

Lesson 2: Writing a Tall Tale

Lesson Focus: Using Figures of Speech to Create Unique Characters

Objectives

Students will:

- Learn to write a tall tale.
- Use figures of speech to develop characters.
- Add meaning to the story by varying sentence length.
- Practice writing dialogue.

Materials

Resource Packs (see pp. TK-TK)

Remove these pages from each Pack (or print them, if you have the digital version)

- Level 3 Fold-N-Go Grammar Pack
 - ~ *Figures of Speech Fold-N-Go* pages*
- Student Worksheet Pack F
 - ~ *Reading log of your choice (optional, as needed)*
 - ~ Activity Set 2:2
 - *Tall Tales Chart*
 - *Taller Than Life – Paul Bunyan**
 - *Taller Than Life – Babe the Blue Ox**
 - ~ Activity Set 2:3
 - *Sentence Length Flip Card**
 - *Journal Prompt*
 - ~ Activity Set 2:4a and 2:4b *Brainstorming* (2 pages)
 - ~ Activity Set 2:6 *Self-Editing Checklist*
- Time-Saver Pack F (optional)
 - ~ Activity Set 2:3 *Tall Tales Spinner*
- Junior Writer's Notebook 2 (optional)
 - ~ *Genre: Tall Tale*

*Advance prep may be required

Required Supplies for Lesson 2

All Activity Sets

- Everyday supplies as noted in Introduction, pp. TK-TK. (Everyday supplies include items you should already have on hand. They will not be listed below.)

Activity Set 2:3

- Supplies to make a spinner, such as a dinner-size paper plate, brad, and paperclip (not needed if using "Tall Tales Spinner" from Time-Saver Pack F)

Activity Set 2:7

- 12- x 12-inch sheets of colorful solid or patterned scrapbooking paper to create a story quilt (To make one from fabric, see Optional Supplies below for Activity Set 2:7.)

Optional Supplies for Lesson 2

Activity Set 2:1

- *Skin Like Milk, Hair of Silk: What are Similes and Metaphors?* from the *Words are Categorical®* series by Brian P. Cleary

Activity Set 2:6

- Zipper storage bag to hold play money
- Motivational goals, prizes, or small treats (*see p. TK*)

Activity Set 2:7

- Supplies to make a fabric story quilt:
 - ~ Muslin or other solid, light-colored cotton fabric cut into 12- x 12-inch squares
 - ~ Freezer paper, available in the foil and plastic wrap aisle
 - ~ Iron and ironing board
 - ~ Inkjet printer
 - ~ Sewing machine and thread
 - ~ Quilt batting
 - ~ Fabric for quilt backing

Activity Set 2:8

- Picture books to introduce Lesson 3 and the mystery genre, such as:
 - ~ *Piggin* by Jane Yolen
 - ~ *Who Pushed Humpty Dumpty? And Other Notorious Nursery Tale Mysteries* by David Levinthal
 - ~ *Grandpa's Teeth* by Rod Clement
- Clue® board game

ACTIVITY SET 2:1

Introduction to Tall Tales

If your students are new to this genre, reading or listening to tall tales will help prepare them for upcoming activities and increase their confidence and success. In case you missed it, "Lesson 2: Let's Look Ahead" (p. TK) suggests several ways you can introduce children to tall tales.

At a Glance: Activity Set 2:1

- **Introduction to Tall Tales**
- **Fold-N-Go Grammar**
- **Reading Log**

Fold-N-Go Grammar - Figures of Speech

Advance Prep

Remove the six pages for Lesson 2 *Figures of Speech Fold-N-Go* from the Level 3 Fold-N-Go Grammar Pack. If you are using the digital version, print out all six pages. Assemble the *Fold-N-Go* and two bookmarks.

Today you will introduce a new *Fold-N-Go*.

1. Read through each page together. Allow time for your student to complete the pencil activities. Do not let her use a pen for these exercises. Spread activities over 2-3 days, if needed.
2. After each pencil activity, discuss her answers.
3. If she makes a mistake, praise her efforts. Offer gentle correction and erase the mistake or use correction tape before she writes the correct answer.

Store the *Figures of Speech Fold-N-Go* with the *Grammar Review Fold-N-Go* in your expandable folder or file box.

To help your child gain confidence understanding and identifying metaphors and similes, encourage her to read *Skin Like Milk, Hair of Silk: What are Similes and Metaphors?* from the *Words Are Categorical®* series by Brian P. Cleary.

Tip

If your student is not familiar with the tall tale of Pecos Bill and Slue-Foot Sue, remove the Activity Set 2:3 "Larger than Life Chart" from the Student Worksheet Pack and keep it handy as she completes this *Fold-N-Go*.

“The *Fold-N-Go* was great! We loved learning about how we use words creatively.”

—Janeé, TX

Parents Say...

We looked for metaphors, similes, and idioms all week in different books we were reading.

Similes and metaphors were completely new to my daughter. The recommended book Skin Like Milk, Hair of Silk really helped illustrate the concepts.

At the library, we found DVDs that introduced my daughter to several tall tale legends. They also used a lot of similes and metaphors, which reinforced the Fold-N-Go for this lesson.

Reading Log

Activity Set 1:1 introduced your student to reading logs. If she enjoyed filling out a reading log and tracking her reading, use this time to update the log and discuss her progress.

Because Lesson 2 focuses on tall tales, encourage her to read tall tales to record in her reading log over the next few weeks.

ACTIVITY SET 2:2

Lesson Overview

Tall tales, which originated during America's frontier days, combine history, myth, and fact with a dose of humor. Stories feature superhero-like characters who performed legendary feats while the West was being settled. Figures of speech, such as similes and metaphors, are often used in tall tales to compare these legendary heroes to things of nature, including cyclones and lightning bolts. These comparisons help make the main characters appear larger than life—bigger, taller, and stronger than real people.

Some tall tales are exaggerated and humorous stories about **people who actually lived**, including Calamity Jane, Annie Oakley, Davy Crockett, and Johnny Appleseed. Other tall tales feature **imaginary characters** such as Slue-Foot Sue, Pecos Bill, Paul Bunyan, and Babe the Blue Ox.

To prepare for this lesson, review the Activity Set 2:2 "Tall Tales Chart." Talk about each character on the chart and discuss reasons this folk hero is "larger than life."

Pre-writing Activity - Taller Than Life

Advance Prep

Remove the Activity Set 2:2 "Taller Than Life: Paul Bunyan" and "Taller Than Life: Babe" pages from the Student Worksheet Pack. If you are using the digital version, print a copy of each page on plain paper.

1. Cut apart each of the pictures so there is a top and bottom piece for both characters.
2. Cut apart the 2 speech bubbles and the 8 rectangles containing blank lines. Set aside 4 rectangles for Paul Bunyan and 4 for Babe.

Be prepared with a story or two about Paul Bunyan by visiting the website *American Folklore* (americanfolklore.net). Locate "Categories" and click "Paul Bunyan."

Directions

This pre-writing activity will help your student think of dialogue, metaphors, similes, and other details to help her develop legendary characters and add the "tall" to a tall tale. It's an oral exercise that will boost her confidence working with this genre. There will be no writing involved.

At a Glance: Activity Set 2:2

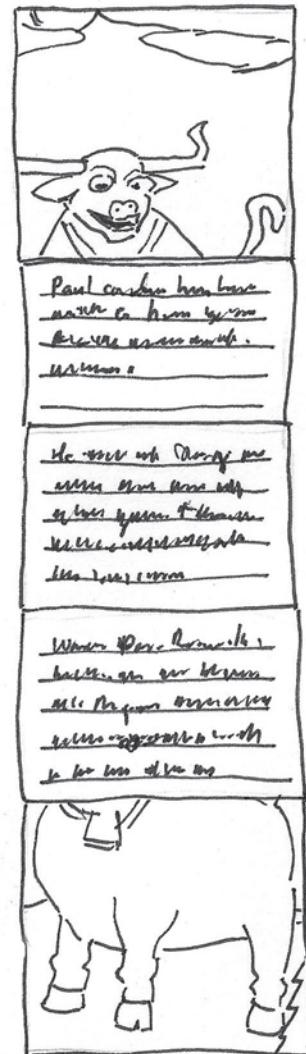
- **Lesson Overview**
- **Pre-writing Activity**
- **Model and Teach**

“A lot of fun! It was a great visual of what a TALL character is.”

—Marisa, WA

Before you begin, read a tall tale about Paul Bunyan and his blue ox, Babe, such as one from americanfolklore.net.

1. Give your student the pictures of Paul Bunyan and Babe from the "Taller Than Life" pages. Explain that you will work together to give these characters legendary qualities.
2. Begin with Paul Bunyan, discussing ideas for exaggerated and humorous ways to develop his character. She can borrow from the story you read or come up with her own, such as:
 - Paul combed his beard with a large pine tree.
 - He yelled so loudly that he caused a landslide at Pike's Peak.
3. Encourage her to use metaphors, similes, and other figures of speech to describe Paul Bunyan. Refer to the *Figures of Speech Fold-N-Go* as needed.
 - *Simile*: Paul's axe was as long as Montana.
 - *Personification*: He grabbed the river by its tail and shook out the kinks.
4. On one of the lined rectangles, write down the first idea and tape it to the bottom of Paul Bunyan's torso. Write another idea on a new rectangle and tape the second idea to the bottom of the first one. (Ideas don't have to be related to each other or to a particular storyline.)
Continue writing down and attaching ideas. Spend no more than 5 minutes on this. When finished, tape Paul's legs to the bottom.
5. Discuss two examples of dialogue Paul Bunyan could use and write them in the speech bubbles. You can follow an example from the story or make up your own. For instance:
 - "I'm gonna tame that crooked river!"
 - "No foolin'! I could eat a hundred bowls of oatmeal."
6. Repeat steps 1-5 to develop Babe's character. Tape your first idea to the bottom of Babe's head and shoulders, as shown. When finished, tape Babe's body and legs to the bottom. Again, spend only about 5 minutes thinking of ideas.
7. Point out how tall both characters are now!
8. Explain that tall tales were originally told aloud as part of an American oral tradition of storytelling. Invite your student to tell you a tall story about Paul Bunyan and his blue ox, Babe, using some of the ideas you wrote down for this activity.



Model and Teach

Today you will model writing a tall tale. A sample dialogue will guide you to introduce and teach new concepts.

Directions

Read aloud the following writing sample, "Davy Crockett Tracks a Bear." Explain that this story is a tall tale because it took place during America's frontier days and features a legendary hero who had exaggerated qualities.

Davy Crockett Tracks a Bear

Davy Crockett woke up one winter morning to discover a bear had messed up his cabin and eaten all his grub. It was the biggest, baddest, meanest, and smartest bear in all of Tennessee.

Now, no bear had outwitted Davy Crockett yet. "I'll get that bear if it takes me till spring thaw!" whooped Davy with a yell as loud as a thunderclap. Davy Crockett had a nose that could smell a critter 500 miles away. So he followed his nose. Davy tracked that bear north. He tracked that bear south. He tracked him east. He tracked him west. Davy cleared a trail through the Tennessee woods as wide and deep as the Grand Canyon just tracking that bear.

It was about the time of the spring thaw when Davy followed his nose and followed that bear to the door of his very own cabin! The bear had led Davy on a wild goose chase and headed right back where they'd started from. And quick as lightning, that bear had made a fortune hunting and trapping and fishing off of Davy's land. He was rich! Davy looked at the sacks of gold piled higher than the tallest hickory tree in the Appalachian Mountains. Right then and there, Davy made a decision.

"We'll let bygones be bygones," Davy told the bear. "Let's go into business together." And that's how Davy got the biggest, baddest, meanest, and smartest bear in all of Tennessee as a new hunting, trapping, and fishing partner.

Use this script as an example of how to guide the writing through modeling. Since your student will answer differently, use it to help you think of similar ways to prompt her and steer conversation. Asking questions such as *what*, *where*, or *how* will help a reluctant child contribute more details to the story.

You: *In Lesson 1, we learned that there are lots of different genres (**zhahn**-ruhz), which are types of stories. A tall tale is one genre. It's a humorous story that originated during American frontier days. Characters of tall tales were like legendary superheroes! These wild stories took place while the West was being settled. They can include a bit of history, a bit of fact, and usually, a lot of myth!*

Your Fold-N-Go introduced you to figures of speech, such as similes and metaphors. Figures of speech were often used to compare tall-tale heroes to tornadoes and lightning bolts to make them seem way bigger than ordinary people. Even the name

"tall tale" helps us remember that these characters were "taller than life."

Our writing sample is called "Davy Crockett Tracks a Bear." In this tall tale, what were some of the exaggerations that were made?

Child:

(Possible answer: Davy's nose could smell a critter 500 miles away. He cleared a trail through the Tennessee woods as wide and deep as the Grand Canyon.)

You:

Good observations! Exaggerations like these make a tall tale feel like it's about a superhero from frontier days.

Some tall tales were exaggerated stories about people who actually lived, such as Annie Oakley and Johnny Appleseed. Other tall tales included imaginary characters such as Pecos Bill, Slue-Foot Sue, and Paul Bunyan.

Let's pick a tall tale to write about. We could write a story about someone who actually lived, such as Davy Crockett, or we could choose a totally imaginary character such as Slue-Foot Sue. Which tall tale would you like to choose?

Child:

(Possible answer: Annie Oakley)

You:

In our example story, Davy Crockett wakes up with a big problem in the beginning of the story. How would you like our story to start out?

Child:

(Possible answer: Annie Oakley got captured by Sitting Bull.)

You:

That's a great problem for our story to start with. But remember that a tall tale needs to include "tall" details. How could you turn this beginning into a tall tale? What exaggerated thing was _____ (name of character) doing at the beginning of your story?

Child:

(Possible answer: Annie Oakley was shooting the nails off a cabin a hundred miles away.)

You:

That's definitely a good start to a tall tale! (Write the sentence down.) What exciting thing happened next?

Child:

(Possible answer: Quick as a flash, a herd of horses thundered past, and she was captured by Sitting Bull.)

You:

I love that!

In "Davy Crockett Tracks a Bear," Davy's yell was as loud as a thunderclap, and his nose could smell a critter 500 miles away. What larger-than-life characteristics would you like our main character to have to make our story a tall tale? Pull out your Fold-N-Go to help us think of figures of speech like metaphors and similes.

Child:

(Possible answer: Annie Oakley could shoot as far as the Pacific Ocean. She could ride her horse as fast as the wind.)

You:

That's really exaggerating! Now, let's write a few sentences to show how the main character used these exaggerated qualities to help solve the problem of the story.

Spend 20-30 minutes gently guiding and prompting your child in this manner until finished. *Be sure to add at least three details to the middle of the story.* When you are finished, discuss ideas for a title and write it at the top.

ACTIVITY SET 2:3

Skill Builder - Sentence Length Game

At a Glance: Activity Set 2:3

- Skill Builder
- Journal Writing Practice

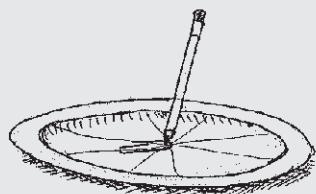
Advance Prep

Spinner

Remove the Activity Set 2:3 "Tall Tales Spinner" page from Time-Saver Pack F, or print it out if you are using the digital version. Assemble the spinner.

If you are not using the Time-Saver Pack, create your own spinner by following these instructions:

1. On a dinner-size paper plate or piece of cardboard, draw a large circle and divide it like a pie into 10 wedges.
2. Label nine of the spaces with the name of one legendary tall-tale hero: *Davy Crockett, Annie Oakley, John Henry, Johnny Appleseed, Slue-Foot Sue, Pecos Bill, Widow-Maker, Paul Bunyan, and Babe the Blue Ox*. Label the tenth space *Your Choice*.
3. Create a spinner by poking a hole in the center with a pen and inserting a brad. Position a paperclip on the brad and spin it around in a circle. If the paperclip does not spin freely, spin the paperclip around the point of a pencil instead, as shown.



Flip Card

Remove **both** of the Activity Set 2:3 "Sentence Length Flip Card" pages from the Student Activity Pack. If there will be more than two players, *keep an original page as your master copy* and photocopy or print out enough copies so each player has one to play the Sentence Length Game.

Overview – Sentence Length

Explain that writing sentences of different lengths helps add interest and meaning to a story.

Long sentences. Sentences of seven or more words give readers more time to think about what's happening. Use longer sentences for parts of the story that are thoughtful and slow.

“This was a favorite for both of us. What a great, non-threatening way to get long sentences.”

—Jennifer, IL

When explaining or describing something, especially when using figures of speech, long sentences work best.

Short sentences. Sentences of six or fewer words give readers a sense of urgency and make them read faster. Use short sentences for exciting parts of the story. When writing about danger or fast-paced adventure, short sentences work best.

Tip

A reluctant learner can dictate sentences for you to write on her flip card.

Directions

Together, play the Sentence Length Game to give practice writing long sentences for explanations and descriptions and short sentences for fast, exciting action. Keep the “Tall Tales Chart” from Activity Set 2:2 handy, if needed.

Note: This game uses both a spinner and a die. The spinner determines the tall tale character students will write about, and the die tells them whether to come up with a short sentence or a long one.

1. Provide one “Sentence Length Flip Card” for each player. Fold the flip card in half along the horizontal dashed line, blank sides together (Fig. 1). Fold the flip card in half once more along the short dashed line so that the student’s name is on the front (Fig. 2).
2. Youngest player goes first, spinning the spinner to see which tall-tale hero she will write about during this turn. Next, she rolls one die.
 - *If a 1, 2, or 3 is rolled:* Flip over the card and write **one short sentence** about that character in an *exciting* part of a tall tale. The sentence should have 6 or fewer words, such as: *She flew clear to the moon!*
 - *If a 4, 5, or 6 is rolled:* She flips the card open and writes **a long sentence** about that character in a *descriptive* part of a tall tale. The sentence should have 7 or more words, such as *Johnny Appleseed’s feet were so tough, he walked on sharp rocks as if they were marshmallows.*
 - **Optional:** In the corresponding box, draw a very simple picture of the tall tale hero (or what that sentence represents).
3. When her turn is over, the second player spins the spinner, rolls the die, and writes a sentence. Players continue taking turns spinning for a new tall-tale character and rolling the die.
4. If a player already has three short sentences and rolls a 1, 2, or 3, she skips her turn, and the other player goes next. Likewise, if she already has three long sentences and rolls a 4, 5, or 6, she skips that turn and the other player goes. The first player to have three short sentences and three long sentences wins the game.

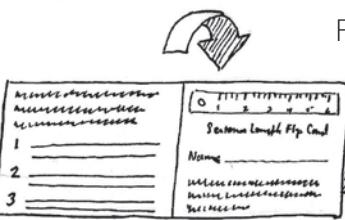


Fig. 1

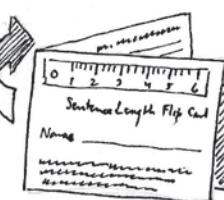


Fig. 2

If your child enjoyed this activity, photocopy or print out more "Sentence Length Flip Card" pages and play the game again as you have time.

Parents Say ...

Instead of spinning each turn to write about different characters, my son chose to use the spinner to pick just one character. Then, each time he rolled the die, he wrote a new long or short sentence about that character.

Our spinner didn't spin well, so I numbered the spinner sections 2-11 and gave my son two dice. First, he rolled both dice to choose the character he would write a sentence about. Then he tossed one die to determine sentence length.

Journal Writing Practice - Writing a Tall Tale

Advance Prep

Remove the Activity Set 2:3 Journal Prompt from the Student Worksheet Pack. If you are using the digital version, print a copy. If your child does not care for the assigned prompt, print or photocopy one of the blank journal prompt pages in the Student Worksheet Pack and look ahead to "Alternative Journal Topics" on p. TK.

Activity Set 2:4 Brainstorming		Name: _____
The Fable		
Character:	Character Trait:	Character:
Character:	Character Trait:	Character:
Title: _____		
Beginning:		
PLACEHOLDER		
Middle:		
End:		
Moral:		

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In this activity, your child will spend time writing in a journal, focusing on writing a tall tale. For suggestions to follow during Journal Writing Practice, review p.TK, "Journaling Tips."

Give your child the journal prompt. Invite her to spend 5-15 minutes writing in her journal.

A Gentle Reminder

Remember that the journal prompt will not be edited or revised. This freewriting exercise is an opportunity for students to practice using new writing skills without correction. This journal is not a teaching tool, so whether the writing is grammatically correct or organized isn't the point. Don't correct spelling or try to edit or improve the journal. You have one key responsibility today: *Praise your child for trying.*

“She likes knowing that the more precise points of writing are off limits during this activity.”

—Heather, NY

When finished, add this page to her journal notebook or folder. Take time for her to share with you what she has written.

Alternative Journal Topics

If your student doesn't want to write about a contest between Babe and Widow-Maker, give her a copy of a blank journal page and let her choose a different story starter for her tall tale, such as:

- *As the largest cattle drive in Texas was about to start, Slue-Foot Sue got up early to cook flapjacks for the hungry cowboys. She used Oklahoma for a griddle and...*
- *One winter, it was so cold the mountains froze like popsicles and all the railroad tracks were piled under snow so deep it reached up to the clouds. Not a single train could get through until John Henry arrived with his mighty sledgehammer to...*
- *The Wild, Wild West Show offered a bag of solid gold to any cowboy who could shoot the needles off a cactus from two miles away. Three of the sharpest sharpshooters showed up for the contest, including Annie Oakley. When the first cowboy took aim...*
- *Up in Minnesota one year, Old Man Winter decided not to send any snow. Babe the Blue Ox was so tired of the heat that he dug a hole clear to the ocean just to keep cool! Paul Bunyan decided to pay Old Man Winter a visit, so he went up to the North Pole and...*

ACTIVITY SET 2:4

Brainstorming

For Lesson 2, your child will write a tall tale. The ideas she generates during today's brainstorming will provide many of the elements she will need to include in her tall tale.

Brainstorming is much more than coming up with ideas; it helps students organize the parts of the story and keeps them on track so they don't ramble or forget an important element. Because it's a key part of the writing process, your student will fill out a brainstorming worksheet every lesson. (A reluctant writer can dictate her ideas to you, and you can write them on the worksheet.)

If she presses you to skip brainstorming and go straight to the Writing Project, explain that brainstorming is one of the most important parts of writing because it will guide her to write a more interesting and organized story.

Smaller Steps

Do you have a reluctant writer? Smaller Steps helps you adjust the Writing Project to make it simpler or less overwhelming. Read ahead to Activity Set 2:5 (p. TK) to see whether this lesson's Smaller Steps will be a good fit for your student. If so, brainstorm accordingly today.

Directions

If your student needs the review, read the tall tale "Davy Crockett Tracks a Bear" (p. TK) once again.

Explain that you will brainstorm ideas together so your student can write her own tall tale. As you write her ideas on a large writing surface (see Intro pp. TK-TK), she will copy the information onto her own worksheet. She will be able to brainstorm more independently as her skills and confidence grow.

Choose the Elements of the Story

1. Give your student Activity Set 2:4a and 2:4b brainstorming worksheets from the Student Worksheet Pack. Working on your own large writing surface, use a marker to draw a grid similar to the one on her worksheet (2:4a). Explain that you will be brainstorming together using a graphic organizer to help organize her ideas.

At a Glance: Activity Set 2:4

- **Brainstorming**

“Brainstorming was an absolute necessity in order to write the tall tale for the Writing Project.”

—Lynn, NY

Activity Set 2:4 Brainstorming		Name: _____
The Fable		
Character:	Character Trait:	Character:
Character:	Character Trait:	Character:
Title: _____		
Beginning:		
Middle:		
End:		
Moral:		
PLACEHOLDER		
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Activity Set 2:4 Brainstorming		Name: _____
The Fable		
Character:	Character Trait:	Character:
Character:	Character Trait:	Character:
Title: _____		
Beginning:		
Middle:		
End:		
Moral:		
PLACEHOLDER		
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2. *Main character.* The key to a tall tale is **exaggeration**, so the character should be tougher, bigger, faster, or wilder than anyone! Discuss which legendary hero or heroine your student wants to write about. She may choose one from her Activity Set 2:2 “Larger Than Life Chart,” or she may make up an original, highly exaggerated character.

Invite her to draw a quick sketch of the main character in the blank space at the top of the 2:4a worksheet.

3. *Plot.* Ask your student to suggest an idea for her tall tale. If she gets stuck, prompt her with questions, such as:

- What could happen when two tall-tale heroes meet for the very first time?
- What kind of contest might appeal to a tall-tale hero or heroine?
- What could be a big problem with weather or climate?
- What might be a good adventure for your character or a good problem to solve? For example, the main character might:
 - ~ Travel to a new place
 - ~ Tame a tornado or a wildfire
 - ~ Feed hungry cowhands or lumberjacks
 - ~ Clear a forest
 - ~ Build a road or railroad over difficult terrain
 - ~ Haul or move something huge

Students may also draw from a previous activity such as the Model and Teach story you wrote during Activity Set 2:2 or their Activity Set 2:3 journal prompt.

Plan and Organize Story Details

1. *Beginning.* Discuss ideas for the beginning of the story (see Tip box on p. TK).
 - On your paper, write down three details that could happen. Invite your student to draw a quick sketch in each box on her worksheet that represents each of these details. (A perfectionist child may have trouble with this, so encourage her to use stick figures.)
 - Think of ideas for one long sentence that could describe the setting or the main character in the beginning of the story. Write it on the blank lines.
2. *Middle.* Talk about what takes place in the middle of the story (see Tip box).
 - On your paper, write down three details that could happen. Invite your child to draw a quick sketch that represents each of these details.
 - Think of ideas for one short sentence that could add excitement or a feeling of danger in the middle of the story. Write it on the blank line.
3. *End.* Discuss how the story will end (see Tip box).
 - On your paper, write down three details that could happen. Invite your student to draw a quick sketch that represents each of these details.
 - Be sure to end the tall tale in a satisfying way.

4. *Figures of Speech*. Review how tall tales incorporate exaggeration and humor, often by using figures of speech such as *idioms, metaphors, and similes*.
 - On the 2:4b brainstorming worksheet, have your student write down at least one idiom, one metaphor, and one simile to include in her tall tale.
 - Refer to the *Figures of Speech Fold-N-Go* as a guide.

To look up more examples of idioms, explore the website Idiom Site idiomsite.com.

5. *Dialogue* shows the way a character might respond to situations in the story. Invite your child to:
 - Think of two dialogue examples for the main character.
 - Write at least one sentence in each speech balloon.
 - Include a dialogue tag such as *said, cried, yelled, thundered, or exclaimed*, along with correct punctuation.

Example: "Flapjacks are ready!" hollered Slue-Foot Sue.

6. *Title*. Discuss various ideas. Have your student choose her favorite and write it on the 2:4a brainstorming worksheet.

Tip

When planning the beginning, middle, and ending of a tall tale, include exciting and preposterous elements.

Consider some of these ideas:

- Incredible weather extremes, such as: *It was so hot that____, so cold that____, or so windy that____*
- Cause and effect of ridiculous proportions, such as: *Stomping through the mud causes a lake to form, running causes an earthquake, or sneezing creates a windstorm*
- Unbelievable ways to travel across plains, rivers, or mountains
- Taming a lightning bolt, tornado, or flood
- Saddling a giant eagle or other wild animal
- Using large props for common tasks, such as *whittling a pine tree into a toothpick, turning a canyon into a soup bowl, using boulders as marbles, or frying bacon on a hot plateau*

Parents Say . . .

Making up a story and adding idioms, metaphors, and similes felt like too much for my child, so we chose to do Smaller Steps (p. TK) to help her over the brainstorming hump.

ACTIVITY SET 2:5

The Writing Project - Writing a Tall Tale

For today's Writing Project, your child will write her own tall tale based on her Activity Set 2:4a and 2:4b brainstorming worksheets.

At a Glance: Activity Set 2:5

- **The Writing Project**
- **Smaller Steps or Flying Higher**

Directions to the Teacher

1. Adjust the Writing Project for a younger or more reluctant writer by using Smaller Steps, or consider the Flying Higher activity if your advanced learner would enjoy an additional challenge.
2. Display the writing sample from Activity Set 2:2 "Davy Crockett Tracked a Bear" (p. TK) as a reference while she writes.
3. Talk about ideas for ways to start the story, such as:
 - Everyone for miles around knew that (*hero's name*) ...
 - Now (*hero's name*) was (*doing what? going where?*) ...
 - One winter ...
 - One day...

Directions to the Student

1. Refer to the Activity Set 2:4a and 2:4b brainstorming worksheets as you write so you can incorporate dialogue and other important details into your story.
2. You do not have to use every single brainstorming idea.
3. Include special vocabulary:
 - Figures of speech such as *metaphors, similes, idioms*, and *personification* (pull out the *Figures of Speech Fold-N-Go* as a reference)
 - Words that create exaggeration, such as: *fastest, meanest, wildest, biggest, fiercest, toughest, or smartest*
 - Transition words, such as:
 - ~ Now one day...
 - ~ Right away...
 - ~ Before he knew it...
 - ~ After that...
 - ~ The next summer...
 - ~ At last...
 - ~ Finally...

“The sloppy copy went quickly and smoothly. My children have found that a well-written brainstorming sheet almost writes the story for them.”

—Hanlie, MI

4. Indent the first line of each paragraph. Indent dialogue text each time a new person talks.
 5. Skip every other line as you write. This will leave you enough space to make corrections during Editing and Revising.
-

Parents Say ...

- *Before writing, we brainstormed together for three possible story starters and my daughter chose her favorite.*
 - *My children read all the time, but they have never read a tall tale. I now see how this has impacted their writing. Though their stories used tall tale characters—and even some characteristics, they were more like adventure stories. Before we move on to Lesson 3, I plan to spend an extra week re-teaching this genre and having them write an actual tall tale.*
-

Smaller Steps - Retell a Tall Tale

Reluctant writers might benefit from retelling a tall tale in their own words and making it even bigger and better!

1. Read a tall tale aloud together.
2. Invite your student to draw a picture of the main character on her brainstorming worksheet. From the original story, choose two sentences of dialogue that the main character spoke. Discuss ways she could rewrite those sentences in her own words, and write them in the speech balloons. (If the tall tale didn't have any dialogue, create your own to write in the speech balloons.)
3. Ask her to identify and point out an idiom, a metaphor, and a simile in the tall tale you read. Write these on the Activity Set 2:4b brainstorming worksheet.
4. Suggest that she have the hero do something extra in the story that is exaggerated or unbelievable. (The Tip box on p. TK might help her think of ideas.)
5. Fill in the remaining details of the brainstorming worksheets by following the instructions in Activity Set 2:4, using information from the tall tale you read together.
6. When your student writes the story, have her retell the tall tale in her own words. Alternatively, allow her to dictate her story as you write.

Flying Higher - Be a Research Sleuth

An accelerated learner may enjoy learning the history behind the tall tale she chooses to write about. Explore the Internet together to learn facts behind the legend. Sometimes it helps to use search terms such as "history of Paul Bunyan" or "Johnny Appleseed facts."

After she writes her original tall tale, invite her either to make a list of facts or write a short report summarizing what she learned.

ACTIVITY SET 2:6

Editing and Revising

Because children feel personally attached to their writing and are often touchy about receiving criticism, editing and revising can challenge even the most willing writer. That's why it's so important to introduce self-editing.

Self-editing gives them the opportunity to search for and fix their own errors. Armed with an assortment of fun tools, students grow to see editing as a natural, enjoyable part of writing.

Self-editing is not a process to zip through in a hurry, so make sure to set aside enough time so your student doesn't feel rushed or stressed. If she does become overwhelmed, see Tips for Reluctant Editors (p. TK).

At a Glance: Activity Set 2:6

- **Editing and Revising**

“This is the best editing process I have ever used. The focus on looking for the things done right has totally changed my child’s attitude about revising.”

–Kim, WA

Advance Prep

Cut several sheets of lined paper into 8 1/2- x 8 1/2-inch squares. Because students will be publishing the Writing Project as a **story quilt**, they will need these squares of paper to assemble the quilt during Activity Set 2:7 “Publishing the Project.”

At the end of today’s editing session, students will copy their edited first draft onto the squares. The number of squares needed will depend on the length of the tall tale.

Students who are not interested in making a story quilt may choose an alternate publishing project from the Appendix (see pp. TK-TK).

Directions

Read your student’s tall tale together. Then, guide her to learn how to proofread her own work by using her new self-editing tools:

- Said It, Read It, Edit Bag
- *Fold-N-Go* guides from Lessons 1 and 2
- Proofreading Marks page
- Self-Editing Checklist

Said It, Read It, Edit Bag

Read the tall tale together. Remind your student that this is her sloppy copy, and it's okay to mark on it. If she resists, try one of the options in "Tips for Reluctant Editors" (p. TK).

1. Invite your student to choose a highlighter from the bag and do a "Job Well Done" search. Look over the story together and guide her to highlight:
 - A difficult word she spelled correctly.
 - A sentence she wrote correctly by starting it with a capital letter and using correct punctuation.
 - At least one idiom, metaphor, or simile.Praise her for a job well done.
2. Pull out the "Proofreading Marks" page. Encourage your child to choose several proofreading symbols to write on her paper today. Keep the chart handy for reference.
3. Ask if her story has all the elements it needs. If not, discuss ideas for improvement.
 - Does the tall tale include something exaggerated or humorous?
 - Does it have a beginning, a middle, and an end?
 - Examine the dialogue. Did she use quotation marks correctly?
 - Each time a different person speaks, does that sentence start on the next line in a new paragraph?
 - Did she add interesting details and descriptions?
4. Instruct her to read her tall tale **aloud**. As she reads, have her check each sentence to make sure she:
 - Indented the first line of each paragraph.
 - Began each sentence with a capital letter and used correct punctuation.
 - Does not have any missing words in the sentences.
5. Encourage her to use a thesaurus to exchange weak words for concrete words.
6. Have her circle, look up in the dictionary, and correct any difficult words whose spelling she's not sure about.

Parents Say ...

The kids all have different favorite tools for editing. One likes crayons, one colored pencils, and the third markers.

Concrete Word Bank (optional)

If your child has enjoyed earning "hard cash" by trading weak words for strong ones at the Concrete Word Bank, she can use this time to earn play money based on the guidelines in Activity Set 1:6.

“He was asking for the thesaurus on his own, pulling out the dictionary, and using his Fold-N-Go—all to make improvements to his story.”

—Tammy, FL

Parents Say...

My oldest two each got over \$100, so we added some larger prizes to the list. These may take all year to save up for, but they're excited about their goals.

Fold-N-Go

Remind your student to correctly apply her new skills using her *Figures of Speech Fold-N-Go* as a reference.

Self-editing Check

When she's ready, give your child the Activity Set 2:6 "Self-editing Check" page from the Student Worksheet Pack. Go down the checklist together. Have her check off each task she already accomplished. If she has forgotten to do something, allow time for her to complete that task and then check it off the list.

Tip

Learning to write descriptively can produce a swing of the pendulum in young writers.

Instead of choosing strong, interesting words, students typically start out wanting to write the shortest possible stories. For this reason, they are given many opportunities during their elementary years to play with language and discover ways to enhance their (often dull) writing.

In their newfound motivation to add concrete words such as adjectives and adverbs, the pendulum can swing from flat, uninteresting writing to overly wordy prose. The next step, then, is to teach them to replace strings of adjectives or adverbs with stronger nouns and verbs.

Tips for Reluctant Editors

Some students balk at the task of self-editing, and sensitive ones feel that their creative efforts are being criticized. Try these ideas if your child resists editing and revising.

- If she's easily discouraged or overwhelmed by her mistakes:
 - ~ Type out her Writing Project as a worksheet.
 - ~ Rather than have her fix all her errors, give her a set of more manageable instructions, such as:
 - Find 3 misspelled words, 4 punctuation errors, and 2 capitalization errors.
 - Circle a word that shows action.
 - Circle 3 descriptive words.
- If she's reluctant to mark up her Writing Project:
 - ~ Make a photocopy of the original and let her edit the photocopy.
 - ~ Type and print out the story, article, or report. As you type, don't fix her spelling or punctuation. Let her edit the typed copy.
- If she just can't seem to identify her own mistakes:
 - ~ In the left margin of each line, write "P" (for punctuation), "C" (for capitalization), "S" (for spelling), and "G" (for grammar). Without pointing out the exact error, you're alerting your student to a particular *kind* of mistake in that line. If she's sensitive to corrections or suggestions, start slowly by identifying just a few errors. Gradually point out more as her confidence builds.
 - ~ Put four sticky notes on her paper, titled "Punctuation," "Capitalization," "Spelling," and "Grammar." On each sticky note, write the number of errors you want her to find and fix throughout the story. If you spot six spelling errors, for example, you might want her to find three for starters.

Final Check

Parent Editing

When your student has finished self-editing, take time to give her paper one final edit. Use the "Proofreading Marks" page to write the correct proofreading marks on the story. Write the corrections on the blank spaces between the lines.

Revising

For the most attractive published project, instruct your student to rewrite her final draft on the prepared 8 1/2- x 8 1/2-inch squares of lined paper. To help her plan her story layout, look ahead to Activity Set 2:7 (p. TK) to see how the squares will be displayed.

Alternatively, she may create typed quilt squares for her final draft. Set the margins of your word processor to print on 8 1/2- x 8 1/2-inch paper, and help her choose a larger font size. If she needs help, you may do some or all of the typing.

Don't worry if you notice new errors in your child's final copy. (See Activity Set 1:6 "What If the Final Copy Has New Mistakes?")

Parents Say . . .

Breaking the story into four parts to make four quilt squares helped make the project seem more manageable for my reluctant writer.

Editing went well because my kids were inspired by the quilt project and couldn't wait to publish!

Publishing as a quilt met with some resistance for my son, so it took extra encouragement and patience to bring him on board. The finished product turned out great, though. In the end, he was glad he stuck with it.

ACTIVITY SET 2:7

Publishing the Project - Story Quilt

During pioneer days when tall tales originated, many families made quilts. In the designs and colors that were used, quilts often told a story that the quilt maker wanted to pass on to family members or friends. Today, students will publish their tall tales by making a story quilt. They can either make a story quilt out of paper to hang on the wall or create a fabric quilt using a computer and printer. Children who choose to make a fabric quilt will need help from an adult.

Directions to the Student To Create a Paper Quilt

1. Using glue or double-sided tape, affix each square of the Writing Project onto a 12- x 12-inch square of solid or patterned scrapbooking paper. (To make a smaller quilt, use 6- x 6-inch squares.)
2. If the tall tale is short and only uses one or two squares, draw or paint pictures on matching paper squares to make the quilt the size you want.
3. Tape the large squares of scrapbooking paper together using 2-inch wide clear packing tape, or glue the squares to a large piece of butcher paper.
4. Mount the paper quilt on the wall as an eye-catching display.

To Create a Fabric Quilt

1. On the computer, set the bottom page margin at 2 1/2 inches so the text fits in an 8 1/2-inch square.
2. Type the tall tale. Experiment with larger font sizes such as 18 pt, 24 pt, or 36 pt until the story fits on an even number of pages.
3. With an adult's help, print out the story on sheets of fabric following the guidelines on your printer or the tips and suggestions found on one of these websites:
 - Video tutorial bit.ly/youtube-print-on-fabric
 - Photo tutorial bit.ly/freezer-paper-method
4. If the tall tale is short and only uses one or two squares, draw or paint pictures on matching fabric squares to make the quilt the size you want.

At a Glance: Activity Set 2:7

- Publishing the Project

“The story quilt is a fantastic idea for reinforcing the concept of the tall tale genre and tying it into a historical lesson.”

—Krystin, KY



- Sew the fabric sheets together to make a quilt top. Add strips of fabric borders between the story pieces, if desired. Finish the quilt by sewing batting and a backing to the back of the quilt top.
5. Invite your student to share her story quilt with family members or friends.

If making a quilt does not appeal to your child, invite her to choose an alternative publishing idea from the Appendix.

Parents Say . . .

The kids had fun picking out the colors and patterns of scrapbook paper they wanted to use. My oldest chose paper with maps on it because "my character travels around a lot." We made one large "family quilt" from both kids' stories and hung it on the wall.

My daughter wrote her story and drew pictures on 5- x 5-inch paper and added dashed "sewing lines" around the edge of the white squares. We cut colorful 12- x 12-inch scrapbooking paper into 6- x 6-inch squares to make a mini-quilt.

We typed the story. I set the margins to print pages that were 6 1/2 inches square. Then the kids cut 8-inch squares of construction paper and glued on the story and illustration squares. Because of the smaller size, the finished "quilt" could be folded up to fit into their writing folders.

The boys weren't excited about the quilt idea. One son drew a map showing where his tall tale took place. Then he taped the map and story side-by-side onto a 12- x 18-inch sheet of construction paper. The other one typed his story in two columns, printed it out and cut it in half vertically, and taped the two halves together to make a long, thin, "tall" tale!

ACTIVITY SET 2:8

Evaluating the Student's Work

Use the Junior Writing Skills Evaluation Chart for Lessons 1-6 to evaluate your student's writing.

Want to Do More?

Writing Across the Curriculum: Spotlight on Social Studies – United States History

Most tall tales originated in a specific state. Your student will better understand the background of a favorite tall tale by learning the history of the state it came from.

1. Help your student find out which state a tall tale originated from by searching the Internet or looking on the website *American Folklore*. americanfolklore.net/folklore/tall-tales
2. Guide your child to research the history of that state during its pioneer days. Look up information in a library book or on the Internet.
3. Have her write a short report about the facts she learned. Reluctant writers can make a list of facts instead.

Computer Capers – Tall Tale Storyteller Award

Teach your student how to insert a picture into a document by creating an award.

1. Open a new document and guide her to type the following text:

Tall Tale Storyteller Award
Presented to
(Your Student's Name)
(Date)
2. Have her use the computer's typing program commands to center the text. If she has forgotten how to do this, review Activity Set 1:8 Computer Capers (p. TK).
3. Encourage her to adjust the font size and color to give the text a fancy appearance.

When finished, show your child how to insert a picture into the document.

1. Invite her to draw a picture of her favorite tall-tale hero or heroine. Use a digital camera to take a photograph of her illustration and upload the JPG image to your desktop.
2. Return to the document she is creating. Place the cursor above the first line of text. Insert the image of the tall-tale character.
 - Click on the "Insert" command in the toolbar.

At a Glance: Activity Set 2:8

- **Evaluating the Student's Work**
- **Want to Do More? (optional)**
 - ~ *Writing Across the Curriculum*
 - ~ *Computer Capers*
 - ~ *Junior Writer's Notebook*
- **Lesson 3: Let's Look Ahead**

- Click on the “Picture” command or icon.
- On the desktop, locate and double-click on the image of your child’s drawing. (Alternatively, click once on the image and then click the “Insert” button.)
- Once the image is inside the document, resize it (or the text font) to fit.

Junior Writer’s Notebook – Genre: Tall Tales

Read the “Genre: Tall Tale” worksheet together. Have your student add the master copy to her **Junior Writer’s Notebook**. On a separate sheet of lined paper, invite her to write down ideas for future tall tales by answering the prompts from this worksheet.

6 “Andrew really likes this worksheet for brainstorming for his future novels!”

–Erika, TX

Lesson 3: Let’s Look Ahead

Introduction to Mysteries

The next lesson will teach students to write a mystery. If this genre is new to your kids, reading a mystery will help prepare them for upcoming activities and increase their confidence and success.

Read a Picture Book

Before you begin Lesson 3, why not introduce your child to this genre through picture books? Kids of all ages will love these engaging stories, and because picture books are short and sweet, students can easily identify the important elements of a mystery.

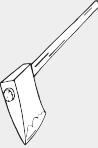
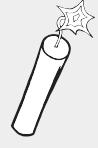
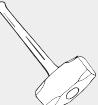
- **Piggins** by Jane Yolen reads like a classic English mystery, right down to the butler, missing jewels, and dinner-guest suspects with their various motives. The classic mystery structure makes it perfect for introducing traditional mysteries to upper-elementary students.
- In **Who Pushed Humpty Dumpty? And Other Notorious Nursery Tale Mysteries**, author David Levinthal retells classic nursery rhymes in the style of a 1940s crime-fiction detective novel. This creativity opens doors for discussing the elements of a mystery with all ages!
- **Grandpa’s Teeth** by Rod Clement is a hilarious picture book that older students will enjoy. It introduces all the elements of a mystery they’ll be learning about in Lesson 3, from vocabulary, characters, and plot structure right down to its very satisfying ending.

Play a Game

The classic game of Clue® for ages 9+ is a fun way to expose children to the mystery genre. *Which suspect committed the crime? In which room did it take place? What weapon was used?* It’s a classic whodunit, and players must become detectives in order to solve the mystery.

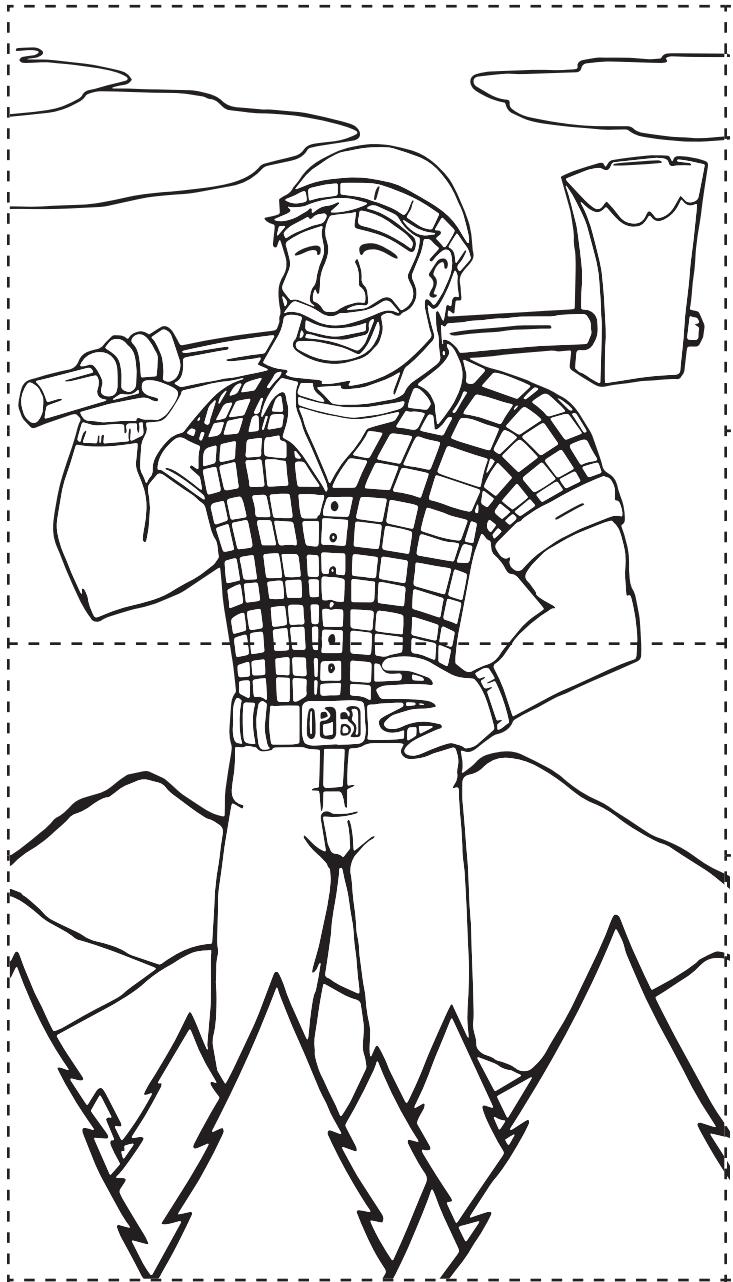
Activity Set 2:2 Lesson Overview

Tall Tales Chart

Character	Why Is This Folk Hero “Larger Than Life”?
 Paul Bunyan Lumberjack	<ul style="list-style-type: none">Made lakes and stamped out forest fires with his bootsCould clear a forest of trees with one swing of his axeClothes were so large he used wagon wheels for buttons
 Babe, the Blue Ox Paul Bunyan's pet	<ul style="list-style-type: none">Took a flock of crows all day to fly from one horn to the otherUsed Lake Michigan for a waterholeStrong enough to straighten crooked roads
 Pecos Bill Cowboy	<ul style="list-style-type: none">Was raised by coyotesUsed a rattlesnake as a lariatRoped a tornado and rode on its shouldersOften rode a mountain lion instead of Widow-Maker
 Widow-Maker Pecos Bill's horse	<ul style="list-style-type: none">Meanest, toughest horse in the WestDynamite was his favorite foodBucked like a maniac—only Pecos Bill could ride him
 Slue-Foot Sue Cowgirl	<ul style="list-style-type: none">Could ride anything that moved, even a giant catfishStood on the fish's back while shooting at the cloudsWidow-Maker bucked her off his back and she bounced all the way to the moon
 Davy Crockett Frontiersman	<ul style="list-style-type: none">Wrestled a bear at 3 years oldRode a lightning boltUntangled a comet from the North Pole
 Johnny Appleseed Pioneer	<ul style="list-style-type: none">Kept a wolf as a petPlayed with family of bearsNever wore shoesHad skin so tough, even a rattlesnake bite couldn't hurt him
 Annie Oakley Sharpshooter	<ul style="list-style-type: none">Could shoot tiny things from great distancesShot through a dime tossed 90 feet into the airSliced a playing card in half from 75 feet awayStarred in Wild West shows as the best sharpshooter in the West
 John Henry Railroad man	<ul style="list-style-type: none">Won a race against a steam-drill machine using his own strength and two hammers to pound steel nails into railroad tracks

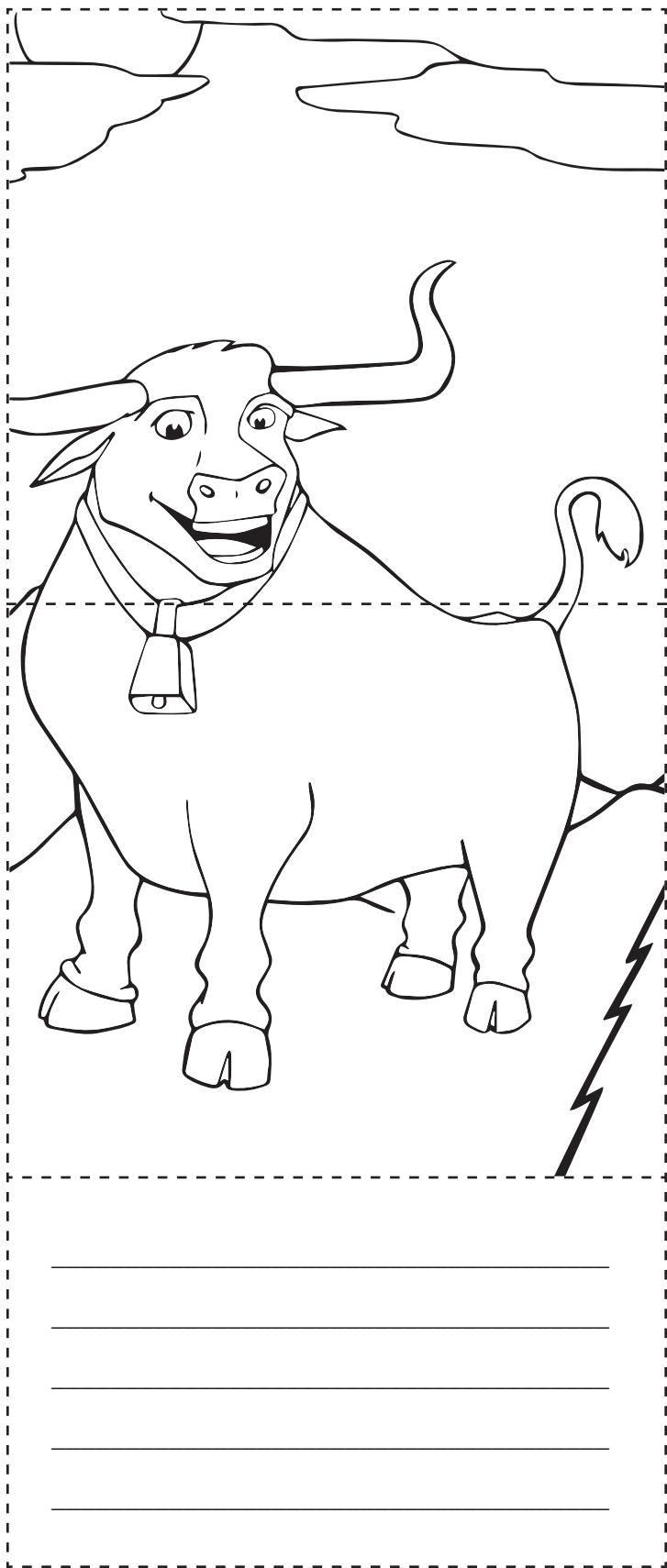
Activity Set 2:2
Pre-writing

Taller Than Life: Paul Bunyan



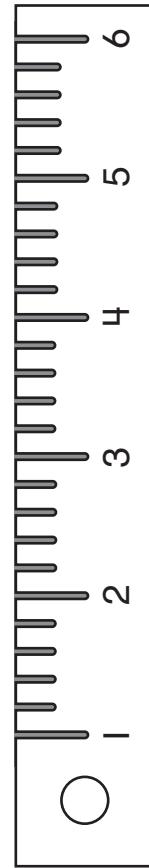
Activity Set 2:2
Pre-writing

**Taller Than Life:
Babe the Blue Ox**



Sentence Length Flip Card

- Name: _____
- Use a variety of different sentence lengths to add interest and meaning to your story.
- 1 _____
- 2 _____
- 3 _____



SHORT SENTENCES: 6 words or fewer

Excitement! Danger! Fast Adventure.

Examples: "Stop!" he shouted. *The horse bucked wildly.*

LONG SENTENCES: 7 words or more
Thoughtful. Slow. Explanations and descriptions. *Example: She brushed her thick black hair that hung down her back like a horse's tail.*

- 1 _____
- 2 _____
- 3 _____

Activity Set 2:3 **Journal Prompt**

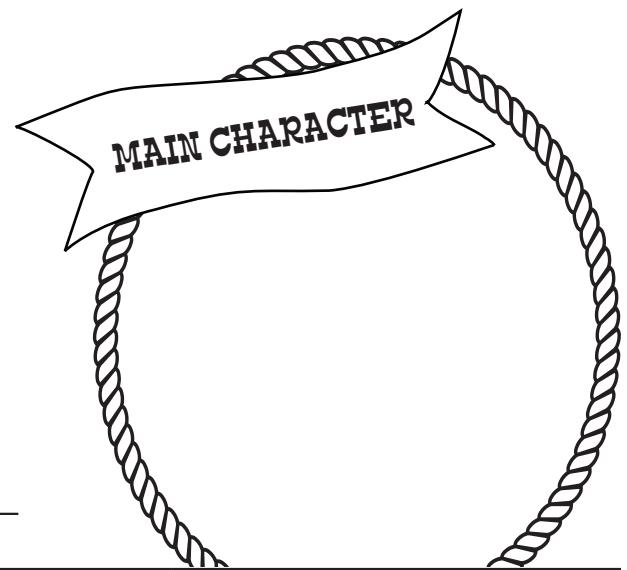
Name: _____

Directions: What gigantic contest might take place if Babe, Paul Bunyan's big blue ox, ever met Widow-Maker, Pecos Bill's horse? Write a new tall tale to tell what happens.

Widow-Maker was minding his own business one day when a cyclone picked him up and blew him all the way from Texas to Minnesota, where he met Babe, the giant blue ox. Pecos Bill and Paul Bunyan decided right then to hold a contest between their animals to see which one could _____



Activity Set 2:4a Brainstorming



Name: _____

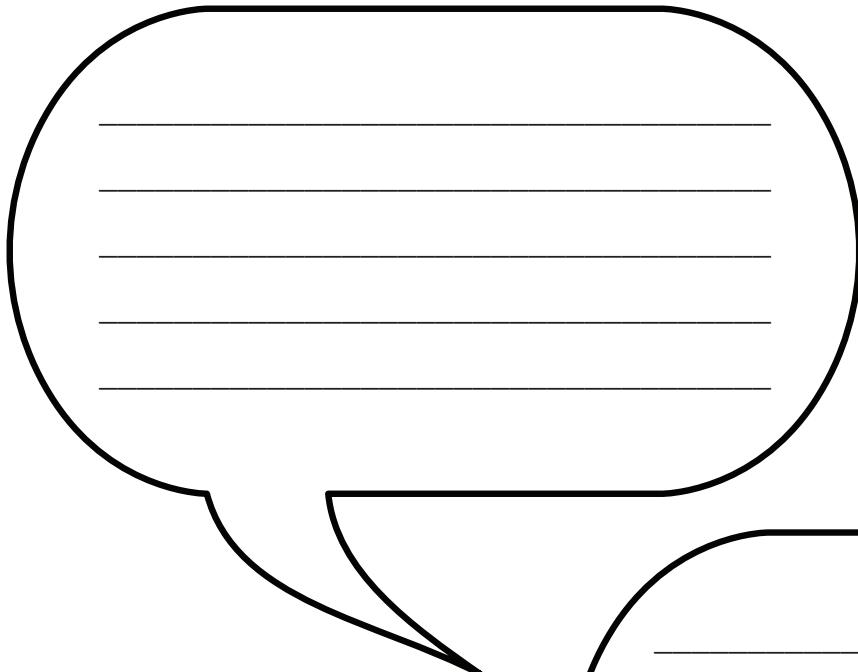
Title: _____

BEGINNING			
	Long sentence: _____ _____		
MIDDLE			
	Short sentence: _____		
END			

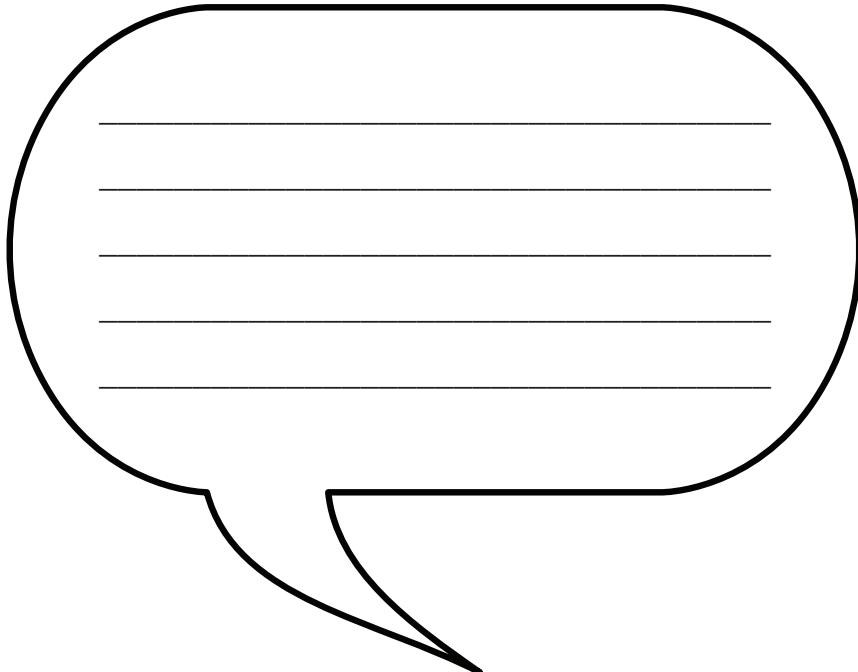
Activity Set 2:4b
Brainstorming

Name: _____

Figures of Speech

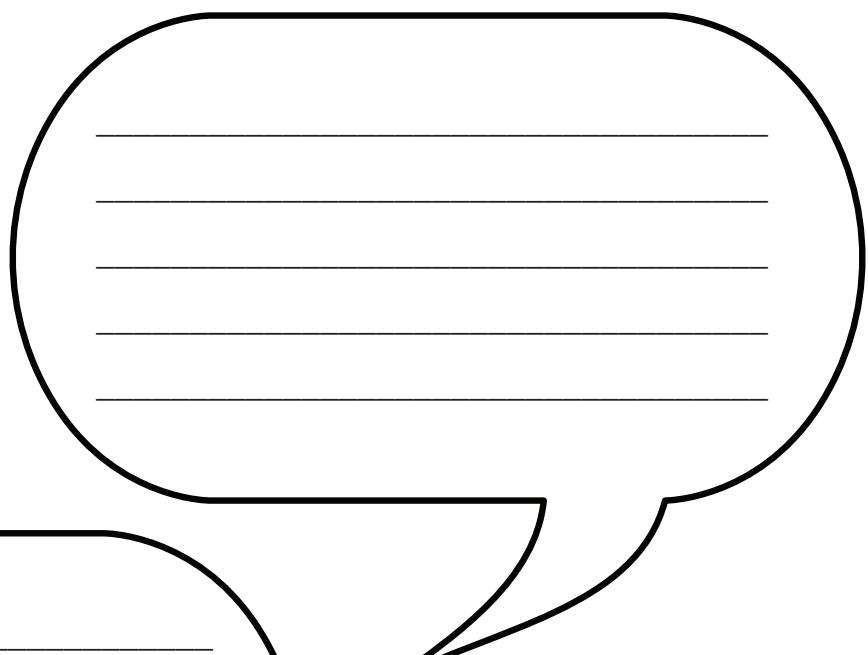


Metaphor



Simile

Idiom



Activity Set 2:6 Editing and Revising

Name: _____

Self-editing Check

Content

- I wrote a beginning, middle, and end.
- I added interesting details and descriptions.
- My story follows guidelines for its genre.

Mechanics and Grammar

- I wrote complete sentences that start with a capital letter and end with a punctuation mark.
- I used a capital letter for each proper noun.
- I used commas correctly.
- I used quotation marks correctly.
- I indented each new paragraph.

Self-editing

- I used proofreading marks to make corrections.
- I checked that my story makes sense.
- I looked in a dictionary to check my spelling.
- I looked in a thesaurus to find concrete words.