Paul Bunyan: The Invention of an American Legend

by Noah Van Sciver

TOON Graphics
Grades = 3-5
F&P Reading Level = T
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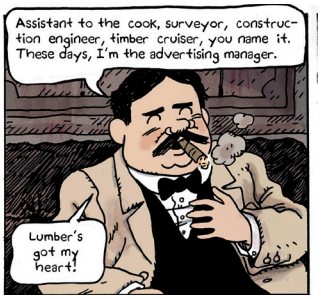
CCSS-aligned Guided Reading Lesson Plan

Standards indicated for grades 3-5 – (See page 10-11 for other grades.)

Overview	Readers will learn about the Paul Bunyan legend and the real story behind it.
Subject	History
Grade Level	3-5
Objectives	To help children learn about the tradition and origin of tall tales. To help children understand that the Paul Bunyan legend was the creation of a logging company—that anything they read might have an agenda behind it. To help children understand how logging companies acquired the lands they exploited. To help children understand the effects of logging on Indigenous people, their lands, and their cultures. To help children gain an understanding of the variety of ways text and images work together to bring out the underlying ideas driving an informational or literary narration.
	VERBAL EXPRESSION
RI.3.1, RI.3.7, RI.3.10, RI.4.1, RI.4.7, RI.4.10, RI.5.1, RI.5.10, RL.3.1, RL.3.3, RL.3.6, RL.4.1, RL.4.2, RL.5.1, RL.5.2	Page 4: What do you learn on this page about the man who is speaking?

RI.3.1, RI.3.4, RI.3.7, RI.3.10, RI.4.1, RI.4.4, RI.4.7, RI.4.10, RI.5.1, RI.5.4, RI.5.10, RL.3.1, RL.3.4 RL.4.1, RL.4.4, RL.4.7, RL.5.1, RL.5.4, RL.5.7

What do you think a **timber cruiser** does? What is the man's job now? [1]



RI.3.1, RI.3.4, RI.3.7, RI.3.10, RI.4.1, RI.4.4, RI.4.7, RI.4.10, RI.5.1, RI.5.4, RI.5.10, RL.3.1, RL.3.4, RL.4.1, RL.4.4, RL.4.7, RL.5.1, RL.5.4, RL.5.7

What do you think **old growth** is?

RI.3.1, RI.3.4, RI.3.7, RI.3.10, RI.4.1, RI.4.4, RI.4.7, RI.4.10, RI.5.1, RI.5.4, RI.5.10, RL.3.1, RL.3.4, RL.4.1, RL.4.4, RL.4.7, RL.5.1, RL.5.4, RL.5.7

Page 8: What is a **stand**?[3]

RI.3.1, RI.3.7, RI.3.10, RI.4.1, RI.4.10, RI.5.1, RL.3.1, RL.4.1, RL.5.1

What has happened to the north woods after twenty years of lumbering?[4]

RI.3.3, RI.3.7, RI.3.8, RI.4.3, RI.4.7, RL.3.7, RL.4.7, RL.5.7

Why is **MOST OF THE TREES ARE GONE!** in capital letters and boldface? Where else do you see words in all capital letters and/or boldface in the book? Why do you think those words are shown that way?[5]

RI.3.1, RI.3.7, RI.3.8, RI.4.1, RI.4.7, RI.5.1, RI.5.3, RI.5.6, RL.3.1, RL.3.3, RL.3.7, RL.4.1, RL.4.7, RL.5.1, RL.5.7

Later on: How do the other passengers react to the man's stories about Paul Bunyan? How can you tell?[6]

RI.3.1, RI.3.7, RI.3.8, RI.4.1, RI.4.7, RI.4.8, RI.5.2, RI.5.3, RL.3.1, RL.3.3, RL.3.7, RL.4.1, RL.4.2, RL.4.6, RL.4.7, RL.5.1, RL.5.2, RL.5.6, RL.5.7

What would you say is the role of the man in the yellow checked shirt in this book? How about the train conductor? Explain your answer with examples from the book.[7]

RI.3.1, RI.3.6, RI.3.7, RI.4.1. RI.4.7, RL.3.1, RL.3.6, RL.3.7, RL.4.1, RL.4.6, RL.4.7, RL.5.1, RL.5.6, RL.5.7

What is your favorite Paul Bunyan story that the man tells? Why?

RI.3.1, RI.3.3, RI.3.4, RI.3.7, RI.4.1, RI.4.3, RI.4.4, RI.4.7, RI.5.2, RI.5.3, RI.5.4, RI.5.10, RL.3.1, RL.3.4, RL.4.1, RL.4.4, RL.5.1, RL.5.3, RL.5.4

Page 36: What is **clear cutting**? How has it affected the lands of Indigenous peoples?

RI.3.1, RI.3.7, RI.4.1, RI.4.7, RI.5.1, RL.3.1, RL.3.2, RL.3.7, RL.4.1, RL.4.6, RL.4.7, RL.5.1, RL.5.6, RL.5.7

Pages 36-37: How did the Native peoples think about trees? How do you know?

RI.3.1, RI.3.2, RI.3.3, RI.3.7, RI.4.1, RI.4.2, RI.4.3, RI.4.7, RI.4.8, RI.5.1, RI.5.2, RI.5.3, RI.5.8, RL.3.1, RL.3.2, RL.3.7, RL.4.1, RL.4.2, RL.4.7 RL.5.1, RL.5.2, RL.5.6

How were lumber companies able to acquire the land to cut down the trees?

RI.3.2, RI.3.6, RI.3.10, RI.4.2, RI.4.8, RI.4.10, RI.5.2, RI.5.10, RL.3.1, RL.3.6, RL.4.1, RL.4.2, RL.5.1, RL.5.2

What would you say are the main ideas of this book? Why do you think so? Use evidence from the book to support your answer.

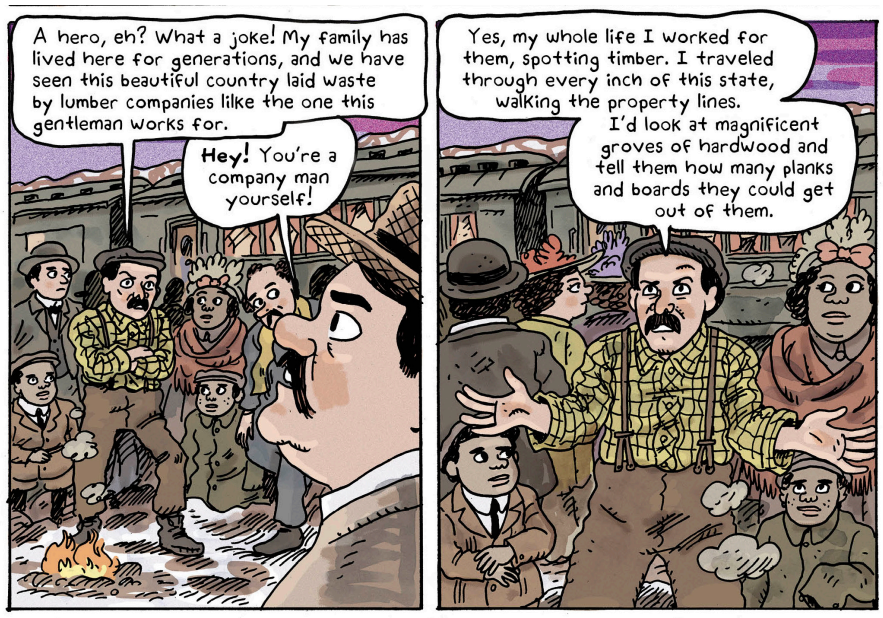
Why are trees important? Explain your answer.

Trees make oxygen. They provide food and habitats for many kinds of animals. They provide fruits and nuts. They make shade. Furniture, paper, cardboard, and many other things are made from wood from trees. Wood is used for floors and for building houses and other structures.

VISUAL EXPRESSION

RI.3.1, RI.3.7, RI.4.1, RI.4.7, RI.5.3, RL.3.1, RL.3.3, RL.3.6, RL.3.7, RL.4.1, RL.4.2, RL.4.3, RL.4.6, RL.4.7, RL.5.1, RL.5.2, RL.5.3, RL.5.6, RL.5.7

How is the man in the yellow shirt dressed differently from the other passengers (besides his yellow shirt)? Why do you think this is so?



Emanata

RI.3.7, RI.4.7, RL.3.7, RL.4.7, RL.5.7

Lines and squiggles emanating from a character to represent something about the character are called emanata. They can be used for objects, too.
What do you think the emanata in the following panels tell us?
Page 11, panel 1(Don't forget the puff of smoke at the bottom!)
Page 12, panel 2 (lines) and panel 3 (drops of sweat)
Page 29 (smoke/steam, drops of sweat)
Page 32 (question marks)
Page 33, bottom right (three curved lines next to Paul Bunyan)
Page 34 (steam, drops of sweat)
Page 35, panel 1 (red lines, beads of perspiration)
Page 37 (beads of perspiration)

Besides the emanata, how else does the author show Joe's strength?

The sudden change of background color, the yellow patch of light, the X's in the other man's eyes, the angles of the bodies, Joe's fists.

Fill a piece of paper or two with characters with emanata of your own. See if your classmates can figure out what your emanata wish to communicate.

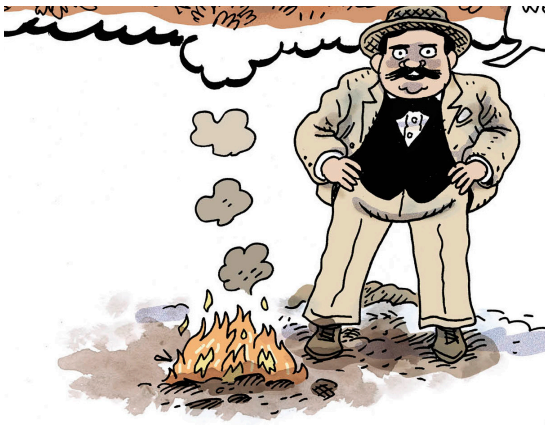
RI.3.7, RI.4.7, RL.3.7, RL.4.7, RL.5.7

Do you notice how much alike the faces of the man telling the story and of Paul Bunyan look? Why do you think this is so?

This may reinforce the relationship between the lumber companies and the creation of the Paul Bunyan legend. The two men are even standing alike on page 15, as the man tells the story.

RI.3.7, RI.4.7, RL.3.7, RL.4.7, RL.5.7

Notice how the author/artist uses many **insets** (small panels set into larger ones). Most have square borders (e.g., page 29), one has none (page 17), and two have a different kind of border (page 33). Do you have any thoughts why this might be so?



RI.3.7, RI.4.7, RL.3.7, RL.4.7, RL.5.7

On page 15, notice how the puffs of smoke from the fire work like a thought balloon (or **internal dialogue**). It makes it look as though the fire is telling the story. You can see this again on page 23. In a sense, the fire is telling the story, because if the train hadn't broken down and people hadn't started the fire, they wouldn't be all together to hear the story. And the fire was made from pieces of wood.

RI.3.7, RI.4.7, RL.3.7, RL.4.7, RL.5.7

Notice the position of the hands throughout the book. How do they help to reinforce the meaning of what the characters are saying or thinking?

Angles

RI.3.7, RI.4.7, RL.3.7, RL.4.7, RL.5.7

Notice on page 18 (panel 1) and page 23 how the dramatic angle upward emphasizes Paul Bunyan's height. (The small figure on the bottom left of page 24 does this, too.)

On page 28, the angle looking down on Babe emphasizes how heavy the load on Babe's back is.

Color

RI.3.7, RI.4.7, RL.3.7, RL.4.7, RL.5.7

How does the author use color to show that time has passed from the beginning of the book to the end?

RI.3.7, RI.4.7, RL.3.7, RL.4.7, RL.5.7

Why is Babe purple on page 29?

RI.3.7, RI.4.7. RL.3.7, RL.4.7, RL.5.7

What do the color changes in Babe show on page 34? Notice how the plain, white background makes the action and drama of the moment stand out. The plain, orange background on page 11 (panel 1) has the same effect. At what other moments is color used as an expressive element in this book, standing out from the book's overall color palette?

The background on page 13, the sky on pages 22-23, for example.

RI.3.7, RI.4.7 RL.3.7, RL.4.7, RL.5.7

There are very few bright colors in this book. Why might that be?

Perhaps to indicate that despite the humor, there are serious issues raised in the book.