

BLUEGRASS & TALL TALES

BRIGHT STAR TOURING THEATRE

A NATIONALLY TOURING THEATRE FOR YOUNG AUDIENCES

What is a tall tale?

A tall tale is a story about a larger-than-life character who has great adventures. Sometimes, these characters are even based on real people! Other cultures have their own special versions of tall tales, but in America, we are especially well known for ours.

Who wrote America's famous tall tales like Paul Bunyan and Johnny Appleseed? Sometimes we don't know because they were made up, spoken, and then passed down to families and friends from generation to generation.

IS THERE SOMEONE IN YOUR FAMILY WHO IS REALLY GOOD AT TELLING STORIES? MAYBE YOUR GRANDPA TELLS STORIES ABOUT FISHING, AND MAKES THEM LARGER THAN LIFE, OR MAYBE YOUR BROTHER OR SISTER TELLS STORIES ABOUT YOUR PARENTS WHERE THE IMPRESSIONS OF THEM ARE BIG AND FUNNY? HAVE ANY OF THESE STORIES BEEN RETOLD BY YOUR FAMILY OVER AND OVER?



CAN YOU REMEMBER FROM THE PLAY?

WHAT DOES PAUL BUNYAN DO FOR HIS JOB? DO YOU REMEMBER THE NAME OF HIS PET OX?



What is bluegrass music?

Bluegrass is a form of music that is purely American, and it celebrates the origins of the many different immigrant groups who moved to the United States.

People from England and Scotland, as well as African American musicians, all played a part in creating bluegrass music.

Just like tall tales, bluegrass songs were often made up and passed down from generation to generation, instead of being written down. Bluegrass songs are often about the lives and stories of everyday people.



DID YOU KNOW...?

JOHNNY APPLESEED IS BASED ON A REAL PERSON? HE WAS A PIONEER BORN IN 1774.



DID YOU KNOW...?

DANIEL BOONE BECAME FAMOUS DURING HIS OWN LIFETIME? STORIES ABOUT HIM WERE PUBLISHED IN THE U.S. AND EUROPE!

IS THIS YOUR FIRST TIME SEEING LIVE THEATRE?

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Attending a live performance is very different from going to the movies, or watching television at home. Below are some of the main reasons seeing live theatre is unique and fun!

1. The actors are right in front of you, so they can see and hear your reaction to things. If it's funny, and you laugh, they know that you are enjoying yourself. If you are asked to volunteer, you get to be part of the show too!
2. In this play, there was only one set or background that the actors stood in front of to perform. In the movies, they often change locations several times.
3. Movies stay exactly the same every time because they are recorded on film. Live performances are a little different every time depending on how the audience reacts, and how the actors relate to each other.

WE'RE TRAVELING ACTORS!



* Did you know that our actors travel all across the country performing shows in all kinds of theatres, street festivals, schools, libraries etc?



Traveling in mini-vans, our shows have been seen from California to the National Theatre in Washington DC!

Can you remember from the play...?

- What was the "set" or background the actors stood in front of?
- Why do you think this set was chosen for this play?
- What did the actors wear as costumes? Do you think these costumes helped them tell the story even better?
- What did you think was the funniest moment in the play?

FUN ACTIVITIES!



Draw the place where you hear stories from your friends or family. This could be the playground, your room, the living room, or even the classroom. If you were making your own play, this could be your set!



Piece together your own old-style bluegrass band using found objects and things that you might throw away. You know early mountain settlers often relied on buckets, barrels, broom handles and more for instruments. Using found objects, what kinds of instruments and sounds can you create? Can you make a band?

Bluegrass

Instruments: where did they come from?

The Fiddle: Used to play folk songs in Ireland



The Guitar: First became widely used in Spain



Mandolin: Originated in Italy



Harmonica: Became popular during the American Civil War



Do you know anyone who plays any of these instruments?

What instruments from above did the actors play? What instruments from above were not part of the play?

Homemade Instruments: Many bluegrass instruments were made out of household items such as jugs, spoons, and washboards!

Storytelling and music:



THEATRE WAS BORN FROM THE ORAL TRADITIONS OF GENERATIONS AGO. AS LONG AS MAN HAS BEEN ABLE TO SPEAK, STORY TELLING HAS BEEN A WAY FOR US TO ESCAPE OUR DAILY LIVES AND FIND SOME FORM OF ENTERTAINMENT.

IMPROVISATION!

Do you ever make up stories or games with your friends and family? Maybe you pretend to be different people, or imagine that you are in another place, then you make up words to tell the story. Then you have done something called improvisation, or improv. Improv is used often by bluegrass musicians. For example, a bluegrass guitarist might make up a new solo every time he or she plays for an audience. Improv is also used by jazz and blues musicians, and by comedians who make up funny situations to entertain audiences. Before American tall tales were written down, they were improvised too!

DID YOU KNOW!

The banjo, while nowadays is linked to country, folk and bluegrass traditions--actually started out in Africa?! During slavery times, slaves found themselves very instrumental in the creation of Southern American musical traditions. The African Kora instrument is thought to have provided the early inspiration for the banjo. Similarly, slaves developed many of the musical techniques used in playing bluegrass style fiddle! How awesome is that?



The Geography of Bluegrass and Tall Tales

Print out maps of the United State & the world. Have students color code bluegrass and tall tale regions with crayons or colored pencils.

As an added activity, students can label each region.

MAPPING BLUEGRASS: Find these areas on the maps and outline them in blue.

The Appalachian Mountains: The birthplace of bluegrass.

Bluegrass artists came to the United States from many different places. Find these countries/continents and outline them in blue.

- England
- Ireland
- Scotland
- Africa

Bluegrass is now a well known musical form everywhere in the United States, and across the globe, but these states are especially well known for their bluegrass traditions. Find them on a map, and outline them in blue.

- Kentucky (known as the bluegrass state)
- North Carolina
- Tennessee
- Virginia

MAPPING AMERICAN TALL TALES: Find these areas on the map, and label them with a red star.

Daniel Boone was an American Frontiersman who explored much of the United States. Find the areas associated with him and label them with a red star.

Pennsylvania-birthplace of Daniel Boone

Kentucky-Daniel Boone was famous for helping settle this state.

Appalachian Mountains-Boone traveled these mountains during his pioneering days.

Missouri-Where Daniel Boone spent the last years of his life.

Johnny Appleseed was kind, generous, and concerned about his environment. Find the areas where he made a large impact and put a red star there.

Massachusetts-Johnny's home state

Pennsylvania, Ohio, Indiana, Illinois-Where Johnny was known to plant apple trees.

Paul Bunyan's legend started in the American Northeast, and originated among lumberjacks. Find areas associated with his legend, and put a red star.

Michigan-Where the story of Paul Bunyan was originally written down.

Minnesota-There is a memorial park here dedicated to Paul.

The Great Lakes-Paul Bunyan and Babe were said to help form these lakes.



-Do the bluegrass and tall tale areas you found overlap?

-Do you know if any of your family members immigrated from any of the countries that helped develop the style of bluegrass? Has your family lived in regions where bluegrass and tall tales became popular?

Fun Activities...oh and talk about this

1. The characters in tall tales are often based on real people, but in the stories they become larger-than-life heroes. Have your students think about who in their life is a hero to them (a parent, a teacher, a grandparent). Then have them imagine what that person would be like if they were a legend. What parts of them would be larger than life? Would they have super powers or super pets? Have students draw pictures of their legends and post them in the classroom.

2. Is there a story students have heard in their own family? Maybe it is a bedtime story their parents tell them, the story of how their parents met, or a funny fishing story from grandpa. Have students create their own short story book that retells their own story using paper and crayons or colored pencils.

3. Many of the stories told through *Bluegrass & Tall Tales* celebrate the American Frontier. Do further research on frontier life, or read another story about frontier life.

4. A Simon-says activity where students have to repeat actions from the play silently.

Examples:

- Simon says play the banjo
- Simon says ride your ox
- Simon says plant an apple tree
- Simon says play the harmonica

1. What are some other American Tall Tales that we didn't mention in the show today?

2. What was your favorite part of the show and why?

3. Bluegrass music has grown up out of the American South--what other musical styles are from the area of the country where you live?

4. What's your favorite instrument that the performers played today?

FUN ACTIVITY

SPLIT STUDENTS INTO GROUPS AND HAVE THEM CREATE A SHORT PLAY ABOUT LIFE ON THE FRONTIER. THEN HAVE THEM PERFORM THE PLAY IN FRONT OF THE CLASS.

OR, HAVE THEM REENACT THEIR FAVORITE MOMENT FROM THE PLAY.

WE WANNA BE THE BEST!

Our objective is to provide professional, affordable theatre to young audiences across the country. It is our hope that your experience with our company surpassed your expectations in every single way. If anything didn't please feel free to connect with us anytime at David@brightstartheatre.com thanks a million! Hope you enjoy the show!

SEE ALL OF OUR SHOWS ONLINE

www.brightstartheatre.com

WE LOVE GETTING MAIL, LETTERS AND DRAWINGS!

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This show debuted in September 2012

Thanks so much for your support and especially making the arts part of a young person's life

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