

AMERICAN TALES AND TUNES

Study Guide

Always Free

Bright Star Touring Theatre

This 45-minute adventure takes your audience all around our great country to hear the stories and songs that shape America!

FOLK TALES

FOLK SONGS

Folk songs and folk tales from across America come to life in this music-filled adventure. We've delved deep into American literature from the Jack Tales of the Appalachian region to the fishing docks of New England. We've created a vibrant and energetic show that seamlessly blends fantastic regional stories with classic American folk songs—from "Shenandoah" to "Shady Grove!"

"All music is folk music. I ain't never heard a horse sing a song."

-Louis Armstrong

WHAT IS A FOLK TALE?

A story that is told by adults to their children and grand children over and over again. Folk tales are usually very old, they usually say something important about the people who tell them, and they have great lessons and advice about how to be a good person.

WHAT IS A FOLK SONG?

A song that is sung by every day people and is passed down from adults to children. It usually says something important about the place where they live and what their lives are like.

ACTIVITY

Make your own instruments in class.

Many folk instruments were made things like spoons, buckets, barrels and jugs. Using found objects, put together your own instruments and make your own classroom folk band.

For an extra challenge, try taking a folk song and changing the words so they are about the people in class!



We want young to connect people with fun tales and tunes that enrich their lives and teach them about about American culture!





GEOGRAPHY ACTIVITY!

Have students plot the locations below on a map. They can do this individually, or as a class with thumb tacks and tags to label where stories and songs originated. For an extra challenge they can use a map of the globe too. Some tales that are told in America were originally brought here from other countries by folks who immigrated here!

FIND THESE TALE AND TUNES LOCATIONS!

JACK TALES!

Stories that all involve a hero named “Jack” and how he overcomes big obstacles by being smart and brave. These are popular in the **Appalachian Mountains**. Originally, though, these stories were told by people from **Germany, Ireland** and **Scotland**.

FISHING FOLK TALES!

There are many folk tales about fishing in the New England states of America. Try finding the following New England states: **Maine, Massachusetts, Rhode Island**.

BLUE MOON OF KENTUCKY!

The Country Music Channel (CMT) said this is the 11th best country song ever written. But of course, it started off as a folk song. Find the state of Kentucky which is the subject of this song. What to find more? Look for **England, Africa** and **Ireland**. The style of Bluegrass came from these countries and a few more. “Blue Moon of Kentucky” is both a folk song and a bluegrass song!

PAUL BUNYAN AND BABE THE BLUE OX! There are many stories about Paul Bunyan, the giant lumber jack hero, and his pet Babe. One story says that Bunyan created the **Great Lakes** so Babe could have something to drink. Find these lakes. Another story says that the **Grand Canyon** was made by dragging Paul Bunyan’s ax. Can you find it on a map too?

SHENANDOAH! This song talks a lot about the **Missouri River**. Pinpoint it on the map!

HOME ON THE RANGE It became an anthem of the Great American West and for pioneers. It’s also the state song of **Kansas**. Can you find the wheat state?

PECOS BILL There are many tales about this cowboy and his cowgirl wife Slue Foot Sue. He was a hero of the Southwest. Try finding these Southwest states: **Arizona, New Mexico, Texas**.

Discuss the following:

What folk tales came from the region where you live? If none were talked about in the show, try finding some!

What do you think about where folk tales and songs come from? How does the location or environment of a place affect what stories they make up there? Do you think stories from the city are different from stories in the country?

Classroom Activity: Make your own folk tale!

Is there a story that you have heard in your own family? Maybe it's a bedtime story, a funny story a grandparent tells, or the story of how their parents met. Create your own short folk tale and illustrate it using crayons or colored pencils!

Classroom Activity: Folk Legend

Often, the characters in folk tales are based on real people. Once they are in stories, they become larger-than-life heroes! Have students think about someone in their life who is a hero to them—a teacher, sibling or friend. Have them draw that person as a folk hero. Would they have special powers, be bigger, wear special clothes, or have super pets? Have students post their pictures around the classroom or give their pictures to the hero of their choice.

Classroom Activity: Memory Challenge

See who can make the biggest list of songs and stories from the play!

Classroom Activity: Fractured Folk Tales

(For Older Grades) Break students into groups and have them choose two folk tales—or draw them from a hat. Their challenge is to create a miniature performance that combines the stories in a funny or interesting way. The plays should have a beginning, middle and end. Perform them in front of the class!

Classroom Activity: Simon Says

(For younger grades) Play a game of Simon says using moments from the play. For example: Simon says go fishing, Simon says act like Babe the Blue Ox, Simon says sail down the Missouri!

School Activity: Folk Concert!

Have every class in school learn a different folk song and perform them at an assembly or a concert where students can invite their families!

FUN FACTS ABOUT THEATRE!

After a play is over and everyone goes home, there is always a light left on backstage. It's called a ghost light!

The oldest play that is still around was written by an Ancient Greek named Aeschylus. It's almost 2500 years old!

The longest performance on stage was over 23 hours long! It happened in New Jersey in 2010.

William Shakespeare is a famous play writer. He wrote 37 plays and is still quoted by many people. There are 157 million google pages that mention him--the most of any famous person ever!

In theatre, it's considered bad luck to tell an actor, "Good luck" before a performance. Instead, you're supposed to say, "Break a Leg!"

This play will be seen by audiences all across the country in theaters, museums, libraries, community events and schools!

Folk Tale and Tune Vocabulary:

Folks: People.

Culture: A way of life. Music, clothes, cooking and stories are all part of culture.

Oral Tradition: Songs and stories being passed down by singing and talking. For many years, this is how folk tales and songs got passed down.

Fiddle: A popular folk instrument that was made in Ireland.



Moral: A lesson that you find in a story. Most Folk Tales have a moral.

Legend: Sometimes legends are based on real people and events, but they get exaggerated (or get bigger) over time and become legends!

Guitar: A very popular folk instrument. It was first made in Spain!

Region: A certain part of a country. Can you name the different regions of the U.S.?

YOU CAN DO THIS TOO!

Where to start: All of our actors started out playing and telling stories when they were young -then they decided to study acting in school. Now they are pros! Here are some ways you can start doing theatre right away!

In School! Does your school have plays or musical performances? This is a great place to start.

In Your Community! Many towns have community theaters or local acting groups. See if you can try out!

Start Something! If your school doesn't have a drama club or a theatre club, talk to your favorite teacher about how you might be able to start one.

At Home! Get together with friends, cousins, brothers and sisters and make your own play. You can make

up plays based on your favorite books and stories. Invite family and friends to see your performance.

Try new things and do your best at them! There are lots of jobs in the theatre besides acting. There are people who paint the sets, make costumes, write plays and more. Get the most out of your art, music and English classes. You can use all of these things to be a live theatre pro!

After seeing the Play...

Write your own review of the play! A review is a way of telling your thoughts about a play, movie or book. Consider the following when you are writing your review.

What was your favorite part? Who was your favorite character? Can you summarize the play in your own words? If you had written this play, would you have done anything different? Would you recommend this play to a friend? Name one new thing you learned from watching this play!

BEFORE YOU SEE THE PLAY...

Attending the theatre is very different from watching TV or going to the movies. For one thing, the actors are real people who are performing right then and there. They can see and hear everything that happens in the audience. Because of this, YOU are an important part of the play and its important to do your job as an audience member well. Here are some tips before you see the play.

1. Please be quiet and respectful so everyone else around you can hear what's happening and so the actors can do their job.
2. If something is funny, it is okay to laugh!
3. The actors may ask you to participate. Don't be afraid to respond, ask a question or volunteer!
4. Keep your hands to yourself and your eyes up front.
5. If you like the play, be sure to clap at the end.
6. Have fun! Enjoy yourself!



Woody Guthrie, one of the most famous folk singers of all time! He wrote "This Land is Your Land."



Write a Review of the show



A mini-van is our hip and favored mode of transportation for touring the country!

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THEATRE VOCABULARY!

Actor: The people on-stage performing the play.

Backdrop: The background for the play.

Props: Anything that an actor holds while on-stage--a cane, book or rubber chicken.

Downstage: the area closest to the audience a long time ago stage were built at angles.

Upstage: The area away from the audience, like the back wall of the a stage.

Director: The person who told the actors where to go while they were on-stage and helped them create the characters they played.

Costumes: The wigs, clothing and glasses that the actors wore to help flush out their characters .

Facts about us!

1. Did you know we're owned by an Emmy winning actor?

2. Our actors average 1,000 miles a week traveling the country to entertain young audiences.

3. Our programs have been seen in almost every corner of the country and even around the world.

4. We watch over 1200 actors audition before we cast our season.

5. We offer dozens of different shows a season from Black History to anti-bullying and literary classics.

6. We toured Moscow with performances of our Aesop's Fables.

7. We're based in Asheville, NC.

ABOUT US!

Founded in 2003, Bright Star Theatre tours the nation offering high quality, affordable programs to every imaginable venue. We've had countless engagements at the National Theatre, toured to Moscow and are so grateful to be in your very school today!



Auditions: How an actor gets a role is by auditioning. They may have to interview, pretend to be a character from the play or read something from it.

Set Designer: The person who decided what should be on the background and who painted or created it.

The Process of a Play:

1. Actors audition 2. Directors cast the show (that means they choose actors) 3. The directors and actors rehearse the play (that means they practice it). 4. A team of people works on building the set, costumes and props. 5. The play opens (that means it is performed for the first time)!

Were there other terms that came from the experience of seeing the live play that you'd like to learn more about?



BRIGHT STAR THEATRE

Bright Star Touring Theatre performs across the country from Boston to Burbank and many schools, museum,s theaters and community events in between. Each season our shows run the gamut from Black History to anti-bullying, from literary classics to biographical shows. Our shows are available throughout the year for any event in any part of the world.

AMERICAN TALES AND TUNES

Created by Bright Star Touring Theatre-Lead Authorship carried out by David Ostergaard, All Rights Reserved.

Learn more about this show, this company & our whole Season:

www.brightstartheatre.com

American Tales and Tunes
Made it's debut in September 2014

We want every show to be special and remarkable for our audience. Please feel free to connect with us at anytime to tell us about your experience:

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