

Teacher's Guide for  
BIG STEPS: American Tall Tales

—About the performance—

Big Steps: American Tall Tales introduces students to America's tall tales through storytelling, performance, and audience participation. Costumes, props, and a large map line the stage. Some students become characters in the stories and participate in a game. They will hear about several bigger-than-life characters; such as the famous characters Johnny Appleseed and John Henry. Students will also hear about several not so well known characters, such as, Sal Fink and Annie Christmas.

—About Cwerks, inc.—

Cwerks was founded in 1995 and brings live theater to all ages through a variety of venues: interactive children's plays; audience-participation mysteries; workshops and classes; etc. The directors, Christopher and Marian Scadden have over 50 years combined theater experience. Christopher has a B.A. in Theatre Arts and M.S. in Bilingual Education; Marian has a B.A. in Children's Theatre and 30 years experience in Mime.

The performer of Big Steps, Christopher, has directed, performed and taught with numerous amateur and professional theater groups for children and adults; such as Great American Melodrama, California; Children's Educational Theatre, Oregon; and many School Districts.

—Books about American Tall Tales, and performing—

adapted by Steven Kellogg: PAUL BUNYAN, JOHNNY APPLESEED, SALLY ANN THUNDER  
ANN WHIRLWIND CROCKETT

CUT FROM THE SAME CLOTH: AMERICAN WOMEN OF MYTH, LEGEND, AND TALL TALE  
by Robert D. San Souci and Brian Pinkney

*INSTANT THEATER FOR CHILDREN: •Enhance Creativity & Self-Esteem •Strengthen Verbal Skills •Improve Literacy*, by Marian Scadden, coming May 2008. This handbook is a teacher's guide to adding theater into the classroom through simple—and short—activities. ([www.scaddenbooks.com/marian.html](http://www.scaddenbooks.com/marian.html))

PLAYS, THE DRAMA MAGAZINE FOR YOUNG PEOPLE, (click on their link from our website: [www.cwerks.com](http://www.cwerks.com))

MAKE BELIEVE, A BOOK OF COSTUME AND FANTASY, Klutz Press

THEATRE GAMES FOR YOUNG PERFORMERS, by Maria C. Novelly

101 DRAMA GAMES FOR CHILDREN by Paul Rooyackers

various plays for children to perform: [www.cwerks.com](http://www.cwerks.com)

—Online resources—

[www.42explore.com/talltale.htm](http://www.42explore.com/talltale.htm)

[www.americanfolklore.net/tt.html](http://www.americanfolklore.net/tt.html)

[www.hasd.org/Faculty/DHietpas](http://www.hasd.org/Faculty/DHietpas)

[www.infoplease.com/spot/amerfolklore1.html](http://www.infoplease.com/spot/amerfolklore1.html)

[artsedge.kennedy-center.org/content/2339](http://artsedge.kennedy-center.org/content/2339)

**—People mentioned in the program—**

- Paul Bunyan: a giant logger who started in Maine, went through the south, into California and up to Alaska. Purported to have created the Grand Canyon and the Northern Lights, and made the six Mississippi Rivers into one large river.
- Babe the Blue Ox: companion of Paul Bunyan.
- Johnny Appleseed: a real person in American history whose planting of apple trees became legend.
- John Henry: Also a real person in American history who became larger-than-life. He worked on the railroads, driving spikes.
- Mike Fink & Sal Fink: Tough father and daughter team who poled keelboats up and down the Mississippi River.
- Annie Christmas: A keelboat woman from New Orleans, kind to everyone but bullies.
- Pecos Bill: Raised by coyotes, he became the first cowboy with his rattlesnake lasso and his steed known as Widow Maker. He invented the cattle drive. Purported to have created the Grand Canyon.

**—Possible follow-up activities—**

- Read other American Tall Tales, or even other versions of those mentioned in the program.
- Act out a tall tale, creating props and costumes from simple materials. Make the performance different by using modern language or by singing some or all of the story, like a musical or opera.
- Draw a picture from a tall tale.
- Using a map of the United States, locate where some of the stories took place.
- Study the areas and the time periods of the characters of tall tales, e.g. Johnny Appleseed started out in Massachusetts and traveled through Ohio in the 1700s.
- Read about the real Johnny Appleseed (John Chapman) and John Henry.
- Create a crossword or word search puzzle.
- Create a large mural about a tall tale on a sheet using fabric markers.
- Write your own tall tale about one of the characters mentioned or create a new character.

**—Let us hear from you—**

Questions, comments, concerns, suggestions, and accolades all cheerfully accepted, as are children's pictures and notes:

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If you care to write a testimonial that we can include on our website ([www.cwerks.com](http://www.cwerks.com)) or with our promotional packets, please attach a note indicating this.



**cwerks**

*Live theatre  
where people interAct*