

## Unit 4 Mini-Lesson

# Tall Tales



### What is a tall tale?

A tall tale is a type of folktale, passed down through generations mainly by oral retelling. Tall tales are imaginative and funny and have exaggerated elements. For example, a dog isn't just big, he is bigger than a city bus! This is called hyperbole. Tall tales have a hero who can be a real person or a fictitious one. The hero is often bigger, stronger, more skillful, and more courageous than an ordinary person.

### What is the purpose of a tall tale?

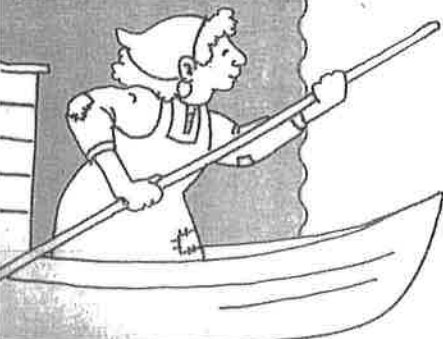
A tall tale seeks to entertain the reader while it teaches a lesson or sets a good example. The hero shows strength, wit, determination, and courage over great odds. A tall tale often celebrates human strength, cleverness, and know-how. The hero overcomes nature, machines, or just plain evil. The hero often finds exaggerated ways to solve problems.

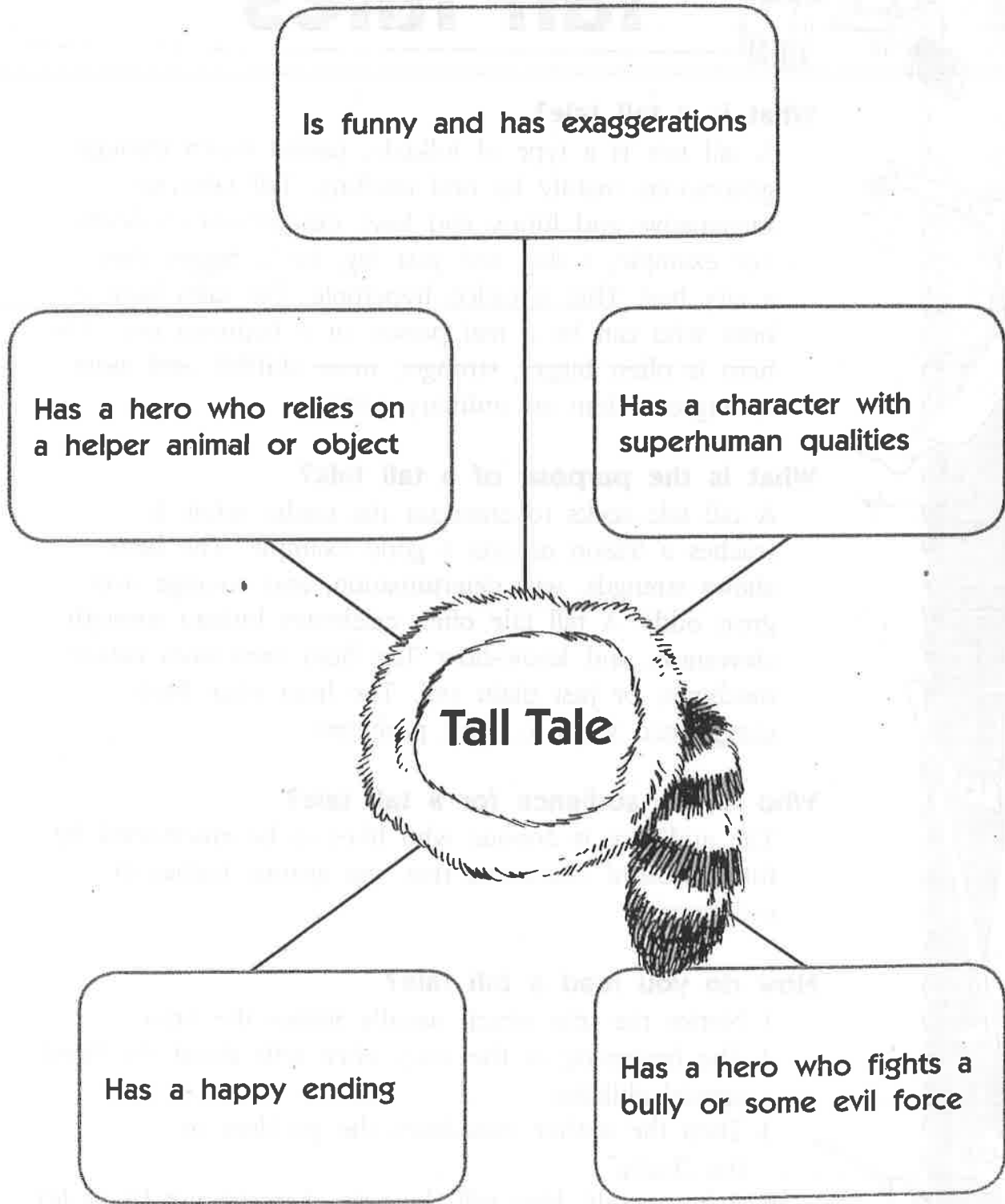
### Who is the audience for a tall tale?

The audience is anyone who likes to be entertained by funny, absurd characters that win against bullies or evil forces.

### How do you read a tall tale?

1. Notice the title, which usually names the hero.
2. The beginning of the story often tells about the hero's special abilities.
3. Then the author introduces the problem or the "bully."
4. Ask yourself: *How will the main character use his or her powers to defeat this bad guy?*

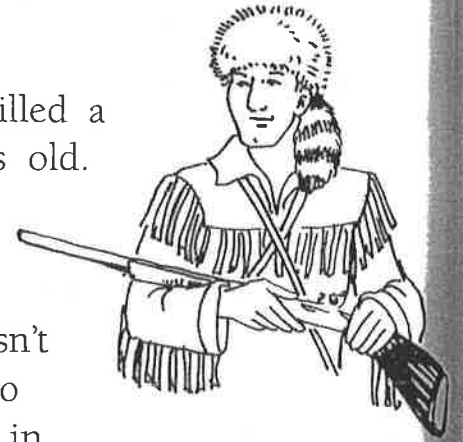




## Davy Crockett

This is the story of Davy Crockett, who killed a bear with his hands when he was three years old.

Davy was the best hunter in the North, South, East, and West. But one winter the snow piled as high as a mountain. There wasn't much food and he did not want his family to waste away to skin and bones. So he set off in his raccoon-skin cap with his best friend, Betsy. Betsy was his rifle. It was snowing so heavily that Davy was in a sea of white. "You can't stop me!" shouted Davy to the icy winds. He climbed the mountain higher, looking for fresh meat. Betsy stopped suddenly and whispered that she heard a bear. Within seconds Davy had turned, aimed, and he shot a bear that was bigger than a cave!



Davy put the bear on his back and started to walk home. But then Davy and Betsy were startled at the sight of two icy cold fingers wrapped around the sun's throat. Davy scolded the ice.

The ice replied, "The sun melts us away every spring. We won't be victims again! The sun will be our prisoner!"

Davy had a dilemma. He had enough food for his family, but he couldn't leave. If the ice took over the sun, everyone would freeze and die. An idea popped into his head! Davy threw the bear onto the icy fingers and beat it with his bare hands. Before long hot oil oozed from the bearskin, which started to melt the ice. Now Davy could gently push the sun away from the icy grip.

The snow and ice disappeared. The sun thanked Davy and Betsy for saving spring. It warmed them the whole journey home. When Davy reached his family that evening, they enjoyed a tasty supper and an exciting story!



Name \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_

Use what you read in the passage to answer the questions.

**1.** Who are the characters in the tall tale?

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**2.** Who is the hero?

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**3.** What is the main character's first problem?

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**4.** What was the main character's second problem?

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**5.** What sentence tells you who the bullies are in the story?

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**6.** What is this story mainly about?

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**7.** How does the story end?

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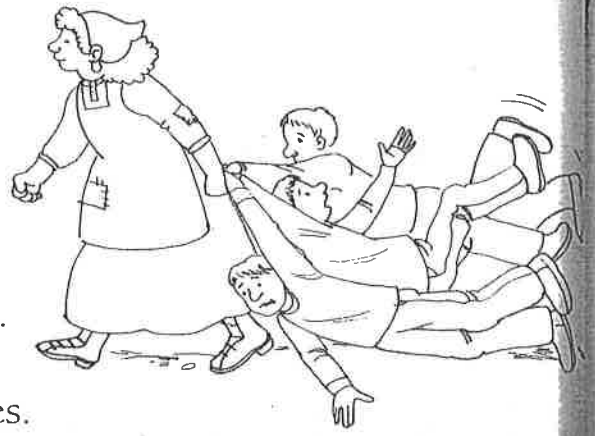
**8.** Give an example of exaggeration in this tale.

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## Keelboat Annie

Keelboat Annie was the hardest working pilot on the Mississippi River. She was as tough as an old tree, and her arms were as powerful as branches. Annie didn't tolerate bullies!



One day Annie was poling up the river. She heard a scream and saw an old woman crying. Annie leapt a mile to the woman's side. "What happened?" Annie asked gently.

The old woman pointed to the road. "Three men stole my crop of oranges. I will have no money to feed my grandbabies!"

"Do not worry, Granny," said Annie. "Hold my tooth necklace, and I'll be back in a jiffy." Then Annie sprinted away, following a trail of smashed oranges. Three men were laughing like hyenas and throwing oranges at fish.

"Did you steal those oranges from a poor woman?" Annie roared. At the sound of Annie's voice, the frogs stopped jumping and the alligators grew quiet. The whole world, except these men, knew what Keelboat Annie could do when she was mad.

"That's a laugh and a half," said one of the men.

Anger filled Annie's eyes. She picked up the three men with one hand. With the other hand she plucked a tooth from each rude mouth and carried the thieves back to town.

The old woman thanked Annie and returned the tooth necklace. The townspeople asked Annie if she wanted a reward for her courage. "Oh, that won't be necessary!" she said. Then she carefully removed three teeth from her pocket, strung them onto her necklace, and smiled.



Name \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_

Use what you read in the passage to answer the questions.

**1.** Who are the characters in this tall tale?

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**2.** Which character is the hero?

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**3.** What is the problem in the story?

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**4.** What sentence tells you who the bullies are in the story?

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**5.** How does Annie find the three men?

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**6.** How does the hero capture the bullies?

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**7.** How does the story end?

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**8.** Give an example of exaggeration (or something “larger than life”) in this tale.

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