

Fish Tales

There's something fishy about that tale!



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Chapter 2 • Lesson 7

Please note: Academic Standards are updated regularly and our alignments will be updated on the DNR Academic Standards Website at: www.mndnr.gov/education/teachers/edstandards_intro.html

Fish Tales

Minnesota Academic Standards

- ☉ Lesson *introduces* this Benchmark.
- ☑ Lesson *partially* addresses this Benchmark.
- ☑ Lesson *fully* addresses this Benchmark.

Language Arts

Grade 3

I. Reading and Literature

A. Word Recognition, Analysis, and Fluency:

Benchmark 1—The student will read unfamiliar complex and multi-syllabic words using advanced phonetic and structural analysis. ☑

B. Vocabulary Expansion:

Benchmark 1—The student will acquire, understand and use new vocabulary through explicit instruction and independent reading. ☑

C. Comprehension:

Benchmark 2—The student will recall and use prior learning and preview text, using title, headings, and illustrations to prepare for reading. ☑

Benchmark 3—The student will generate and answer literal, inferential, interpretive and evaluative questions to demonstrate knowledge about what is read. ☑

Benchmark 4—The student will retell, restate or summarize information orally, in writing, and through graphic organizers. ☑

D. Literature:

Benchmark 1—The student will read from and listen to American Literature, as well as literature from other countries. ☑

Benchmark 2—The student will identify, describe and respond to literary elements of characterization, plot, setting and theme. ☑

Benchmark 4—The student will compare and contrast similar works by different authors in the same genre or same theme. ☑

Benchmark 6—The student will identify and determine the meanings of similes and metaphors. ☑

Benchmark 7—The student will critically read, and examine text to determine author's purpose. ☑

Benchmark 8—The student will respond to literature using ideas and details from the text to support reactions and make literary connections. ☑

Benchmark 9—The student will read from and respond to a variety of fiction, poetic and nonfiction texts of increasing complexity for personal enjoyment. ☑

II. Writing

A. Types of Writing:

Benchmark 1—The student will write in a variety of modes to express meaning ☑, including:

- a. descriptive
- b. narrative
- c. informative
- d. friendly letter
- e. poetic

B. Elements of Composition:

Benchmark 2—The student will use composing processes, including:

- a. prewriting—planning strategies such as brainstorming, journaling, sketching, listing, outlining and determining audience, purpose and focus. ☑
- b. drafting—organizing, supporting and putting ideas into sentences and paragraphs. ☑
- c. revising—improving the quality of content, organization, sentence structure and word choice. ☑
- d. editing—correcting errors in spelling and grammar. ☑
- e. publishing—producing a document and sharing the writing with the audience. ☑

Benchmark 3—The student will use verbalization (discussions, interviews, brainstorming) to prepare for writing. ☑

C. Spelling, Grammar, and Usage

Benchmark 1—The student will compose complete sentences when writing. ☑

Benchmark 2—The student will recognize and correct spelling errors when writing. ☑

Benchmark 5—The student will apply grammar conventions correctly in writing (1); including:

- a. nouns
- b. verbs
- c. adjectives
- d. pronouns.

Benchmark 6—The student will apply punctuation conventions correctly in writing, (1) including:

- a. periods, question marks, exclamation points
- b. capitalization of proper nouns
- c. abbreviations
- d. sentence beginnings
- e. commas in a series.

D. Research:

Benchmark 1—The student will use grade-level appropriate reference materials to obtain information from dictionaries, glossaries, encyclopedias, and the Internet. (1)

E. Handwriting and Word Processing:

Benchmark 1—The student will write legibly, allowing margins and correct spacing between letters in a word and words in a sentence. (1)

Benchmark 3—The student will begin acquiring keyboarding skills. (1)

III. Speaking Listening, and Viewing

A. Speaking and Listening:

Benchmark 1—The student will participate in and follow agreed-upon rules for conversation and formal discussions in large and small groups. (1)

Benchmark 2—The student will demonstrate active listening and comprehension. (1)

Benchmark 3—The student will follow multi-step oral directions. (1)

Benchmark 4—The student will give oral presentations to different audiences for different purposes. (1)

Benchmark 5—The student will organize and express ideas sequentially or according to major points. (1)

Benchmark 6—The student will perform expressive oral readings of prose, poetry or drama. (1)

Grade 4

I. Reading and Literature

A. Word Recognition, Analysis, and Fluency:

Benchmark 2—The student will read aloud narrative and expository text with fluency, accuracy, and appropriate pacing, intonation and expression. (1)

B. Vocabulary Expansion:

Benchmark 1—The student will acquire, understand and use new vocabulary through explicit instruction and independent reading. (1)

C. Comprehension:

Benchmark 2—The student will recall and use prior learning and preview text to prepare for reading. (1)

Benchmark 3—The student will generate and answer literal, inferential, interpretive and evaluative questions about what is read to demonstrate understanding. (1)

Benchmark 6—The student will distinguish fact from opinion, determine cause and effect, and draw conclusions. (1)

Benchmark 10—The student will compare and contrast information on the same topic from two sources. (1)

D. Literature:

Benchmark 1—The student will read and respond to a variety of high quality, traditional, classical and contemporary literary works specific to America, as well as significant works from other countries. (1)

Benchmark 2—The student will identify, respond to, and compare and contrast the literary elements of characterization, plot, setting, and theme. (1)

Benchmark 4—The student will compare and evaluate similar works by different authors in the same genre or theme. (1)

Benchmark 7—The student will identify and determine the meanings of similes and metaphors. (1)

Benchmark 8—The student will critically read and evaluate text to determine author's purpose and point of view. (1)

Benchmark 9—The student will respond to literature using ideas and details from the text to support reactions and make literary connections. (1)

II. Writing

A. Types of Writing:

Benchmark 1—The student will write in a variety of styles to express meaning (1), including:

- a. descriptive
- b. narrative
- c. informative
- d. friendly letter
- e. poetic
- f. persuasive
- g. thank you note.

B. Elements of Composition:

Benchmark 3—The student will use composing processes including:

- a. prewriting—planning strategies such as brainstorming, journaling, sketching, listing, outlining and determining audience, purpose and focus
- b. drafting—organizing, supporting and putting ideas into sentences and paragraphs
- c. revising—improving the quality of content, organization, sentence structure and word choice
- d. editing—correcting errors in spelling and grammar
- e. publishing—producing a document and sharing the writing with the audience.

Benchmark 5—The student will use verbalization (discussion, interviews, brainstorming) to prepare for writing.

Benchmark 6—The student will consider audience in composing texts.

B. Spelling, Grammar, and Usage:

Benchmark 1—The student will compose complete sentences when writing.

Benchmark 4—The student will apply grammar conventions correctly in writing, including:

- a. verb tense
- b. adverbs
- c. prepositions
- d. subject and verb agreement
- e. possessive pronouns.

Benchmark 5—The student will apply punctuation conventions correctly in writing, including:

- a. apostrophes
- b. capitalization of proper nouns
- c. abbreviations
- d. sentence beginnings
- e. commas in a series
- f. quotation marks

D. Research:

Benchmark 1—The student will locate information in various reference materials including dictionaries, online dictionaries, glossaries, encyclopedias, and the Internet.

E. Handwriting and Word Processing:

Benchmark 2—The student will apply basic keyboarding skills.

III. Speaking Listening, and Viewing**A. Speaking and Listening:**

Benchmark 1—The student will participate in and follow agreed-upon rules for conversation and formal discussions in large and small groups.

Benchmark 2—The student will demonstrate active listening and comprehension.

Benchmark 3—The student will give oral presentations to different audiences for different purposes.

Benchmark 5—The student will perform expressive oral readings of prose, poetry or drama.

Grade 5

I. Reading and Literature**A. Word Recognition, Analysis, and Fluency:**

Benchmark 2—The student will read aloud narrative and expository text with fluency, accuracy and appropriate pacing, intonation and expression.

B. Vocabulary Expansion:

Benchmark 1—The student will acquire, understand and use new vocabulary through explicit instruction and independent reading.

C. Comprehension:

Benchmark 2—The student will recall and use prior learning and preview text to prepare for reading.

Benchmark 4—The student will identify main idea and supporting details in fiction text.

Benchmark 7—The student will generate and answer literal, inferential, interpretive and evaluative questions to demonstrate understanding about what is read.

Benchmark 8—The student will distinguish fact from opinion and provide evidence to support conclusions.

Benchmark 11—The student will critically read and evaluate text to identify author's point of view and purpose.

D. Literature:

Benchmark 1—The student will read a variety of high quality, traditional, classical and contemporary literary works specific to America, as well as significant works from other countries.

Benchmark 2—The student will identify and analyze literary elements and devices in works of fiction including characterization, plot, tone and theme and the ways they convey meaning.

Benchmark 4—The student will interpret literature by answering questions that ask for analysis and evaluation.

Benchmark 5—The student will distinguish among various literary genres and subgenres. (M)

Benchmark 7—The student will identify and determine the meanings of similes and metaphors. (M)

Benchmark 8—The student will respond to literature using ideas and details from the text to support reactions and make literary connections. (M)

II. Writing

A. Types of Writing:

Benchmark 1—The student will write in a variety of modes to express meaning (M), including:

- descriptive
- narrative
- informative
- formal letter
- poetry
- persuasive
- thank you notes
- reports.

B. Elements of Composition:

Benchmark 3—The student will use composing processes, including:

- prewriting—planning strategies such as brainstorming, journaling, sketching, listing, outlining and determining audience, purpose and focus (M)
- drafting—organizing, supporting and putting ideas into sentences and paragraphs (M)
- revising—improving the quality of content, organization, sentence structure and word choice. (M)
- editing—correcting errors in spelling and grammar (M)
- publishing—producing a document and sharing the writing with the audience. (M)

C. Spelling, Grammar, and Usage:

Benchmark 1—The student will compose complete sentences when writing. (M)

Benchmark 2—The student will edit written documents for correct spelling. (M)

Benchmark 4—The student will apply grammar conventions correctly in writing, (M) including:

- verb tense
- prepositional phrases
- adverbs
- subject and verb agreement with simple subjects
- possessive pronouns and plural possessives

Benchmark 5—The student will apply punctuation conventions correctly in writing (M), including:

- apostrophes
- capitalization of proper nouns
- abbreviations
- sentence beginnings
- commas
- quotation marks.

D. Research:

Benchmark 1—The student will locate and keep notes on the information in various reference materials including print and online dictionaries, glossaries, encyclopedias, CD reference materials and the Internet. (M)

E. Handwriting and Word Processing:

Benchmark 2—The student will apply keyboarding skills. (M)

III. Speaking, Listening, and Viewing

A. Speaking and Listening:

Benchmark 1—The student will participate in and follow agreed-upon rules for conversation and formal discussions in large and small groups. (M)

Benchmark 2—The student will demonstrate active listening and comprehension. (M)

Benchmark 6—The student will perform expressive oral readings of prose, poetry or drama. (M)

Social Studies

Grades K-3

I. U.S. History

A. Family Life Today and In the Past:

Benchmark 1—Students will compare family life in his or her community from earlier times and today. (M)

C. Many People and Cultures Meet in the Making of North America:

Benchmark 1—Students will understand that large and diverse American Indian nations were the original inhabitants of North America. (M)

III. World History

A. Family Life Today and In the Past:

Benchmark 1—Students will compare family life in their own communities from earlier times and today. (M)

IV. Historical Skills

B. Historical Resources:

Benchmark 1—Students will compare different kinds of historical sources and describe sorts of information the sources provide. (M)

Grades 4-8

I. U.S. History

A. Pre—history through 1607:

Benchmark 1—Students will compare ways of life of Indian Nations from different regions of North America. 🗎

II. Minnesota History

A. Pre-contact to 1650:

Benchmark 2—Students will explain the major historical aspects of Dakota and Ojibwe culture, social organization and history, and compare and contrast them. 🗎

IV. Historical Skills

B. Historical Resources:

Benchmark 1—Students will identify, describe, and extract information from various types of historical sources, both primary and secondary. 🗎

Benchmark 3—Students will investigate the ways historians learn about the past if there are no written records. 🗎

V. Geography

D. Interconnections:

Benchmark 2—Students will analyze how the physical environment influences human activities. 🗎

Science

Grade 4

III. Earth and Space Science

A. Earth Structure and Processes:

Benchmark 1—The student will identify and investigate environmental issues and potential solutions. 🗎

Environmental Literacy Scope and Sequence

Benchmarks

- Social and natural systems are made of parts. (PreK-2)
- Social and natural systems may not continue to function if some of their parts are missing. (PreK-2)
- When the parts of social and natural systems are put together, they can do things they couldn't do by themselves. (PreK-2)
- In social and natural systems that consist of many parts, the parts usually influence one another. (3-5)
- Social and natural systems may not function as well if parts are missing, damaged, mismatched or misconnected. (3-5)

For the full Environmental Literacy Scope and Sequence, see:

www.seek.state.mn.us/eemn_c.cfm

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Chapter 2 • Lesson 7

Fish Tales

Grade Level: 3-5

Activity Duration: five 60-minute sessions

Group Size: any

Subject Areas: Language Arts, Expressive Arts, Social Studies, Science

Academic Skills: communication, description, evaluation, listening, listing, organization, peer review, presentation skills, problem solving, reading, research, small group work, writing

Setting: indoor or outdoor gathering area, computer lab (optional)

Vocabulary: exaggeration, folklore, hyperbole, main character, metaphor, setting, simile, tall tale, theme

Internet Search Words: Annie Oakley, Dakota Indian storytelling, exaggeration, fish stories, folklore, Ojibwe Indian storytelling, Paul Bunyan, storytelling, tall tales

Instructor's Background Information

Fishing has always played an integral role in the history, stories, traditions, and cultures of the people of Minnesota. Fish continue to be an important source of food for people and for other animals, including eagles, loons, bears, and other fish. And fishing is also a popular recreational activity enjoyed by many Minnesotans.

Native Minnesotans and Minnesota's Long Fishing History

Long ago, before political boundaries defined the state of Minnesota, and long before Europeans arrived and settled in this region, the land was inhabited by native cultures described by scientists as:

- Big Game or Paleo-Indians: approximately 7,000 years ago
- Eastern Archaic people: approximately 7,000-3,000 years ago
- Woodland peoples (northern part of the region): approximately 3,000-300 years ago
- Mississippian peoples, who migrated to the north from the southern areas of what is now the United States: 1,000-300 years ago. (Present-day Dakota, Choctaw, and Cherokee peoples are descended from this group, as are other present-day Indian tribes.)

Dakota tribes that lived in the Midwest migrated northward through what is now Minnesota to the southern and western areas of Lake Superior. The Dakota fished the area's many lakes, streams, and rivers. They also hunted other animals, including bison, deer, and elk, and they gathered what they could from the wild. They harvested wild rice in the fall. What they hunted or gathered depended on the season, but fish could be speared and caught year-round. The Dakota people had lived in the lower half of what is now Minnesota for several hundred years before French traders and fur trappers first ventured to the area in

Summary

The fish stories that many anglers tell today are part of a long tradition of storytelling in Minnesota. In the tradition of Dakota and Ojibwe Indians, and like the early frontier settlers and pioneers, students share fish stories around a simulated campfire. Students do research to learn more about the history and basic elements of tall tales, then write a tall fish tale about a heroic character who uses larger-than-life abilities to solve a problem about Minnesota fish, fishing, or aquatic habitats in an amazing way. Classmates review and edit one another's drafts of these tall tales.

Student Objectives

The students will:

- 1 Discuss the history of fishing and of storytelling in Minnesota.
- 2 Read, write, and share fish stories and tall tales.
- 3 Research the history and story elements of tall tales on the Internet, in the school library, or using resource books available in the classroom.
- 4 Write a tall tale that includes exaggeration, metaphors, similes, and a heroic main character that solves a present-day problem about Minnesota fish, fishing, or aquatic habitats in an amazing way.
- 5 Review two rough drafts of tall tales written by classmates, analyzing main character, setting, and theme.

continued

Student Objectives (continued)

- 6 Investigate how stories have been told for different reasons throughout history, and how stories sometimes reveal what the storyteller knows and believes about things in nature, such as fish.

Materials

- Small lamp or flashlight
- Sheets of notebook paper, several per student
- Sheet of unlined art paper, one per student
- Pens or pencils
- Stick or other object to serve as a “talking stick” (optional)
- Access to Internet for Web-based research on tall tales
- Large hat or container to collect paper
- Audio recorder (optional)
- **Tall Tales Research Sheet**, three for each student group of three or four students
- **Reviewing a Tall Tale Sheet**, two per student

Suggested Tall Tale Resources for Classroom Reference

Blair, Walter. *Tall Tale America: A Legendary History of Our Humorous Heroes*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1987.

Blassingame, Wyatt. *John Henry and Paul Bunyan Play Baseball*. Champaign, IL, Garrard Publishing Co., 1971.

DeLeeuw, Adele. *Paul Bunyan and His Blue Ox*. Champaign, IL, Garrard Publishing Co., 1968.

Erdrich, Louise. *The Birchbark House*. New York: Hyperion Books for Children, 1999.

Martin-Pugliano, Carol. *Read-Aloud Plays: Tall Tales* (grades 3-5). New York: Scholastic, 2000.

Malcolmson, Anne. *Yankee Doodle's Cousins*. Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1941. Pp. 229-260.

Mason, Jane. *Paul Bunyan and Other Tall Tales*. New York: Scholastic, 2002.

McLellan, Joe. *Nanabosho, Soaring Eagle and the Great Sturgeon*. Winnipeg: Pemmican Publications Inc., 1997.

Nolen, Jerdine. *Thunder Rose*. San Diego: Harcourt, 2003.

Pope Osborne, Mary. *American Tall Tales*. New York: Knopf, 1991.

Pope Osborne, Mary. *American Tall Tales* [unabridged] Audio CD. Scott Snively (Narrator). Audio Bookshelf, 2002.

Sabin, Louis. *Paul Bunyan*. Mahwah, NJ: Troll Associates, 1985.

Sanderson, Jeannette. *12 Tall Tale Mini-Books*. New York: Scholastic, 2002. Shapiro, Irwin. *Paul Bunyan Tricks a Dragon*. Champaign, IL: Garrard Publishing Co., 1975.

West, Tracey. *Teaching Tall Tales (Grades 3-5)*. Scholastic, 1999.

approximately 1650. By the seventeenth century, many Dakota people had settled in and around Mille Lacs Lake.

Sometime around the year 900, a group of Anishinaabeg, or Ojibwe, people began migrating from the east coast of Canada. They traveled along the St. Lawrence River, along the shores of what is now Lake Michigan and the Canadian border, to the waters of Lake Superior or *Gitchi Gummi*, as they called it, meaning big water.

The Ojibwe found an abundance of fish in the area's waters. Ojibwe fishermen used large birchbark canoes and nets made from twisted and knotted strands of willow bark to catch lake trout, whitefish, and sturgeon. In winter, they used hand-carved wooden decoys as bait and speared fish through holes chopped in the ice. By the mid-1700s, the Ojibwe people had settled in what is now central Minnesota. Like the Dakota, they subsisted on what the land and waters produced throughout the seasons.

Because fish played an important role in people's daily lives, they became the subject of many stories, traditions, and myths passed from generation to generation in both the Dakota and Ojibwe cultures. Oral histories and stories play a very important role in Dakota and Ojibwe traditions and cultures. Today, the two main Native American tribes in Minnesota are still the Dakota and the Ojibwe. Each tribe is subdivided into various tribes, bands, clans, and villages. Some clans bear the names of various fish species.

Settlers and Pioneers

Just as the excellent fishing in Minnesota's lakes, rivers, and streams attracts many out-of-state vacationers and tourists to Minnesota today, fish were an important resource that helped attract the first European settlers to the region. Fish provided food as well as a source of income for the area's first commercial fishermen, as illustrated in this text from the North Shore Commercial Fishing Museum (located in Tofte, Minnesota) describing the beginnings of commercial fishing in Lake Superior:

"Commercial fishing began on Lake Erie and Ontario in the 1820s and spread westward in the late 1880s to Lake Superior, when, Scandinavian immigrants settled the rocky North Shore of Lake Superior. Lured by tales of abundance and opportunity, the first settlers traded the harsh coasts of their homeland for the equally harsh climate of the North Shore. Although the early settlers pursued both farming and logging, fishing was the primary occupation. Fish buyers in Duluth eagerly promoted the fledgling fishing industry by providing both fishing equipment on credit and a ready market for the catch. Glowing reports of success soon attracted more families from the homeland and commercial fishing became an established way of life in the new land. Many of these immigrants came directly from the coastal fishing



Spirit Lake was the Dakota name for the large central Minnesota lake that French explorers later named Mille Lacs.

Minnesota is derived from the Dakota word *Minisota*, which means sky-tinted waters.

Lake sturgeon from the St. Louis River provided a dietary staple for some of the northernmost bands of Ojibwe.



In Ojibwe tradition, the sturgeon is considered the king of fish and the Chief of the Fish Clan. Its Ojibwe name is *namé* (nah-may).



Dakota and Ojibwe peoples engaged in winter fishing long before European settlement. Ice fishing has long been practiced in Scandinavian countries, too. Finnish, Norwegian, and Swedish settlers brought their ice fishing traditions to Minnesota.

villages of Norway, bringing with them knowledge of appropriate fishing techniques, a formidable work ethic and a native hardiness. The North Shore offered many new challenges, but the familiarity of fishing from a cold, rugged shore provided them with a sense of place.”

Minnesota Residents Today

Fishing is still a way of life—or at least an important recreational activity—for a significant percentage of Minnesotans, and for each new group of people that immigrates to the state. In addition to food, fish provide products such as fish oil and fertilizer, income for commercial fishermen, and tourism that benefits resorts, bait shops, fishing guides, and other local businesses. Fishing also provides recreational opportunities for the state’s many anglers.

Fish Storytelling in Minnesota

Fishing seems to go hand-in-hand with storytelling. When avid anglers aren’t fishing, they’re probably telling fish stories, from reeling in a “big one” to almost catching “the one that got away.” This was true for Minnesota’s earliest anglers, too. Since human history began, people have passed on knowledge and culture through the oral tradition of storytelling.

Minnesota winters are long and hard, and long ago, native peoples spent much of the season confined inside their tipis (eastern Dakota) and wigwams (Ojibwe). They often passed the winter evenings sitting around the fire, recounting their history, teaching the young, and entertaining one another with stories. Many stories are oral histories or stories with a spiritual or ceremonial purpose, which are highly valued and important in the traditions and cultures of native peoples. Stories serve different purposes, depending on the intent of the storyteller. Elders from native cultures are well-versed in tribal history, traditions, customs, and ceremonies. They pass on this information by skillfully telling and retelling stories.

Some stories have been told to entertain children. Through long winters, elders have often elaborately embellished these stories to delight and hold the attention of the young ones. Reflecting the importance of fishing to their survival, many of these stories exist as colorful tales about fish and fishing. These are some of the earliest exaggerated Minnesota fish stories!

Ojibwe Stories

According to Ojibwe legend, the first snowfall brings the storytelling season, which lasts until the first boom of thunder in the spring. There are two types of Ojibwe stories. The first type is *Aadizookaan*, the Ojibwe word meaning traditional story. These stories relate far-reaching themes of human spirituality: where the people came from, how the people should live, how to cope with daily trials and hardships, and gratitude for the blessings and teachings of life. They were—and

are—considered sacred. The second type consists of tales that teach, offer humor, provide entertainment, and answer the “why” questions about natural phenomena and behaviors. Storytellers sometimes own their stories; only they can tell them. In order for another person to tell a particular story, they would have to get permission from the story’s owner, and offer the owner a gift of tobacco or possibly a blanket, clothing, food, or something else. Today, offering an elder tobacco or another gift for the privilege of telling a story is still a common practice.

Dakota Stories

The close connection between Dakota people and the natural world has always manifested itself in traditional spirituality, and this is expressed in their stories. In Dakota cultural practices, everything in nature has a spirit. All things are kindred, or related to each other, and to Wakan Tanka, the Great Mystery. The stories reflect the beliefs of the people. Often an animal would be the **main character** or central figure of a story, teaching people lessons or revealing which plants to use for food, medicines, or ceremonies or the plants to use for making canoes, tipis, wigwams, bowls, fishing nets, and other tools. Animal characters also teach people how to hunt and fish. Stories teach Dakota children about the world around them and about many principles and values, including the consequences of being greedy, boastful, or teasing others. Stories encourage children to listen, have patience, and to be observant and creative. Through storytelling, the peoples’ knowledge, culture, values, traditions, and history pass from generation to generation.

“The oral traditions of Native people are thousands of years old, and alive and flourishing today. Stories that are told . . . are integral elements of Native cultures, having meaning within the context of those cultures, and perhaps meant for only certain people within the culture . . . a work that is to be sung only by a certain person or persons, and at a certain time for a certain purpose. . . . Almost everyone likes a story and can learn from it, but there are incorrect versions of tribal stories circulating on the Web and in print; also, errors in details give inaccurate information about Indian people. A story is an effective teaching tool only if the teacher and the learner both understand how the story applies to the lesson. Often Native stories refer to certain people or a geographical region where something happened so that the meaning is tied with a personal acquaintance of people and place. Some stories should be told only at specific times of the year, or by certain people to a particular audience, or in a particular language. . . . Knowing a story’s tribal affiliation is essential to verify authenticity and to determine whether the story is one that should be available for public [listening] . . .”

—Techniques for Evaluating American Indian Web Sites,
Elaine Cubbins, MA-IRLS,
www.u.arizona.edu/~ecubbins/webcrit.html
and ecubbins@u.arizona.edu



The Walleye A Traditional Dakota Indian Story

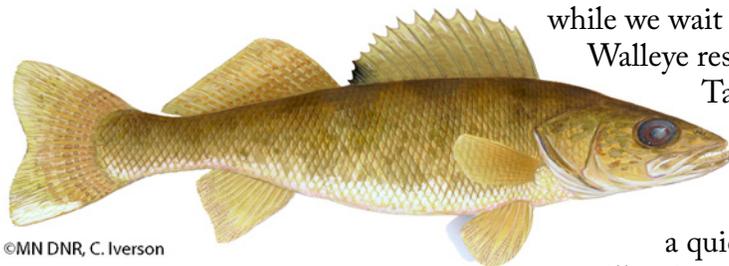
Long ago, before the land was formed, water covered all the earth. In the water lived many fish. Then, one day, the Great Mystery, Waken Tanka, said, “I will make land to walk upon for the Two-Leggeds who are to come. The land will separate the waters into oceans, rivers and lakes, and there will still be plenty of waters for my many Water Dwellers. Together, the Two Leggeds and Water

Dwellers will live in harmony and make use of all the earth.”

Waken Tanka called to the Walleye who was a leader among the Water Dwellers. The Walleye knew how to follow currents to find cool, deep water. His large eyes allowed him to see clearly in the deep and dark waters.

Waken Tanka said to the Walleye, “I am going to send the Sun to warm the water and make land to walk upon for the Two-Leggeds who are to come, but do not fear. There will still be plenty of water for the Water Dwellers on the earth. During the time the land is appearing, the surface and shallows will not be safe for you. You must lead the water dwellers to cooler, deep water. The cooler waters will take you to your new homes where you will be fine. Remain there until I call you again, then you can return. Do not look back, and do not look at the Sun. Do as I ask and remember this warning.”

The Walleye returned to the Water Dwellers and began to lead them to deeper, cooler waters. They traveled far and to the North, swimming deeper and deeper. The water did become cooler. And they swam farther and deeper. Some of the Water Dwellers were curious and said to the Walleye, “We have been swimming deeper and deeper and have traveled far. We haven’t seen the Sun for a long time. What could be happening on the surface? Won’t you go back while we wait here and check what is happening for us?” The Walleye responded, “Remember the warning that Waken Tanka gave to me: Do not look back, and remain in the deeper water until I call you again. He has not called me, I can’t go back, yet.” But they were very curious and persisted, “Just take a quick look and let us know what is happening, then we will wait to be called back.” Finally the Walleye relented and swam back towards the surface to find out what was happening.



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Waken Tanka sent the Sun to burn brighter in the sky and warm the waters. The waters of the earth began to give way to the forming of the land. Only the Walleye who was leader of the Water Dwellers ventured back to the surface during this time because of those who were curious.

At the surface the sun glowed bright and hot in the sky. Never had the Walleye known the sun to be so close to the earth or so hot. As the waters receded, the Walleye looked directly at the Sun. For an instant he saw the great yellow blinding glow, then the sky grew white and colorless. The Walleye hastily plunged back beneath the surface and began swimming towards cooler water. His eyes felt much pain, and he could not see where he was. Frightened, he called to the Water Dwellers, but they were far away and could not hear him.

He called to Waken Tanka, and Waken Tanka answered, “You are blind, Walleye. Because you have disobeyed my word and forsaken my warning, your eyes have become clouded and burned by the Sun. But, your people need you, as you are their leader, and so I will restore your sight. Still, you will not go unpunished. I decree that you and all your children, and all your people’s children, shall wear the same blank, cloudy stare as your sightless eyes for all time to come. Let it remind them and all my children that my word is not to be disobeyed, nor my warnings forsaken.”

And it was as The Great Mystery said. With his sight restored, Walleye was able to find his way back to where the Water Dwellers were waiting, but they were all surprised to see his large, cloudy, blank and blind-looking eyes upon his return. And so it is to this day, when the Two Leggeds walk on the land, that one fish species among all, the walleye, sees clearly through large, clouded “eyes-that-do-not-see,” for it is the decree of Waken Tanka.



This walleye story was most graciously shared for use in the *MinnAqua Leader’s Guide* by Joseph Campbell, a highly respected and acclaimed international speaker, entrepreneur, storyteller, and member of the Prairie Island Mdewakanton Sioux Community.

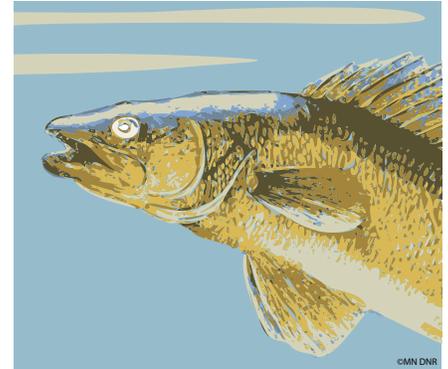
Dakota and Ojibwe stories have been passed from generation to generation, maintaining a vast history through oral tradition for thousands of years. These stories keep the rich histories and traditions alive for each new generation. Native storytelling traditions should always be respected.

Folklore and Values

We can see that different types of stories serve different purposes. Besides telling stories to entertain or to relate details of an event, people often create and share stories to convey the history, understandings, and traditions of their culture. **Folklore** is the creative expression of a particular group of people whose traditions and beliefs are incorporated into stories in innovative ways. Folklore draws on the collective wisdom and experience of a group of people, and is expressed in a creative, engaging way. As stories are repeated and passed from generation to generation, they help shape the attitudes, values, knowledge, beliefs, and behavior of people over time. For this reason, stories are often used to teach lessons about proper cultural values, attitudes, and behaviors. Different types of folklore, such as myths, legends, tall tales, and fables, fall into this category of stories.

Tall Tales

Tall tales are entertaining stories that are outrageously exaggerated or bigger than life, even though they’re told in a straightforward, believable style.

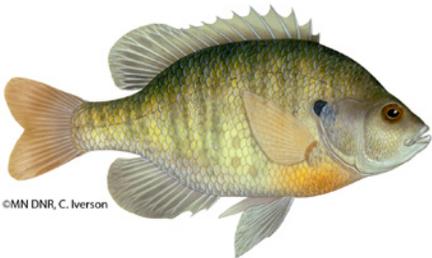


Walleye, with his sight restored by Waken Tanka.



A **simile** is a figure of speech where two unlike things are compared, usually using the words *like* or *as*: Mary swims *like* a fish, or I'm busy *as* a bee.

A **metaphor** is a figure of speech in which a word or phrase that ordinarily refers to one thing is used to describe another object or idea. In a metaphor, something is something else: He's drowning in money, or Her eyes are deep, blue pools.



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The origin of tall tale folklore is attributed to the early pioneers who recounted frontier trials and adventures during the settlement of the western United States.

Tall tales are stories about people who were supposed to have actually lived and had adventures in real places. As these stories were told and retold over the years, the true details of the lives of the main characters were exaggerated and revised. For example, real people, like Davy Crockett, Annie Oakley, and Johnny Appleseed, eventually became folk heroes. Some tall tale characters, like Paul Bunyan, never existed, but it may seem as though they had due to the number of times the stories have been repeated. These stories transform the main characters into heroic figures that perform superhuman deeds, such as roping a tornado (Pecos Bill), creating Minnesota's 10,000 lakes by romping with an ox (Paul Bunyan and Babe the Blue Ox), and melting drinking water from snow with the soles of his feet (Johnny Appleseed). Tall tales sometimes combine some factual information with wild fantasy.

Tall tales often include similes and metaphors, which describe the astounding abilities, traits, and feats of the heroic main character. Typically, the main character uses special abilities and skills to solve a difficult problem that arises in the story.



The Legend of Paul Bunyan's Bobber in Pequot Lakes, Minnesota!

As told by the historians of the Pequot Lakes Office of the Brainerd Lakes Area Chambers of Commerce,
www.pequotlakes.com.

A long, long time ago, Paul and Babe were vacationing near Pequot Lakes after sending their last load of logs down the Mississippi. Paul thought he'd try his luck at catching Notorious Nate: Ol' One-Eyed Jake's cousin, a 40-foot northern so mean that he was expelled from every school of fish in the five-state area. Nate had only one weakness: his love for Sunfish Sally, the sassiest, sexiest, fantail sunfish you ever did see!

Paul's plan was simple: Ole the Big Swede, Paul's blacksmith, forged a huge, deadly iron hook with barbs as sharp as Paul's axe. He attached it to a 90-foot pole and baited it with a juicy 6-foot worm. To complete this fantastic rig, Ole made the largest bobber ever known, 60 feet in circumference.

Armed with this pole, Paul and Babe headed for Whitefish Lake and cast it in off Pickerel Point, just where Sunfish Sally was sunning herself. Nate was nearby as usual, admiring Sally's spectacular silhouette. Sally took one look at that bait and darted

after Paul's murderous hook. Nate, sensing the danger, headed Sally off. But, alas, the zinging hook caught Nate instead! Paul gave one mighty tug and with a last desperate flip, Nate flew so high in the air that he landed seven miles away in downtown Pequot Lakes.

The bobber caught in the tower scaffolding under construction for the new water tower and there it sits today, a mere souvenir of Paul's battle with the ill-fated Nate.

All the townspeople filled two freezers full of fish that spring. But the hole left by Nate puzzled them. The Pequotians decided to bake beans in it every July and that's how Bean Hole Days started.

Oh, yes, and when Paul and Babe were battling Ol' Nate, they left a few footprints, thus creating the Whitefish Chain. Paul named one Lake Bertha, after his aunt. And Babe named one Lake Hay, after his favorite fodder!

People have speculated on the fate of the beautiful Sunfish Sally. It has been said that poor Sally was so blue and brokenhearted over her beau's demise that ever after, each of her descendents carried the mark of her lover's remembrance and hence was born a new species: the bluegill!

So goes the Tale of Paul Bunyan's Bobber.



Tall tales are thought to have originated in the United States in the nineteenth century, as early settlers and pioneers grappled with the daunting vastness of the western frontier. The many challenges of daily life required great fortitude and a good sense of humor. Heroic abilities attributed to main characters of tall tales helped pioneers believe that they could actually settle the expansive land. Each part of the country produced region-specific tall tale heroes and stories. For entertainment on the early frontier, people gathered around a campfire after a hard day's work and shared humorous tales. There were no televisions or movies, and books were extremely expensive and in short supply.

Parents retold the tall tales to their children at bedtime. When the children went to sleep, the tales fueled their dreams with images of amazing heroes with superhuman abilities in grand adventures that involved solving difficult problems.

Exaggeration and Fish Stories

Fish stories share many characteristics with tall tales. There's something about fishing that leads people who fish to tell exaggerated fish stories. The ability seems to come as naturally to first-time anglers as it does to those who are more experienced. Remarkably, each time a fish story

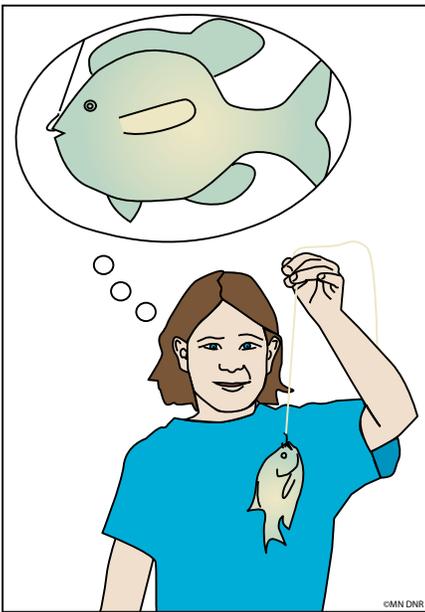


The water tower in Pequot Lakes, Minnesota.



A storyteller uses **exaggeration** by enlarging, overstating, or representing an object, event, or characteristic as larger than normal.

Hyperbole is a figure of speech that employs exaggeration for emphasis or effect: I've been waiting for an eternity!



A Fish Tale

An angler described a bass that he caught on a recent fishing trip. "It weighed 30 pounds! I fought that monster for three hours," he told his friend.

The friend interrupted. "I saw the picture you took of that fish," he said. "You're lucky if it even weighed ten pounds."

"Well," said the angler, without losing a beat, "a fish can lose an awful lot of weight after three hours of fighting!"

is retold, it usually becomes more exaggerated. The fish may get a bit bigger and the fight a little tougher. You've probably heard a fish story from a neighbor or a family member, or you may have told a fish story of your own. Every angler seems to have at least one! Some fish stories sound more like fiction than truth, and fish storytellers have gotten a reputation for **exaggerating**, or embellishing the truth, no matter how earnestly the angler tells their story. You've probably heard stories about how someone caught a fish as big as a moose, or perhaps one about an elusive, mythical fish that no one has been able to catch. For a good fish story, entertainment is key—believability is optional. But an effective storyteller will make you feel that you "should have been there!"

The following is an oft-told example of a fish story that is less about catching fish than entertaining the listener. Notice how the story is told in a way that makes it believable. This keeps the listener involved until the very end.



The Fisherman's Sons A Traditional Tall Fish Tale

A fisherman and his wife were blessed with twin sons. They loved the boys very much but fretted over what to name them. Finally the fisherman said, "Let's not worry about this. If we wait awhile, the names will come to us."

After several weeks had passed, the fisherman and his wife noticed a peculiar fact. When left alone, one of the boys would always turn towards the water's shore, while the other boy would face inland. It didn't matter which way the parents positioned the children; the same child always faced the same direction. "Let's call the boys Towards and Away," suggested the fisherman. His wife agreed, and from that point on, the boys were simply known as Towards and Away.

The years passed and the lads grew tall and strong. The day came when the aging fisherman said to his sons, "Boys, it is time that you learned how to fish." They provisioned their boat, said their good-byes, and set off for a fishing trip.

A terrible catastrophe happened while the father and twins were out in the boat. The father returned home to tell his wife what happened. He said to his wife, "We had just barely gotten out on the lake when Towards hooked into a great fish. Towards fought long and hard, but the fish was more than his equal. They wrestled upon the waves without either of them letting up. Yet eventually the great fish started to win the battle, and before I could reach him to help, Towards was pulled over the side of the boat. He was swallowed whole, and we never saw either of them again."

“Oh my, that must have been terrible!” said the wife. “What a huge fish that must have been! What a horrible fish.”

“Yes, it was,” said the fisherman, “but you should have seen the one that got Away!”



Fish Tales

By turning fish stories into tall tales, students can discover how heroic characters, creative metaphors and similes, ample exaggeration, and a sprinkling of humor combine to create fun, entertaining stories. Telling a good story is a skill that develops with practice and attention to detail. A storyteller should give some thought to describing the **main character**, creating the **setting**, and developing the **theme** of their story.

From the traditions and tales of others, students learn that stories reveal information about a people’s history, transmit knowledge and culture, entertain, teach moral lessons, and convey attitudes, values, and beliefs. Stories can offer valuable perspectives on relationships between people as well as their interactions with the natural world.

Procedure

Preparation

- 1 Set up a reading display using as many tall tale books as you can find, as well as books about early settlers in the Minnesota region.
- 2 Make copies of the **Tall Tales Research Sheet**—three for each group of three or four students.
- 3 Make copies of the **Reviewing a Tall Tale Sheet**—two per student.

Activity

Warm-up

- 1 Tell students that people have always told stories, even before they could preserve them in writing. Since prehistoric times, people all over the world have been passing on knowledge and culture through the oral tradition of storytelling. Passing stories from generation to generation has been important in many early cultures, and remains important today. Stories help families and communities share lessons, knowledge, and history. Have the students think about a time before video games, TV, books, and newspapers. How would the children of these times learn about history, their culture, or how to catch or grow food? Why would stories be an effective way to pass lessons, knowledge, and traditions to children? Compare the storytelling traditions of Dakota and Ojibwe peoples in Minnesota with stories of early settlers and present day anglers. Discuss why Dakota and Ojibwe traditions and stories should be respected. Do we tell stories in our families today?



The **main character** of a tall tale is a heroic figure that solves a problem in an amazing way.

A story’s **setting** includes the time, place, and circumstances in which it takes place.

A **theme** is the plan, scheme, or main point of a story.



In the interest of time, instead of doing the entire lesson, you may choose to do the portions of this lesson that best meet your class objectives and fit your available time frame. For example, you might just do the Warm-up, or choose to omit the writing portion of the activity and emphasize oral storytelling.



If some students can't recall a fish story, you may wish to have several short fish story examples printed and ready to give to those students.



Some of the students' stories may contain more exaggeration than others at this point.

- Why do you tell stories? What do these present-day stories teach you?
- 2 Discuss why fish and fishing have always been important to people who have lived in the land now called Minnesota. Is fishing still important in Minnesota?
 - 3 Ask students if they have ever heard someone tell a fish story or if they have ever told a fish story. Was the story fact or fiction? Why do people tell fish stories? Who told the first fish stories in Minnesota?
 - 4 On a sheet of paper or in a journal, have students write a short (two or three paragraphs) fish story that they've heard or told. Tell the students that—like the early Ojibwe and Dakota peoples, the European settlers who settled in Minnesota, and present day campers—they'll tell their stories around a "campfire."
 - 5 Have the class sit in a circle. You may wish to take the class outside to make the circle. If you stay inside, turn down the lights and position a small lamp or flashlight in the center of the circle to simulate a fire.
 - 6 Have students take turns telling their fish stories as they sit in the circle. You may wish to introduce the "talking stick" concept, which comes from Native American tradition. It's a respectful way for a group of people to talk about things. The student holding the stick (or other item such as a stuffed fish toy, or bobber) is the circle's designated "talker" or storyteller, and everyone else is a respectful listener. The talking stick is then passed to the next person, who then becomes the storyteller.
 - 7 After the fish stories are shared, define exaggeration.
 - 8 Help students understand the definitions of similes and metaphors.
 - 9 Have students practice writing similes and metaphors:

Ask students to take another sheet of paper and write a sentence about themselves describing single characteristics that make them unique, such as "My hair is red." Then have them add the word *as* or the word *like* to their sentences. Have the students finish their sentences by adding a noun or an object to which to compare the trait, such as "My hair is red like a fire engine." or "I can run as fast as a train." Have the students read their sentences aloud. They've written similes!

To practice writing metaphors, begin by showing several everyday items to the students. Some examples include a photo of a bear, a piece of bark, a fish mount, a locket, or a football helmet. Ask the students to compare the items to a different object or idea, using the words *is*, *are*, *was*, or *were*. For instance, a student might say, "a bear is strength," or "the tree's bark is a roadmap through valleys and cliffs," or "the fish were rainbow sparkles in the shadows beneath the dock."

- 10 Have students practice exaggeration using metaphors and similes. Not all stories are told for the same purpose. Some are told to

relate facts, others teach traditions, and some are told purely for entertainment. Tell the students that exaggeration is often used to make a fish story more interesting or entertaining. Similes and metaphors are literary tools that also make a story more colorful and descriptive. Tell the students they are anglers in a bragging contest that will entertain an audience. Contestants must use similes or metaphors when exaggerating or bragging about their fish and fishing adventures. It's important to use exaggeration in a way that's straightforward, and even believable. If the story is told in a believable style, it will surprise the listener and have more impact. Pass the talking stick around the circle to those students who wish to enter the bragging contest.

- 11 Now have each student choose one of the fish stories that were originally told around the campfire. Have them select someone else's story—not their own. Have them rewrite this story using similes, metaphors, and exaggeration—changing facts and details in whatever way they think will make the story colorful, humorous, interesting, and entertaining.
- 12 Using the talking stick, have students read their rewritten fish tales, introducing each story by saying, “According to the way I heard the story . . .”
- 13 Were the original stories fact or fiction? What happened to the original details in the retold stories? Did the stories become colorful and entertaining after they added exaggeration, similes, and metaphors? Were they told in a straightforward, believable style? Did the believable style provide surprise and humor? Have the students heard other fish stories that were a bit exaggerated and hard to believe, yet humorous, interesting, or entertaining?

Lesson

Part 1: Exploring Tall Tales

- 1 Ask your students: What tall tales do you know? What makes a story a tall tale?
 - Tell students that early settlers told tall tales about superhuman characters doing amazing and grand deeds because, to these people, their new surroundings often seemed vast and their lives were very difficult.
 - Tall tales were often passed orally from generation to generation until they were eventually preserved in writing.
 - A story may be old, and possibly quite true at one time, but its details are likely to change as it's told over and over. We saw how that can happen with fish stories!
- 2 Start a story with an exaggerated sentence: “Long ago, there was a girl named Maggie who could see across Lake Superior.”
 - Ask a student to volunteer the next line.
 - Have each student add another line to the story using a vocal tone to indicate the sentence is factual.
 - Choose one student volunteer to create the last sentence, or ending, for the story.



To shorten this warm-up activity, you may wish to ask only a limited number of volunteers to share fish stories verbally.



You may find it helpful to bookmark tall tale websites in advance so the students can use them for their research.



To shorten this exercise, you can provide some sample tall tales that can be read and discussed in class more quickly. Students can explore the characteristics of a tall tale as a class discussion, using the **Tall Tale Research Sheet** as a guide. As another alternative, ask each student group to look up one tall tale using the Internet, school library, or other available resource books to help them complete the **Tall Tale Research Sheet**. This takes less time and allows each student to really explore a tall tale.

- By the time the story ends it should be one whopper of a tall tale! You may want to make an audio recording or write down the story as the students tell it.
 - At the conclusion of the story, have students discuss how a story that is passed down orally might change over time. Ask one or two students to retell the story. Does the story stay the same as the original version?
- 3 Help students set goals for the lesson.
 - What do the students want to learn about tall tales?
 - Goals might include writing and performing their own tall tales, or learning what makes a story a tall tale.
 - 4 Have students work in groups of three and ask them to conduct Internet research, and/or use books in the classroom or school library to determine the characteristics of a tall tale and investigate and discover some famous examples. Give three **Tall Tales Research Sheets** to each group. Allow the groups approximately 45 minutes to find three tall tales, read them, and complete the sheet.
 - 5 Define story setting and story theme. (A story's setting includes the time, place, and circumstances in which it takes place. A story's theme is its plan, scheme, or main point.)

Discuss with the class what the groups learned about tall tales. Were they able to find information on the history of tall tales in the United States? With the class, brainstorm (using information that the students collected) a list of features or characteristics of tall tales. Guide the students to create a list that contains these components of a tall tale:

- a larger-than-life heroic or superhuman main character with a specific job
 - a problem that's solved in a funny and outlandish way
 - exaggerated details that describe things as greater, larger, or smaller than they really are
 - events that may be extraordinary, but described in a way that makes them seem believable to the audience
 - similes and metaphors describing people, objects, events, virtues, and abilities
- 6 Ask the students if exaggeration makes tall tales entertaining. Would they be as entertaining if they contained information that was completely factual or lacked embellishments?

Part 2: Writing a Tall Fish Tale

- 1 Each student will use their group's tall tale information and research to create their own original tall tale about fish or fishing. But first, they will need to select a problem to address in their tales.
- 2 Have students brainstorm a list of current issues related to fish, fishing, and aquatic resources in Minnesota. Write the problems and issues on the whiteboard or projection device.. Discuss each item as you list it.

The list could include:

- pollution in lakes and rivers
- erosion and sedimentation
- the causes of aquatic habitat loss and how this loss impacts fish and other aquatic species populations
- aquatic invasive species
- reasons for fishing regulations
- public awareness and knowledge of fish and fish ecology
- increasing development of lakeshore property
- impact of various land use practices on watersheds
- impact of increased use of sophisticated fishing equipment such as depth finders, fish locaters, and underwater cameras
- illegal overharvest of fish (poaching)
- how low head dams hamper fish migration

3 After the students have produced a sizable list, have each student write a different problem on a small sheet of paper.

- Collect the papers and put them into a hat.
- Pass the hat and have each student draw a problem from the hat.
- The problem drawn provides the plot for that student's tall tale.
- Remind students that, in their stories, the problems must be solved in an amazing way.

The students' solutions will probably not be realistic, but they'll probably start to appreciate that there are no simple solutions for some environmental problems.

4 To help the students practice developing exaggerated, creative solutions to fisheries problems, divide the class into groups of three or four students (or use the tall tale research groups) and have the students work in groups to come up with several exaggerated, outrageous, or unusual ways to solve the problems they've chosen.

5 Have the student groups share their most creative solutions with the class.

6 Finally, ask each student to create a main character and write a draft of a tall tale. Remind students that their main character should attempt to solve the problem they pulled from the hat.

7 Students should use the five components of a tall tale in their stories. To help with this process, ask students to make a simple graphic organizer from a folded sheet of paper. Give a sheet of plain (art) paper to each student. Have them fold the paper in half lengthwise.

- On the left side of the paper, students can draw a picture of their hero. Give the main character at least three heroic characteristics that will help them solve the problem—make the main character bigger, stronger, faster, or smarter than anyone else. Give the hero a name. Decide on the main character's job.
- On the right side of the paper, have students make three boxes. In the first box, have them write down their problem about fish. Have them write the solution in the second box. In the third box, have them decide on a setting for the story, other characters, and a plot.



Instead of having the students brainstorm a list, the instructor may wish to create a list of fisheries-related problems for the class, depending on relevant local issues and the amount of relevant material the students have covered prior to this lesson.



You may wish to review with students that Minnesota is home to people of many cultures and backgrounds. Traditional stories and folklore can reveal attitudes and values regarding the natural world that are held by those cultures or groups of people. Explain to students that it's important for resource managers know and understand the values and attitudes of diverse citizens throughout the state. When managing Minnesota fish, it's necessary to try to balance the needs and desires of all Minnesota citizens to preserve the biological integrity of fish populations, and to do so in a sustainable way. How could learning about the traditional stories of the diverse people who live in Minnesota help fisheries managers do their jobs?

- On the left side of the back side of the sheet of paper, have students list examples of things they can exaggerate in their story. On the right side, they should list ideas for similes and metaphors that they could use to make their story entertaining and fun. Remind them to use their imagination and sense of humor!
- 8 It's time to write the tall fish tale! Tell students to describe the main character in detail so that readers can recognize at least three characteristics of their hero. Remind students to describe the hero, events, and the solution—however extraordinary—in a believable style. Remind students that a good story has a strong ending. When typing their story drafts, students should double-space them for easier review. (If students aren't able to type their stories, have them print the stories neatly.)

Part 3: Reviewing and Revising Tall Tales

- 1 Make three copies of the typed or printed drafts of the students' stories for peer review.
- 2 Pass out two **Reviewing a Tall Tale Sheets** to each student. Divide the class into their previous groups of three or four students. Each student should receive one copy of each fellow group member's stories.
- 3 In the small groups, have each student read their own tall tale aloud as others in the group read along.
- 4 Each student may then complete a **Reviewing a Tall Tale Sheet** for two of the other group members' stories. Each group member should then receive two different peer reviews of their own tall tale.
- 5 Students should read the reviews of their tall tale, make any necessary additions or changes to their story, and write a final version of their story.
- 6 Have the students hand in their drafts, the peer reviews of their stories, and their final tall fish tales.

Wrap-up

- 1 Have students share their final fish tales in a storytelling circle.
- 2 Review the fact that a tall tale is a story that is exaggerated, yet told in a believable way. Ask the class why people have told tall tales. Discuss the hardships early settlers encountered and the origins of tall tales. Why do you think tall tales have endured for so long?
- 3 For further discussion, ask students: Did you learn more about fish from the different fish tall tales? Did you learn something about how the different writers thought about or regarded fish? After hearing these stories, do you think differently about fish? How? What might an American Indian fish story tell you about how the people think about fish? What might an early European settler's story tell you about how they thought about fish? What might a cultural story about fish told by an immigrant to Minnesota from a country in Africa, Southeast Asia, Eastern Europe, or elsewhere tell you about how that culture thinks about fish? What are some resources other than stories that tell us information about the past?



Instead of reading the final fish tales aloud, you might wish to have students illustrate their stories and create a book cover. Then, display the tall tale books in the classroom where students can read them at their leisure.

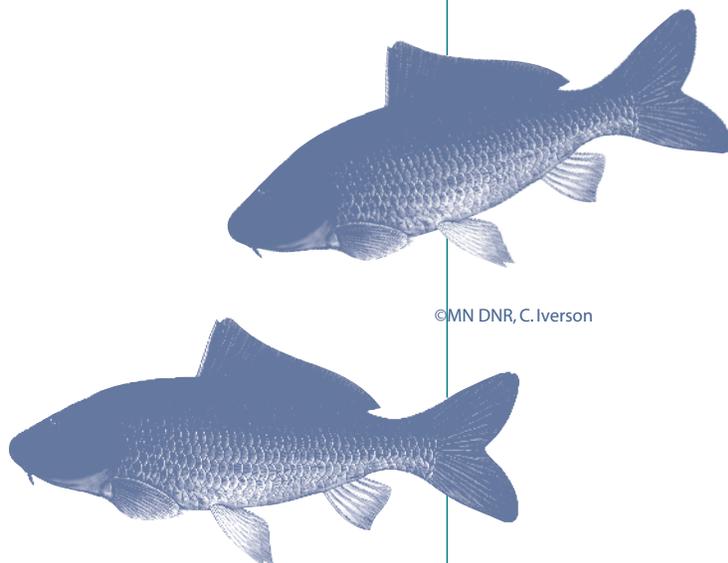
- 4 Remind students that different types of stories have different purposes. Can they give some examples of different types of stories and their purposes? Can they describe how today's storytelling might be different than the storytelling of many years ago? What are some similarities between the stories the students might tell or read today and the stories of Dakota or Ojibwe people? Between the stories told by early Minnesota settlers?

Assessment Options

- 1 Evaluate the participation and research results from the student group work.
- 2 Assess the written tall tale for creativity, correct grammar and spelling, and incorporation of the five characteristics of a tall tale. Make sure that students included a larger-than-life heroic main character with a specific job; a problem that is solved in a funny and outlandish way; at least three extraordinary, superhuman traits for the main character; exaggerated details that describe things as greater, larger, or smaller than normal; similes and metaphors that describe people, objects, events, virtues, and abilities; and a believable style.
- 3 Assess participation in discussion and student's understanding that different kinds of stories are told for different purposes, and that stories can reveal what people might know and think about things in nature, like fish.
- 4 Assessment options include the Checklist and Rubric on the following pages.



As students read their final fish tales aloud, record them with a digital audio recorder or a digital video recorder. The performances can then be posted on the school website.



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Checklists are tools for students and instructors. Checklists involve students in managing their own learning. They help students understand and set learning goals before the lesson begins, and help them monitor their progress during the lesson, ensuring that they meet learning goals and objectives by the end of the lesson. Students can also use checklists to discover areas that may need improvement. Checklists help instructors monitor each student’s progress throughout the lesson, facilitating appropriate adjustment of instruction to ensure learning by the end of the lesson. The instructor may wish to have students add several of their own learning goals to the checklist to personalize it, and to accommodate varied learning needs and styles.

Grade

32-34 points = A
Excellent. Work is above expectations.

28-31 points = B
Good. Work meets expectations.

22-27 points = C
Work is generally good. Some areas are better developed than others.

16-21 points = D
Work does not meet expectations; it’s not clear that student understands objectives.

0-15 points = F
Work is unacceptable.

Fish Tales Checklist

Possible Points	Points Earned	Points Earned	
	Student	Instructor	
4	_____	_____	Student describes four examples of traditional purposes of storytelling, including oral histories, entertainment, teaching lessons, and passing on traditions.
2	_____	_____	Student defines <i>tall tale</i> .
2	_____	_____	Student defines <i>simile</i> and <i>metaphor</i> .
5	_____	_____	Student lists five elements of a tall tale without using notes.
3	_____	_____	Student provides the names of three tall tale characters identified during the research conducted on tall tales.
8	_____	_____	Student includes eight tall tale story elements in their tall fish tale, including a larger than life main character, a problem solved in an amazing way, humor, similes and metaphors, exaggeration, setting, title of story, and author’s name.
2	_____	_____	Story is written in a style indicating that the story is to be considered reasonable and believable.
2	_____	_____	Story identifies a fisheries-related problem.
2	_____	_____	Main character solves problem in an amazing and creative way.
4	_____	_____	Final story incorporates the suggestions and ideas from peer review and original rough draft is improved in the final draft.
Total Points			
34	_____	_____	Score _____

Fish Tales Scoring Rubric

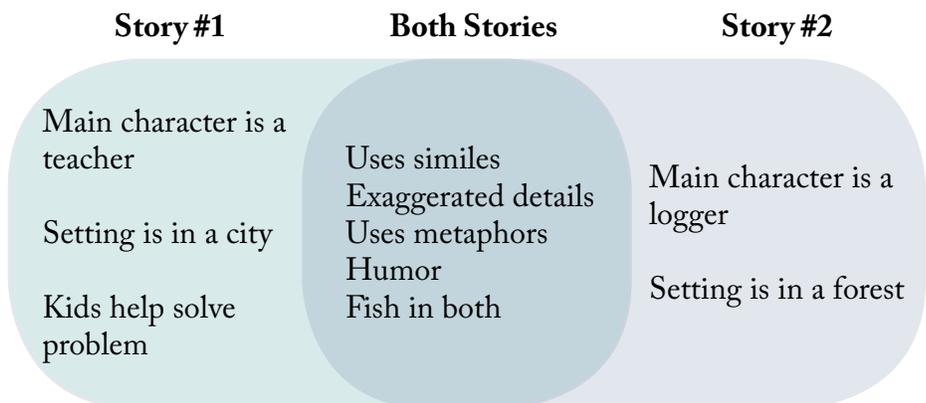
Tall Tales Criteria	4 Excellent	3 Good	2 Fair	1 Poor	0 Unacceptable
History of storytelling	Describes four examples of traditional purposes of story telling including oral histories, entertainment, teaching lessons, passing on traditions.	Describes three examples of traditional purposes of storytelling.	Describes two examples of traditional purposes of storytelling.	Provides one example of traditional purposes of storytelling.	Can't provide an example of traditional purpose of storytelling.
Characteristics of a tall tale	Defines tall tale, simile, and metaphor. Lists five elements of a tall tale, including larger than life main character, a problem that is solved in an amazing way, humor, similes and metaphors, exaggeration, setting, title, author. Provides the names of three tall tale characters, such as Paul Bunyan, Johnny Appleseed, and Annie Oakley, as identified in their research on tall tales.	Defines tall tale, simile, and metaphor. Lists four elements of a tall tale. Provides the names of two tall tale characters, such as Paul Bunyan, Johnny Appleseed, and Annie Oakley, as identified in their research on tall tales.	Defines tall tale. Lists three elements of a tall tale. Provides the names of two tall tale characters, such as Paul Bunyan, Johnny Appleseed, and Annie Oakley, as identified in their research on tall tales.	Defines tall tale. Lists two elements of a tall tale. Provides the name of one tall tale character, such as Paul Bunyan, Johnny Appleseed, and Annie Oakley, as identified in their research on tall tales.	Can't define tall tale. Can't list elements of a tall tale. Can't provide the name of a tall tale character, such as Paul Bunyan, Johnny Appleseed, and Annie Oakley, as identified in their research on tall tales.
Writing a tall fish tale	Story includes the eight tall tale story elements listed above. Story is written in a style indicating that it is to be considered reasonable and believable. Story identifies a fisheries-related problem. Main character solves problem in an amazing and creative way. Final story incorporates suggestions and ideas from peer review.	Story includes six tall tale story elements. Story is written in a style indicating that it is to be considered reasonable and believable. Story identifies a fisheries-related problem. Main character solves problem. Final story incorporates suggestions and ideas from peer review.	Story includes four tall tale story elements. Story identifies a fisheries-related problem. Final story incorporates suggestions and ideas from peer review.	Story includes three tall tale story elements. Story identifies a fisheries-related problem. Final story incorporates suggestions and ideas from peer review.	Story includes less than three tall tale story elements. Story doesn't identify a fisheries-related problem. Final story doesn't incorporate suggestions and ideas from peer review, and it not improved from rough draft.

Score _____ (Calculate score by dividing total points by number of criteria.)

Diving Deeper

Extensions

- 1 To diagram or map plotlines, document the sequence of events as a map. To determine congruence, identify similarities and differences between several versions of plots. Create a diagram that explains these discoveries using the two-circle Venn diagram method. Ask students to compare similarities and differences between fish tales written by two different students. Students should record at least five facts that are different in each story, as well as any facts, characteristics, or details that are the same in both stories.



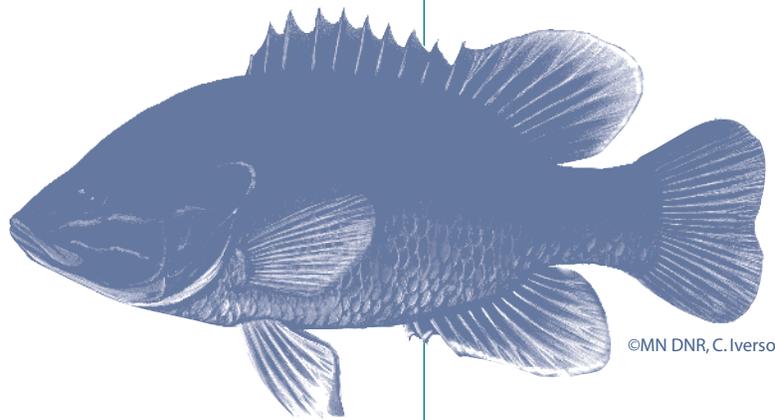
- 2 Tall tales and fish biology (“Scales and Fish Tales”)—Telling fish stories can offer an opportunity to study how fisheries managers determine the age of fish. Begin by telling fish stories. Then tell students that the scales of a fish can “tell tales.” Biologists learn the age of fish by counting the rings on fish scales just as the age of a tree is determined by counting the rings in a cross-section of its trunk. Have each student draw a large fish scale on a paper plate with a number of rings that matches their own age. Brainstorm with the class all the ways fish are important to us (such as healthful source of food, recreational enjoyment, attract tourists to the state, provide jobs for fishing guides, those who fish commercially, and bait store owners). Ask the students to record these ways inside the rings drawn on their paper plate scales.
- 3 Tall tales and expressive arts—Have students illustrate their tall tales. Compile the tales into a class *Tall Fish Tales* book, or post the illustrated stories on a class website. Have students share and read their stories, or act out the stories for younger students.
- 4 Tall tales and communication—Discuss with the class the types of “stories” that appear in newscasts. Ask the students to think about the main characters in their tall fish tales. What things about this main character would you put into a news story, weather report, or sports report? Have the class create a news feature story about the main characters in their fish tales.

- 5 Tall tales and history—Have students draw a picture of a frontier or early settlement campsite with people sitting around the fire telling stories. Have them write a paragraph about what they think it would have been like to live on the Minnesota frontier. Ask students: Would it have been exciting or might it have been scary? How do you think you would have gone fishing? What kind of equipment would you have used to fish? Do you think you would have liked being a kid on the frontier? Why or why not? Would you be able to survive without TV, movies, computers, and video games?

For the Small Fry

K-2 Option

- 1 Read several tall tales aloud to the students and talk about the characteristics of a tall tale. Ask students to share a fish story they have heard or told before. Divide the class into small groups. Each group can choose a story and create a play or puppet show, a mobile illustrating the scenes in the story, or a storyboard illustrating the chosen story.
- 2 Read several stories about fish to students to expose them to fish stories from different places and cultures. Have students draw the things they imagined while listening to the fish stories. Students can tell their own fish stories and illustrate them.
- 3 Have the entire class work together to create a classroom tall tale. Work together to pick a theme and then have each student add a part to the story. The story could relate to something that really happened in the classroom or it could be totally fictional.



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Name(s) _____ Date _____

Tall Tales Research Sheet

Use one of these sets of sheets to answer these questions about *each* of the three tall tales your group finds.

1. What is the **title** of the tall tale? _____

2. Who is the **main character**? _____

3. List at least three **heroic** or larger-than-life traits of the main character. _____

4. List examples of **exaggeration** in the story. _____

5. Were **similes** and **metaphors** used in the story? If so, list them below.

Similes	Metaphors

continued

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Name(s) _____ Date _____

Tall Tales Research Sheet (continued)

6. What is the **problem** in the story? _____

7. How is the problem **solved**? _____

8. What is story's **setting**? (The time, place, and circumstances in which it takes place.)

9. What is the **theme** of the story? (The plan, scheme, or main points.) _____

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Name(s) _____ Date _____

Reviewing a Tall Tale Sheet

1. What is the **title** of the tall tale you are reviewing? _____

2. Who is the **author**? _____

3. Who is the **main character**? _____

Did the writer include at least three **heroic** or larger-than-life traits for the main character?

What are the **traits** of the main character?

- _____
- _____
- _____

4. What is the story's **setting**? (When and where does it take place?)

Time _____

Place _____

5. What was the story's **problem** about fish, fishing, or aquatic resources?

(continued)

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Name(s) _____ Date _____

Reviewing a Tall Tale Sheet (continued)

6. How did the main character **solve** the problem in the story? _____

7. Does the tall tale use **exaggeration**? _____ What was exaggerated in the story?

8. Is the story written in a way that sounds like the events could actually happen? Is it told in a believable way? Why or why not?

9. What is the **purpose** of the story? (For example, did it teach a lesson, entertain, record an event, or explain science?)

(continued)

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Name(s) _____ Date _____

Reviewing a Tall Tale Sheet (continued)

10. Is the story **entertaining**? _____ Did the writer use humor? _____

11. What was your favorite part of the fish tale? _____

12. What did you learn about fish from the story? _____

13. Name one way in which the writer might improve the story. _____

Remember that a review helps the writer by offering suggestions and giving encouragement. Constructive feedback will help the writer create a better tall fish tale!