

8 Storytelling

Read It, Write It, Tell It Episode: “Cy Gatton”

Lesson Overview

The purpose of the lessons in this unit is to help Ohio students in grades 3-7 see the interrelationships of all of the Literary Text benchmarks explored in *Read It, Write It, Tell It* units 1-7. The lessons revolve around the fiction genre tall tales and storytelling. The lessons are divided into two sections: Grades 3-4 and Grades 5-7.

Ohio Academic Content Indicators

English Language Arts: Reading: Literary Text: Character Development, Setting, Plot, Point of View, Theme, Genre, Mood, and Figurative Language: Grades 3-4.

Cy Gatton

Episode Overview

This episode highlights Cy Gatton, a storyteller and folk hero from Richland County, Ohio. The tall tale portion of the episode tells of Cy’s rivalry with Rusty McNabb in the Apple Cider Race. Rusty sabotages Cy’s wagon and drives away his horses. Cy needs an alternative way to carry the eleven cider barrels he must transport for the race. He mixes magical Richland County soil with rabbit food to produce gigantic rabbits.

Fact:

- Cyrus Gatton (1836-1916) was a storyteller and entrepreneur who lived in Wildcat Hollow just west of Butler, Ohio in Richland County.
- He was a family man who owned what is now the Wade and Gatton Nursery and a vacation area that was near Gatton Rocks in Richland County.

Vocabulary

The following words used by the storyteller in the *Read It, Write It, Tell It* episode “Cy Gatton” may be unfamiliar to some students.

chores
puny

scoundrel
taunted

Before Viewing

- Ask students to share a tall tale they already know: Paul Bunyan, Pecos Bill, etc.
- Review the elements of tall tales:
 - Character
 - The hero or heroine is superhuman or larger-than-life.
 - The hero uses everyday language.
 - The hero often displays character traits most admired by the people who helped create the stories such as courage, strength, honor, thoughtfulness, and intelligence.
 - Plot
 - A problem is solved in a humorous or outrageous way.
 - Hyperbole – Exaggeration
 - Descriptions or characters and events are often so exaggerated that they are impossible and/or funny.
- Say: While we watch the *Read It, Write It, Tell It* episode “Cy Gatton” think about the elements of a tall tale. Be ready to share details from the episode that are examples of the elements of a tall tale.

After Viewing

Pre/Post Questions: If the students cannot easily answer the following questions, you may wish to use the Lessons (Section 4) and/or the Extensions (Section 5).

1. What example of superhuman or larger-than-life characteristics did you see in the “Cy Gatton” episode? Support your answer with evidence from the episode.
Cy Gatton was stronger and quicker than a normal human being. “Cy woke up early to get all of his 1,000 stable chores done, eat breakfast, do 1,000 more chores, THEN, get ready for the race. Cy began to fill the wagon with the apple cider barrels. He stacked five on each hand and rolled the 11th barrel with his feet.”
2. What example of everyday language did you hear in “Cy Gatton?”
There are many examples of everyday language. Including “your horses are puny,” “that mean ol’ Rusty had a plan to do some dirty tricks,” “It had to be that no good, no count varmint,” “I have to think real fast. I need something really big. Wait a second, real big and fast,” etc.
3. Describe the character traits of Cy Gatton.
Cy Gatton was physically strong, fast, agile, and intelligent. He could do thousands of chores in a single day, carry more than a normal human, ride bareback and he quickly thought up a way to outwit Rusty McNabb.
4. What problem was solved?
Rusty McNabb stole Cy’s wagon wheels and chased away his horses making it impossible for Cy to compete in the Apple Cider Race. Rusty found a way to overcome the losses by growing giant rabbits that were capable of carrying apple cider barrels around their necks.

5. What was humorous in the episode?

Answers will vary. Students may feel that the following incidents were humorous: the description of Rusty as “Rotten Rusty,” words such as “Jumping Jingos” and “varmint,” rabbits eating dirt, rabbits growing as large as horses, and the rabbit, Skip, kicking Rusty McNabb into the river when Rusty tried to cut the reins Cy was using to guide the rabbits.

6. Give an example of hyperbole from the “Cy Gatton” episode.

Examples include:

- *“Paul Bunyan heard they needed water in five different areas. So, Paul stuck out his hand in the earth and helped create the Great Mohican from his palm. It had five forks from his fingers: the Black, Rocky, Muddy, Cedar, and Clear Forks.”*
- *“Cy woke up early to get all of his 1,000 stable chores done, eat breakfast, do 1,000 more chores, THEN, get ready for the race. Cy began to fill the wagon with the apple cider barrels. He stacked five on each hand and rolled the 11th barrel with his feet.”*
- *“I’ll mix some soil in with the rabbit’s food. Maybe, they’ll grow super fast too; just like the carrots!” They grew all right, big as horses, all 11 of them.”*
- *“Skip, kicked him so hard, he flew up in the air and landed in the Great Mohican.”*

Lesson

Materials:

- A tall tale familiar to your students. See #2 below for ideas and suggestions.
- Student Handout “Is the Story a Tall Tale?”

Procedure:

1. Review the elements of a tall tale. Create and display a list of the elements.
2. View, read, recite, or review a tall tale with which the students are familiar. Each of the *Read It, Write It, Tell It* episodes is a tall tale. The following websites are sources of tall tales:
 - American Folklore:
http://www.millville.org/Workshops_f/Dich_FOLKLORE/FOLKTEXT/folkhome.htm
 - Tall Tales American Folklore:
 - <http://www.americanfolklore.net/tt.html>
 - Retellings of American folktales and legends, Native American myths, weather folklore, ghost stories and more from each of the 50 United States of America. Check out characters such as Paul Bunyan and Babe the Blue Ox, Pecos Bill, Johnny Appleseed and Ethan Allen as we explore American folktales from every region.
3. Have the students complete the handout “Is the Story a Tall Tale?” and discuss the evidence of tall tale elements in the selected story.
4. As a group, brainstorm elements for a tall tale the students will create and tell.
5. Allow students time to create the tall tale individually or in groups.
6. Have the students tell their tales to the class. The sample rubric at the end of this lesson may be used to evaluate the tale.

Is the Story a Tall Tale?

Name:		Date:	
Instructions: Read each of the characteristics of a tall tale. Mark the box (☑ or ☒) in front of each statement that applies to the story you are evaluating. Give an example from the story to support each marked element.			
Characteristic:		Example:	
<input type="checkbox"/> The story uses hyperbole, that is, it has many exaggerations in it.			
<input type="checkbox"/> The main character has a problem to solve.			
<input type="checkbox"/> The main character is bigger than life and has super-human abilities.			
<input type="checkbox"/> The plot of the story is funny and impossible.			
<input type="checkbox"/> In the end, the main character solves a problem, overcomes an obstacle and/or defeats an antagonist (bad guy/girl).			
<input type="checkbox"/> The story includes lots of action.			
Is the story a tall tale? <input type="checkbox"/> YES <input type="checkbox"/> NO			

Extension Activities

Provide group and individual learning activities. Provide a variety of resources to accommodate various modalities. Suggested resources are listed below

Storytelling • Books

Suggestions, Booklists, and Online Access to Ohio's School and Public Libraries

- A Storytelling Bookshelf for Teachers: <http://www.storyarts.org/store/bookshelf/index.html>
- INFOhio's K-12 School Online Catalogs: MultiLIS and SirsiDynix K-12 Sites: <http://www.infohio.org/web2/web2.html>
- State Library of Ohio: Ohio's participating public libraries: Locate Books of Line in your area: <http://seoweb.seo.lib.oh.us/Library%20Info/participating%20librarys.htm>
- Children's Book Awards and Other Literary Prizes: <http://falcon.jmu.edu/~ramseyil/awards.htm>
- ATN Booklists
 - <http://nancykeane.com/rl/>
 - These recommendations are harvested from a variety of listserv such as LM_NET, Childlit, Booktalkers@egroups.com, YALSA, etc. The reading lists were started as part of a librarian collaborative project, All Together Now, begun by Dale Copps.
- Books for Younger Students:
 - *Peggyon Po: A Whale of a Tale* by Andrea Pinkney.
 - *Dona Flor* by Pat Mora
 - *Snickerdoodle!* By Clare Ham Grosgebauer
 - *Sitka Rose / Shelley Gill* by Shannon Cartwright

Ohio Resource Center • Reading http://www.ohiorc.org/search/search_adv.aspx

- Advanced Search: Choose Free Text and ORC Number from the drop down menus and type the ORC Lesson number in the center box. Scroll down and click Submit. For example:
Search for resources that...contain in the
- “Born on a Mountaintop: Davy Crockett, Tall Tales, and History,” Grades 3-6
 - ORC Lesson# 93
 - This resource, maintained by the National Endowment for the Humanities, uses historical documents and tall tales about Davy Crockett as the focus for a unit on American tall tales. The suggested lessons allow students to examine the characteristics of tall tales and how these tales reflect historical events.
- “Exploring American Tall Tales” Grades 4-5
 - ORC Lesson# 4542
 - In this lesson, students explore the common elements of folktales and tall tales, while learning how these stories built the spirit of American pioneers. Students identify the elements of tall tale and write responses to these tales, including a composition in the form of a monologue or a news report.
- “A Variety of Unwise Characters,” Grades 4-5
 - ORC Lesson # 4539
 - In this lesson, students explore the common elements of folktales and tall tales, while learning how these tales built the spirit of the American people. Students also identify the common characteristics of tall tales.
- “Myths, Folktales, and Fairy Tales: Writing with Writers,” Grades 2-3
 - ORC Lesson# 216
 - This promising practice, part of Scholastic's “Writing With Writers” series, provides

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strategies for teaching students to craft their own fairy tales. Designed for implementation within writing workshop, this cross grade level writing project features several components, including fractured fairy tale activities inspired by Jon Scieszka.

- “Fairy Tale Autobiographies” Grades 6-8
 - ORC Lesson# 1350
 - URL: http://www.readwritethink.org/lessons/lesson_view.asp?id=1
 - This lesson uses fairy tales as a vehicle for story analysis and discussion. Students work together in small groups to read, discuss, and analyze three fairy tales for characters, setting, conflict and theme.

Storytelling • Other Online Resources

- “The Value of Storytelling:”
<http://www.ncrel.org/sdrs/areas/issues/content/cntareas/reading/li4lk28.htm>
- “Developing Literacy Skills Through Storytelling:”
http://www.nationalserviceresources.org/resources/newsletters/resource_connection/volume_2_number_4/developing_literacy.php
- “Story Arts Online:” <http://www.storyarts.org/index.html>
- Arts Edge • Kennedy Center
 - “Weaving Words: The Art of Storytelling:” <http://artsedge.kennedy-center.org/content/3481/>
 - “Storytelling Stage:” <http://www.artsedge.kennedy-center.org/content/3520/stage.html>
 - “Spinning Stories, Telling Tales:” <http://www.artsedge.kennedy-center.org/content/3448/story.swf>
 - “Coaching Youth Storytellers:” <http://artsedge.kennedy-center.org/content/3266/>
- Storytelling Educator Resources List:
 - <http://www.multcolib.org/events/tales/educators.html>
 - Multnomah County Library, Portland, Oregon
- National Storytellers Network Resources: <http://www.storynet.org/Resources/index.html>
- Storytelling Workshop with Gerald Fierst: <http://teacher.scholastic.com/writewit/storyteller/index.htm>
- Tim Sheppard's Story Links: <http://www.timsheppard.co.uk/story/storylinks.html>
- Center for Digital Storytelling: <http://www.storycenter.org/index1.html>
- “The Celebrated Jumping Frog of Calaveras County” by Mark Twain.
 - Audio book from Wired for Books
 - www.wiredforbooks.org/twain
- “The Art of Storytelling: Tall Tales”
 - Clearvue & SVE. ©1986. 29 minutes. Grades 3-6.
 - Educational video from Power Media Plus
 - <http://www.powermediaplus.com>
- “O.O.P.S! The Ohio Order for the Preservation of Storytelling”
 - <http://www.oopstorytelling.org/index.htm>
- Southern Ohio Storytelling Festival: <http://www.sostoryfest.com/>
- What is Storytelling?
 - For Parents
 - KYBU, Brigham Young University, Provo, Utah
 - <http://www.callofstory.org/en/storytelling/>

Cy Gatton • Follow Up Activities

Research factual details mentioned in the episode:

- Where in Ohio is Richland County? Learn about the geography and/or history of Richland County.
- What kind of soil does Richland County have?
- Where is the Mohican River? Is it in or near Richland County? Are there forks of the Mohican called Black, Rocky, Muddy, Cedar, and Clear Forks?