabbit smart, tricky, and clever, the winner over larger and stronger animals. Still, Bruh Rabbit sometimes got into trouble, just as the slaves did, which made him seem all the more human." (p. x).

These tales were once a creative way for an oppressed people to express their fears and hopes to one another. They were created out of sorrow, but the stories transcended their environment and turned many an unbearable day into one of smiles, chuckles, and rollicking laughter.

One of the stories which I have chosen for this unit is the "Leaf Monster" which is told by Teresa Piojan de van Etten in her book *Spanish-American Folktales*, in which she has collected folk tales enjoyed by the Spanish-speaking people in the south-western area of the United States. There are more trickster tales in this book.

Coyote is the the trickster in this story. He creates so much havoc in the village, by chasing the chickens, scaring the pigs, etc., that the village men decide to capture and cage him. In order to avoid this, Coyote offers to help the shoemaker by delivering some special shoes to the beekeeper's daughter. He sets out and

hears the beekeeper making his way down the path. He drops one shoe at a time and distracts the beekeeper. The beekeeper lays his container of honey down beside the road while he tries to locate the two shoes. Coyote steals the honey and eats it. A fly gets stuck to his honey-covered snout. He tries to shake off the fly but to no avail and so he rolls on the ground in an effort to get rid of it. Somehow, the fly escapes but meanwhile Coyote's sticky fur is now matted with sticks, leaves, dirt, and other debris from off the ground. As he tries to escape this mess, he meets the men with the cage for him. The men see this monster, drop the cage, and run screaming in fear. Meanwhile, Coyote is very tired and goes to the river to get a drink and swim. The river assuages his thirst and washes off his excess baggage. When he comes out of the river, he finds the whole village looking for the monster and when they see that the monster is no one but coyote, they laugh and declare that they cannot take Coyote away because he makes them laugh.

The second story is from a Virginia Hamilton's collection of Black folk tales and is entitled "Bruh Alligator Meets Trouble." In this story Bruh Rabbit teaches naive Bruh Alligator what trouble is by playing a trick on him. The story also explains how the alligator got its skin looking the way it does and why it lives so close to the river.

Suggested Activities

1. Oral reading of the stories.

These stories were passed from one generation to the next via the oral tradition, and therefore, especially those written in a dialect, lend themselves to oral reading. The students would need to be prepared ahead of time and taught how to read the story e.g. they would need to know how to pronounce certain sounds such as the substitution of the "d" sound for the "th" sound, and to understand the double negative, the inflection of strong verbs as though they were weak, the use of pronouns, etc.

2. Learning the Gullah vocabulary and pronunciation of its words. Hamilton lists them at the end of "Bruh Alligator Meets Trouble."

3. Researching and finding other trickster tales in the libraries, either in compilations or in single volumes. This will necessitate prior instruction in the use of a card catalog or the library's computer system. Locating the books in a library, with the information found in the catalog or the computer, will also be a learning experience.

4. Writing down trickster stories which have been heard at home.

5. Analyzing the trickster stories chosen for this unit by identifying the main characters, determining their location or setting, deciding if the animal characters have the necessary character traits to get the job done, explaining the means used to accomplish the task, and determining whether the outcome justified the means.

6. Class discussion on setting goals and the various means of reaching them. Are some strategies more successful than others? Why or Why not? Does the end justify the means? etc.

7. Use a Venn diagram to compare and contrast various aspects of the trickster tales chosen for this unit.

The Teachers' Bibliography lists additional sources of trickster tales.

Creation stories

The creation stories belong to the genre of "legends", as they are told as fact and are usually set in an historic time and place. They may be known as "pour quoi" stories because they give an explanation for the way things are. These narratives are also "myths." In Virginia Hamilton's excellent book *In the Beginning* (p. x), she tells us why this is so. These stories are about a god or gods, about superhuman beings, animals, plants, and about the first people on the earth. They show the creation of earth and beings of earth and show the earth still forming. These narratives tell about events that caused astounding changes in the way humans feel, think, and act. They are the truth to those who believe in them and the myths, in turn, give people guidance and spiritual strength.

Myths about creation are different from fairy tales in that "they relate events that seem outside of time and place and even beyond time itself. Creation myths take place before the 'once upon a time' of fairy tales. They go *back beyond anything that ever was* and begin *before* anything has happened" (Hamilton, p. x). Myths don't attempt to prove anything, they just make statements as though they are facts. "Even the word *myth* comes from the Greek word *mythos* which means *word* in the sense of final authority. (Hamilton, pg. x) Creation myths deal with a time and a place which it is impossible for us to see.

The creation stories that have been chosen for study are found in the student's bibliography. They are "Elohim the Creator", which is Hamilton's account of the story found in the *Holy Bible*, Genesis 1 and 2. a Yoruba creation myth from Anderson, *The origin of Life on Earth*, and an Onondaga account of the beginning of this world from Caduto and Bruchac, *Keepers of the Earth*.

In this section, I want to emphasize the importance of this earth and the need for its preservation.

Suggested Activities

1. Have the students read the stories chosen in groups. Each group should appoint a leader who will assign jobs such as oral reading, writing down the main events of the story, retelling the story to the class, etc. Each group should also have a list of questions that they have to find the answers to.
2. Make vocabulary lists for each story studied. Find out what each word means and make sure that they are pronounced correctly.
3. Do an environmental activity with the class. Caduto and Bruchac have several excellent activities at the end of each story.
4. Study an ecosystem and emphasize the interdependence of each member of the system.
5. Have a discussion on the importance of recycling. Have the class plan a recycling project and carry it out.
6. Teach a lesson on global warming and the consequences of its effects on us.
7. Plan a "Pollution" discussion and follow it up with a Pollution Control Poster Contest.

Cinderella Stories

The Cinderella story is probably the best known and most loved fairy tale in the world. In 1951, the Swedish folklorist Anna Birgitta Rooth published her doctoral dissertation *Cinderella Cycle* which was based on seven hundred versions of the story which she had collected. (Alan Dundes, *Cinderella: A Folklore Casebook*, p. xiii.) Over the years, more tales have been discovered and identified as Cinderella stories so that now there are thousands of them.

The form of the tale that is popular today is that in which a cinder-girl is able to attend a ball through the benevolence of a fairy godmother on condition that she returns before midnight. Either Charles Perrault or his son Pierre Perrault published this story in 1697 and it is now the standard against which most other Cinderella stories are compared. Common characteristics to be found in most of these stories are that of a wicked stepmother who promotes her own ugly, lazy and vain children above that of her step-daughter. This stepchild, who is usually beautiful, hard-working and kind, is consigned to doing all the hard and dirty work and ends up living among the cinders, thus becoming known as Cinderella. The sisters are invited to a ball. Cinderella cannot attend as she doesn't have any appropriate clothes. A fairy godmother appears and arrays her in fabulous clothes but with the condition that she return home before midnight. Cinderella attends the ball and becomes its belle. She has such a wonderful time that she forgets the time until the clock strikes twelve and she leaves in a great hurry. The prince has fallen in love with her but now cannot find her. In her haste to leave, she drops one of her slippers. The prince tries this slipper on all women to find out its owner. Finally, it is tried on Cinderella. It fits. She marries the prince and they live happily ever after.

The first known story of Cinderella comes from China where it appeared in *The Miscellaneous Record of Yu Yang* a book which dates from the T'ang dynasty 618-907 A.D. (Louie Ai-Ling, *Yeh-Shin*, introduction). Bruno Bettelheim, in *The Uses of Enchantment* (p. 236), speculates that "The unrivaled tiny foot size as a mark of extraordinary virtue, distinction, and beauty, and the slipper made of precious material are facets which point to an Eastern, if not necessarily Chinese, origin." The ancient Chinese bound women's feet to make them small as their belief was that small feet made the woman sexually attractive and beautiful. These two aspects of the small feet and the beautiful slipper seem to have influenced the Cinderella stories that abound in Europe.

The next-oldest story of Cinderella is from Egypt and this tale is a fascinating mix of both fact and fable. It is speculated that Rhodopis was born in northern Greece, kidnapped by pirates as a child, and then sold to a rich man on the island of Samos. One of her companion slaves was Aesop. When she was almost grown, she was taken to Egypt where she was bought by a Greek man named Charaxos who gave her many gifts which may have included rose-red slippers. What is fact is that a Greek slave girl, Rhodopis, married the Pharaoh Amasis (Dynasty XXVI, 570-526 B.C.) and became his queen.

The first European Cinderella-type tale was published by Basile in Italy in 1634 where it was included in the *Pentamerone* (Day 1, tale 6) as "La Gatta Cerentola" and is now often referred to as "The Cat Cinderella". The Perrault version was published in Paris in 1697 and the Grimm brothers wrote down and published their story in the early 1800's. This was translated into English in 1826. (I. and P. Opie, *The Classic Fairy Tales*, pp. 117-119) In this unit, the students will study the Perrault retelling and the Grimms' brothers story as well as Cinderella-type stories that are found in many other cultures in the world. The students' bibliography includes twenty-one Cinderella stories that can be used, and there are many others that can be found on the shelves of children's libraries today.

The purpose of this study is to look at the stories, determine how the culture of a story has affected it, then note the similarities and the differences between the various stories read. The reading levels of the various versions of these stories will differ greatly, so the emphasis in this section will not be on developing reading skills but on developing the skills of understanding and appreciating one's fellow human beings.

Suggested Activities

1. Each student will read his /her story silently.
2. Have each student make a vocabulary list of the new and unusual words in the story, particularly those with cultural importance. They should then study these words, write down their meanings, and later determine their impact on the story.
3. Research the customs of each cultural group, especially those relating to family structure, division of labor, courtship and marriage or other practices pertinent to the story. If possible, find out the origin of these traditions. For example, the dowry system in India was originally intended to safeguard the financial stability of the bride. Be prepared to discuss the advantages and the disadvantages of current practices.
4. Tell the story to the class using the vocabulary appropriate to the country of origin.
5. Make up a questionnaire that will highlight some of the similarities. Present your findings to the class for discussion and questions. Suggested questions:
 - a) What kind of magic turns Cinderella into a desirable beauty?
 - b) What happens to the stepsisters? c) Why is beauty so important?
 - d) Why is the mother/godmother so helpful?
 - e) How does the prince test women to find Cinderella?
6. Make a chart that will allow for the comparing of the stories involved. Possible headings for the columns would be:
 - a) *When* does the story take place?
 - b) *Where* does the story take place?
 - c) Who are the members of the *family* ?
 - d) *Who* is the heroine of the story?
 - e) *What* are her character traits?
 - f) Who *helps* her?
 - g) Is there a *ball* ?
 - h) What is the *test object* ?
 - i) What is the *test* ?
 - j) What are the *animals* that have a major role in the story?
7. Dress in the dress of the country represented while telling the story.
8. Have a class discussion on relationships in the story, focusing on sibling rivalry and ways of dealing with it. Other topics for discussion, that arise out of the Cinderella story, may be jealousy, feelings of inferiority, knowing your own worth, rewards, death (as it is usually the death of the mother that brings about the change in circumstances), dealing with an extended family, dealing with beauty or talents, etc.
9. Role-playing situations that are contemporary versions of Cinderella's problems.
10. Have a Cinderella party with each person bringing a food dish from the country he/she studied.
11. Make a multi-cultural mural of the story with each student contributing a part which is unique to the story he/she studied.

Teacher's Bibliography

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Students' Bibliography

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Caduto, Michael J. and Joseph Bruchac. *Keepers of the Earth*. Golden, Colorado: Fulcrum, Inc., 1989. Native American stories which are beautifully illustrated. There are also coordinated activities which will reinforce the values taught in the stories. "The Earth on Turtle's Back" is an Onondaga (Northeast Woodlands) story of Creation and will be studied in this unit.

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Hamilton, Virginia. *The People Could Fly*. Illustrated by Leo and Diane Dillon. New York: Alfred A Knopf, 1985. An inspiring collection of African American tales. "Bruh Alligator Meets Trouble" is the trickster tale chosen for study in this unit.

Haviland, Virginia. *Favorite Fairy Tales Told in Poland*. Illustrated by Felix Hoffman. Boston: Little, Brown and Company, 1963. A collection of Polish fairy tales retold by Haviland; among them is the story of "Jan the Prince"—a male Polish Cinderella

Huck, Charlotte, *Princess Furball*. Illustrated by Anita Lobel. New York: Greenwillow Books, 1989. A retelling of the Cinderella story in which the Princess overcomes obstacles through her own ingenuity rather than relying on the wave of a magic wand by a fairy godmother.

Isele, Elizabeth. *The Frog Princess*. Illustrated by Michael Hague. New York: Thomas Y. Crowell, 1984. The story of a Russian princess who is as brave and resourceful as her prince. A Russian variation of the Cinderella tale.

Louie, Ai-Ling. *Yeh-Shen A Cinderella Story from China*. Illustrated by Ed Young. New York: Philomel Books, 1982. The Chinese Cinderella story with a copy of the original text in Chinese. The oldest known story of Cinderella.

Martin, Eva and Lazlo Gal. *Canadian Fairy Tales*. Toronto: Douglas & McIntyre Ltd., 1984. A retelling of twelve Canadian fairy tales which are drawn from the people who first settled in Canada—the French, Irish and British. "Goldenhair" is the Cinderella story.

Martin, Rafe. *The Rough-Face Girl*. Illustrated by David Shannon. New York: G.P. Putnam's Sons, 1992. This is the Algonquin Cinderella.

Opie, Iona and Peter. *The Classic Fairy Tales*. London: Oxford University Press, 1974. A collection of fairy tales which is unique in that it was made from the very first English translations of these stories. "Cinderella" in English is very close in form to that of Perrault.

Perrault, Charles. *Perrault's complete Fairy Tales*. Illustrated by W. Heath Robinson. New York: Dodd, Mead and Company, 1961. The collection from which the classic Cinderella is taken. It is often, also, the standard to which many of the other Cinderella stories are compared. It is the most popular form of the tale.

Piojan de van Etten, Teresa. *Spanish-American Folktales*. Little Rock, Arkansas: August House, Inc., 1990. Spanish American tales which also reflect Pueblo influence in the New Mexico area. Includes anecdotes on each tale. The "Leaf Monster" is a trickster tale in this collection

Pollock, Penny. *The Turkey Girl*. Illustrated by Ed Young. Boston: Little, Brown and Company, 1996. The Zuni Cinderella story. It contrasts with the English version, where Cinderella marries the prince, in that many Native American versions end with the hard truth that when we break our trust with Mother Earth, we pay a price.

Schroeder, Alan. *Smoky Mountain Rose*. Pictures by Brad Sneed. New York: Dial Books for Young Readers, 1997. The Appalachian Cinderella.

Stephoe, John. *Mufaro's Beautiful Daughters*. New York: Lothrop, Lee & Shepard Books, 1987. A West African Cinderella. A retelling of a tale first printed in 1895. Stunning illustrations by the author.

Vuong, Lynette Dyer. *The Brocaded Slipper*. Reading, Mass: Addison-Wesley Publishing Co., 1984. A collection of Vietnamese stories. "The Brocaded Slipper" is the Cinderella story in this collection.

Yorinks, Arthur. *Ugh*. Pictures by Richard Egielski. New York: Horowitz/Rae Book Manufacturers, 1990. A male Cinderella. Ugh, a cave boy who becomes king.

Appendix

Giant of the Timber

(figure available in print form)

The Paul Bunyan stories are among our most loved American legends. Although they did not appear until the nineteenth century, hundreds of them have sprung up and are still being told. Paul is a typically American hero. A man with big ideas, he contributed to the building of this country and to the best of its tall tales.

CHARACTERS

STORYTELLER BABE, the blue ox , (two boys under a
FIRST LOGGER under a blanket)
SECOND LOGGER LARSEN
THIRD LOGGER BIG JOE
FOURTH LOGGER THE COOK
FIFTH LOGGER THE COOK'S HELPERS (four or five
SIXTH LOGGER small boys)
PAUL'S MOTHER JOHNNY INKSLINGER
PAUL'S FATHER OTHERS (including girls for dance, if
PAUL BUNYAN desired)
A NEIGHBOR

TIME

The nineteenth century

PLACE

Various sections of the northern United States.

The full text of the play is found in the printed version of this unit and in the following book: *Tall Tales and Tall Men* by Nellie McCaslin, pp. 95-112.

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