

Learning English

American Stories

Paul Bunyan

An American Folk Tale

Lesson Plan
by Jill Robbins, Ph.D.

Introduction

This lesson plan is to accompany the American Stories series episode, *Paul Bunyan, An American Folk Tale*.

A transcript of the story is included at the end of this lesson to print so students can read as they listen. Teachers who cannot play the audio from the website can read the story aloud or have students read it.

This lesson plan is based on the CALLA Approach. See the end of the lesson for more information and resources on teaching with the CALLA approach. The following slide shows the five parts of this lesson plan.

Lesson Elements

Prepare

Present

Practice

Self-Evaluate

Expand

Prepare

Introduce the theme of the story. “Today we will read a traditional American story. It takes place in the forests of North America, and the main character is a lumberjack. What do you know already about lumberjacks, men who cut trees?”

Listen to students’ comments about lumberjacks.

Summarize what the students said. For example, “Lumberjacks are strong. They live in the forest and cut down trees. They eat a large amount of food.” Teach the vocabulary for the story.

Vocabulary

wooded - *adj.* covered with trees

reversible - *adj.* having two sides that can be used

finances - *n.* matters relating to money and how it is spent or saved

blacksmith - *n.* a person who makes or repairs things made of iron (such as horseshoes)

Present

Introduce the story: “Today’s story is what we call a ‘tall tale.’ That means it’s not really true. As we read the story of Paul Bunyan, we can use the strategy *visualize* to imagine some of the imaginary events in this story. Let’s try it.”

Play to ‘This is where he grew up.’

Ask students “What do you think of the story so far? Can you imagine what it tells us about Paul Bunyan as a baby? Did you imagine the waves?”

Guide a discussion of the events: five birds (storks) bring the baby; they needed ten cows to feed him milk; when he rolled over it caused an earthquake; his cradle caused large waves in the ocean.

Model the strategy: “As I read this part, I can imagine a huge baby and little parents. When you get a picture in your mind, it helps you understand the story.” Continue, “Let’s listen to some more of the story. See if you can **visualize** the people and events as we read.”

Play or read aloud to ‘Babe dug his feet in the ground and pulled with all his strength until the road became straight.’

Draw a curved road on the board. Explain this is where Paul was working. Then draw a straight road, with an ox at one end. Explain this is what it looked like after Babe helped him straighten the road. “This is what I *visualized* when I read this part of the story.”

Practice

“Now it’s your turn. We’ll read some more of the story. Make pictures in your mind, or *visualize*, about what the people are doing. Imagine the places you read about.”

Play or read aloud to ‘They ate so much sugar they could not move.’

Invite students to turn to their neighbor and tell what they *visualized* about the events in the story. Ask one or two to come to the board and draw something from the story: giant bees or mosquitoes, Sport the Reversible Dog, or the very large hotcakes.

Encourage students to continue visualizing, “Let’s read to the end of the story now. Keep imagining what you read about.”

Play to the end of the story.

Ask students to draw how they visualized Babe with the giant sunglasses, or the frozen words in the winter air.

Self-Evaluate

Ask students to stay with their neighbor and talk about the end of the story. “What do you think of this story? Does it remind you of any other ‘tall tales?’”

Give students time to talk about the story.

Ask, “Now I’d like to ask – what do you think about using this strategy, *visualize*, when you read? Did it help you pay attention to the story? How about understanding the story? Write a sentence or two on your paper to turn in about how **visualizing** helped you today.”

Expand

Ask students, “Are there other times when you can *visualize*?”

Listen to students’ responses.

Continue, “This strategy is helpful when a story describes people, places, or events. It gives you a way to focus on the information and helps you pay attention when you read or listen.”

Try using this strategy tonight when you do your homework, or in your next class. Let me know how it goes!”

Today we tell a traditional American story called a “tall tale.” A tall tale is a story about a person who is larger than life. The descriptions in the story are exaggerated – much greater than in real life. This makes the story funny. Long ago, the people who settled in undeveloped areas in America first told tall tales. After a hard day’s work, people gathered to tell each other funny stories.

Each group of workers had its own tall tale hero. Paul Bunyan was a hero of North America’s lumberjacks, the workers who cut down trees. He was known for his strength, speed and skill. Tradition says he cleared forests from the northeastern United States to the Pacific Ocean.

Some people say Paul Bunyan was the creation of storytellers from the middle western Great Lakes area of the United States. Other people say the stories about him came from French Canada.

Early in the twentieth century, a writer prepared a collection of Paul Bunyan stories. They were included in a publication from the Red River Lumber Company in Minnesota. It is not known if the stories helped the company’s sales, but they became extremely popular.

Here is Shep O’Neal with our story about Paul Bunyan.

Many years ago, Paul Bunyan was born in the northeastern American state of Maine. His mother and father were shocked when they first saw the boy. Paul was so large at birth that five large birds had to carry him to his parents. When the boy was only a few weeks old, he weighed more than forty-five kilograms.

As a child, Paul was always hungry. His parents needed tens cows to supply milk for his meals. Before long, he ate fifty eggs and ten containers of potatoes every day.

Young Paul grew so big that his parents did not know what to do with him. Once, Paul rolled over so much in his sleep that he caused an earthquake. This angered people in the town where his parents lived. So, the government told his mother and father they would have to move him somewhere else.



Paul Bunyan

Paul’s father built a wooden cradle -- a traditional bed for a baby. His parents put the cradle in waters along the coast of Maine. However, every time Paul rolled over, huge waves covered all the coastal towns. So his parents brought their son back on land. They took him into the woods. This is where he grew up.

As a boy, Paul helped his father cut down trees. Paul had the strength of many men. He also was extremely fast. He could turn off a light and then jump into his bed before the room got

dark.

Maine is very cold for much of the year. One day, it started to snow. The snow covered Paul's home and a nearby forest. However, this snow was very unusual. It was blue. The blue snow kept falling until the forest was covered.

Paul put on his snowshoes and went out to see the unusual sight. As he walked, Paul discovered an animal stuck in the snow. It was a baby ox. Paul decided to take the ox home with him. He put the animal near the fireplace. After the ox got warmer, his hair remained blue.



Babe the Blue Ox

Paul decided to keep the blue ox and named him Babe. Babe grew very quickly. One night, Paul left him in a small building with the other animals. The next morning, the barn was gone and so was Babe. Paul searched everywhere for the animal. He found Babe calmly eating grass in a valley, with the barn still on top of his back. Babe followed Paul and grew larger every day. Every time Paul looked, Babe seemed to grow taller.

In those days, much of North America was filled with thick, green forests. Paul Bunyan could clear large **wooded** areas with a single stroke of his large, sharp axe.

Paul taught Babe to help with his work. Babe was very useful. For example, Paul had trouble removing trees along a road that was not straight. He decided to tie one end of the road to what remained of a tree in the ground. Paul tied the other end to Babe. Babe dug his feet in the ground and pulled with all his strength until the road became straight.

In time, Paul and Babe the Blue Ox left Maine, and moved west to look for work in other forests. Along the way, Paul dug out the Great Lakes to provide drinking water for Babe. They settled in a camp near the Onion River in the state of Minnesota.

Paul's camp was the largest in the country. The camp was so large that a man had to have one week's supply of food when walking from one side of the camp to the other.

Paul decided to get other lumberjacks to help with the work. His work crew became known as the Seven Axemen. Each man was more than two meters tall and weighed more than one-hundred-sixty kilograms. All of the Axemen were named Elmer. That way, they all came running whenever Paul called them.



Loaves of sourdough bread

The man who cooked for the group was named

Sourdough Sam. He made everything -- except coffee -- from sourdough, a substance used in making sourdough bread.

Every Sunday, Paul and his crew ate hot cakes. Each hot cake was so large that it took five men to eat one. Paul usually had ten or more hot cakes, depending on how hungry he was. The table where the men ate was so long that a server usually drove to one end of the table and stayed the night. The server drove back in the morning, with a fresh load of food.

Paul needed someone to help with the camp's **finances**. He gave the job to a man named Johnny Inkslinger. Johnny kept records of everything, including wages and the cost of feeding Babe. He sometimes used nine containers of writing fluid a day to keep such detailed records.

The camp also was home to Sport, the **Reversible Dog**. One of the workers accidentally cut Sport in two. The man hurried to put the dog back together, but made a mistake. He bent the animal's back the wrong way. However, that was not a problem for Sport. He learned to run on his front legs until he was tired. Then, he turned the other way and ran on his back legs.

Big mosquitoes were a problem at the camp. The men attacked the insects with their axes and long sticks. Before long, the men put barriers around their living space. Then, Paul ordered them to get big bees to destroy the mosquitoes. But the bees married the mosquitoes, and the problem got worse. They began to produce young insects. One day, the insects' love of sweets caused them to attack a ship that was bringing sugar to the camp. At last, the mosquitoes and bees were defeated. They ate so much sugar they could not move.

Paul always gave Babe the Blue Ox a thirty-five kilogram piece of sugar when he was good. But sometimes Babe liked to play tricks. At night, Babe would make noises and hit the ground with his feet. The men at the camp would run out of the buildings where they slept, thinking it was an earthquake.

When winter came, Babe had trouble finding enough food to eat. Snow covered everything. Ole the **Blacksmith** solved the problem. He made huge green sunglasses for Babe. When Babe wore the sunglasses, he thought the snow was grass. Before long, Babe was strong and healthy again.

One year, Paul's camp was especially cold. It was so cold that the men let their facial hair grow very long. When the men spoke, their words froze in the air. Everything they said remained frozen all winter long, and did not melt until spring.

Paul Bunyan and Babe left their mark on many areas. Some people say they were responsible for creating Puget Sound in the western state of Washington. Others say Paul Bunyan and Babe cleared the trees from the states of North Dakota and South Dakota. They prepared this area for farming.

Babe the Blue Ox died in South Dakota. One story says he ate too many hot cakes. Paul buried his old friend there. Today, the burial place is known as the Black Hills.

Whatever happened to Paul Bunyan? There are lots of stories. Some people say he was last seen in Alaska, or even the Arctic Circle. Another tradition says he still returns to Minnesota every summer. It says Paul moves in and out of the woods, so few people ever know that he is there.

You have just heard the story of Paul Bunyan. It was adapted for Special English by George Grow. Your narrator was Shep O'Neal. Join us again next week for another American story, in Special English, on the Voice of America. This is Faith Lapidus.

Words in This Story

wooded - *adj.* covered with trees

reversible - *adj.* having two sides that can be used

finances - *n.* matters relating to money and how it is spent or saved

blacksmith - *n.* a person who makes or repairs things made of iron (such as horseshoes)

Now it's your turn. Do you know a tall tale from your culture? Does the hero of the story have unusual size or strength?

About the CALLA Approach

The Cognitive Academic Language Learning Approach (CALLA) is an instructional model for second and foreign language learners based on cognitive theory and research.

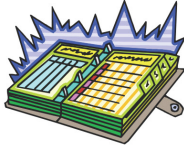



CALLA integrates instruction in priority topics from the content curriculum, development of the language skills needed for learning in school, and explicit instruction in using learning strategies for academic tasks.

The goals of CALLA are for students to learn essential academic content and language and to become independent and self-regulated learners through their increasing command over a variety of strategies for learning in school. CALLA can be used in ESL, EFL, bilingual, foreign language, and general education classrooms.






CALLA was developed by Anna Uhl Chamot and J. Michael O'Malley, and is being implemented in approximately 30 school districts in the United States as well as in several other countries.

See a list of language learning strategies below.







Metacognitive Strategies

CALLA CONTENT AND LANGUAGE LEARNING STRATEGIES		
STRATEGY	DESCRIPTION	
METACOGNITIVE STRATEGIES		
Plan / Organize	 <p>Planner</p>	<p>Before beginning a task:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Set goals. -Plan the task or content sequence. -Plan how to accomplish the task (choose strategies). -Preview a text.
Monitor / Identify Problems	 <p>Check</p>	<p>While working on a task:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Check your progress on the task. -Check your comprehension as you use the language. Do you understand? If not, what is the problem? -Check your production as you use the language. Are you making sense? If not, what is the problem?
Evaluate	 <p>I did it!</p>	<p>After completing a task:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Assess how well you have accomplished the learning task. -Assess how well you have used learning strategies. -Decide how effective the strategies were. -Identify changes you will make the next time you have a similar task to do.
Manage Your Own Learning	 <p>Pace Yourself</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Determine how you learn best. -Arrange conditions that help you learn. -Seek opportunities for practice. -Focus your attention on the task.


Task-Based Strategies

CALLA CONTENT AND LANGUAGE LEARNING STRATEGIES		
STRATEGY	DESCRIPTION	
TASK-BASED STRATEGIES		
		
Use Background Knowledge	 I know.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Think about and use what you already know to help you do the task. - Make associations between new information and your prior knowledge. -Use new information to clarify or modify your prior knowledge.
Make Inferences	 Use Clues	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Use context and what you know to figure out meaning. -Read and listen between the lines. -Go beyond the text to understand its meaning.
Make Predictions	 Crystal Ball	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Anticipate information to come. -Make logical guesses about what will happen in a written or oral text. -Make an estimate (math). -Make a hypothesis (science).
Personalize	 Me	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Relate new concepts to your own life, to your experiences, knowledge, beliefs and feelings.


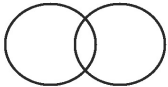


Task-Based Strategies

CALLA CONTENT AND LANGUAGE LEARNING STRATEGIES		
STRATEGY	DESCRIPTION	
TASK-BASED STRATEGIES		
Transfer / Use Cognates	 Coffee/Café	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Apply your linguistic knowledge of other languages (including your native language) to the target language. -Recognize cognates.
Substitute / Paraphrase	 Make it work	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Use a synonym or descriptive phrase for unknown words or expressions.
  USE YOUR SENSES		
Use Images	 See it in your mind	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Use or create an actual or mental image to understand and/or represent information. -Use or draw a picture or diagram.
Use Sounds	 Sound Out	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Say or read aloud a word, sentence, or paragraph to help your understanding. -Sound out/vocalize. - Use your "mental tape recorder" to remember sounds, words, phrases, and/or conversations.



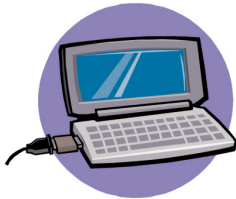


Task-Based Strategies

CALLA CONTENT AND LANGUAGE LEARNING STRATEGIES		
STRATEGY	DESCRIPTION	
TASK-BASED STRATEGIES		
Use Your Kinesthetic Sense		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> --Act out a role, for example, in Readers' Theater, or imagine yourself in different roles in the target language. -Use real objects to help you remember words, sentences, or content information.
 USE YOUR ORGANIZATIONAL SKILLS 		
Find/Apply Patterns	 <p>abacus</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Apply a rule. -Make a rule. -Recognize and apply letter/sound, grammar, discourse, or register rules. -Identify patterns in literature (genre). -Identify patterns in math, science, and social studies.
Classify/Sequence	 <p>Life cycle</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Categorize words or ideas according to attributes. -Classify living things; identify natural cycles. -Identify order and sequences in math, science, and social studies. -Sequence events in history.

Task-Based Strategies

CALLA CONTENT AND LANGUAGE LEARNING STRATEGIES		
STRATEGY	DESCRIPTION	
TASK-BASED STRATEGIES		
Take Notes	 <p>PDA</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Write down important words and ideas while listening or reading. -List ideas or words to include in speaking or writing..
Use Graphic Organizers	 <p>A Venn diagram</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Use or create visual representations (such as Venn diagrams, time lines, webs, and charts) of important relationships between concepts.
Summarize	 <p>Main Idea</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Create a mental, oral, or written summary of information.
Use Selective Attention	 <p>Focus</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Focus on specific information, structures, key words, phrases, or ideas.

Task-Based Strategies

CALLA CONTENT AND LANGUAGE LEARNING STRATEGIES		
STRATEGY	DESCRIPTION	
TASK-BASED STRATEGIES		
 		
USE A VARIETY OF RESOURCES		
Access Information Sources	 Look it up!	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Use the dictionary, the internet, and other reference materials. -Seek out and use sources of information. -Follow a model -Ask questions
Cooperate	 Together	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Work with others to complete tasks, build confidence, and give and receive feedback.
Talk Yourself Through It (Self-Talk)	 I can do it!	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Use your inner resources. Reduce your anxiety by reminding yourself of your progress, the resources you have available, and your goals.