

LEARNING, ACTIVITIES AND RESOURCES FOR GULLIBLE GUS

by Maxine Rose Schur

TALL TALES

A tall tale is a story about unbelievable things but told as if it were true. The tall tale is a type of American folk literature. Some people think that tall tales began in the bragging contests among cowboys. Tall tales are sometimes about real people but their stories are exaggerated. You might want to introduce children to some famous tall tales, such as stories about Pecos Bill, Paul Bunyan, John Henry, Steamboat Annie and Johnny Appleseed.

SYNONYMS

Teach or remind the children that a **synonym is a word that means the same or nearly the same as another word.**

For example, near and close or fast and quick or throw and toss. Ask kids how many synonyms they can think of.

FOR STARTERS (AND FOR FUN!), HERE ARE SYNONYMS FROM GULLIBLE GUS FOR THINGS THAT ARE NOT TRUE:

hogwash, malarkey, tarradiddle, poppycock, baloney, flapdoodle, hokum, fiddle-faddle

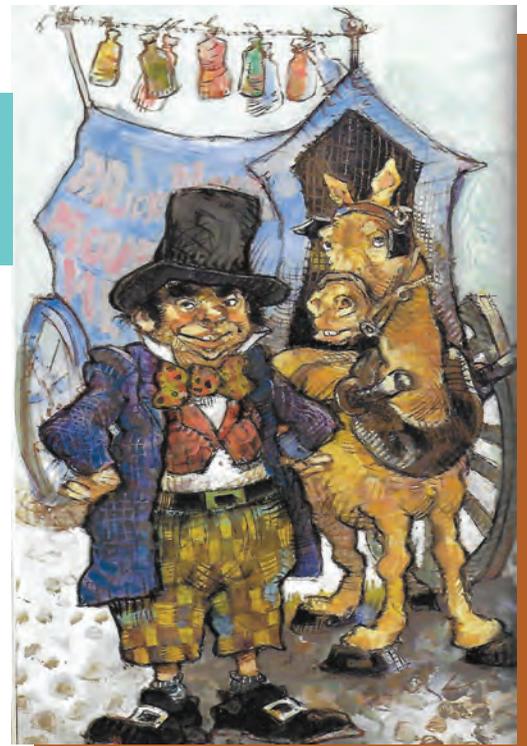
To discover some fun activities to delve deeper into synonyms, check out this site:

<https://www.teachstarter.com/us/blog/teaching-synonyms-in-the-classroom-us/>

Also, here's a short video: **Synonyms for Kids**

FUNNY-SOUNDING WORDS

Words are fun! It's especially fun to say certain words aloud simply because they sound funny. Here are 20 funny-sounding words with their synonyms from Gullible Gus. These words are especially fun to say! Have children use one in a sentence. Ask whether they can think of other words they know that sound funny and are fun to say? Can they make up a funny-sounding word and give it their own definition?



Cantankerous

cranky grumpy, grouchy

Flapdoodle

nonsense

Thunderation

In any situation whatsoever

Hogwash

nonsense, rubbish, hooey

Bamboozled

fooled, deceived, hoodwinked, duped

Babble

blabber, chatter, gibberish

Hooey

hogwash, hokum, claptrap

Fiddle-faddle

silly insignificant nonsense

Chucklehead

a stupid person

Hog wallow

land that has become sunken by hogs wallowing in the mud, or by rain

Mush-mouthed

not speaking clearly, mumbly

Malarkey

nonsense, drivel, hogwash, claptrap

Poppycock

nonsense, rubbish, claptrap

Topsy-turvy

confused, disordered, disorganized

Nincompoopery

foolishness, silliness

Skittery

restless, skittery, easily scared, unpredictable

Taradiddle

a lie, a whopper, a fib

Hokum

nonsense, humbug, hooey, twaddle

Whopper

a big lie

Jabber

to talk rapidly but with little sense, babble, chatter

Tumbleweed

a plant that breaks away from its roots in the autumn and is driven about by the wind as a light rolling mass



IDIOMS

Idioms are a group of words that have a meaning you wouldn't understand just from the individual words. Common idioms are “raining cats and dogs,” “beat around the bush,” “cost an arm and a leg”, “giving someone a cold shoulder”, “hearing it through the grapevine” and “killing two birds with one stone.” Gullible Gus is full of some known as well as original idioms and some of these are listed below. Children could be encouraged to come up with more common idioms and to make up some of their own idioms as well.

Their jokes made him

sadder than dry soup.

It made him as

furious as hot fat in a frypan.

She fled

***faster than a tumbleweed on
a windy day.***

You've gotten

too smart for your own good.

I'd be

leg pulling

if I didn't allow as how you're looking tired.

Folks who'd never talked to each other were now

jabbering together like jaybirds.

They crashed down around Diamond Tooth,

corralling him like a bull in a pen.

The town went downhill

faster than a buttered boulder.

The town had

***run down like a clock that no
one had bothered to wind.***

You'll be so

itching to buy 'em,

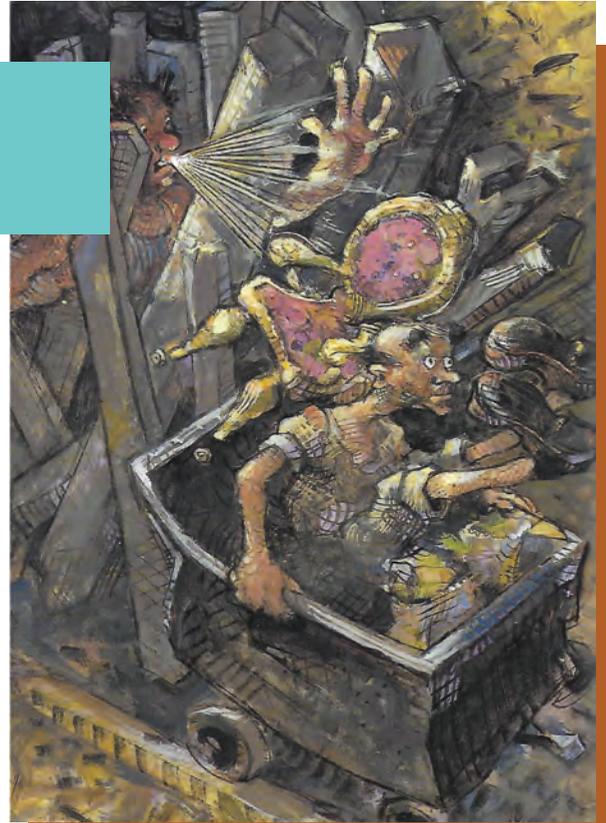
I'll have to throw in a complimentary can of flea powder

Laughs kept escaping from the corners of his mouth
like naughty children sneaking out of school.

EXAGGERATION

Tall Tales are funny because the characters and events are so exaggerated. For example, ask kids whether they think Cantankerous Clem's stomach really rumbled as loud as the Durango Express train? Well maybe not, but you can point out that we actually use exaggerations all the time. Just read the following examples and they'll see that we often exaggerate just for emphasis.

“ **HE RAN FASTER THAN THE WIND.
I HAVE A TON OF HOMEWORK.
HE ATE LIKE A HORSE.
THIS IS THE WORST DAY OF MY LIFE.
THE BIKE COSTS A FORTUNE.
MY DAD WILL KILL ME IF HE FINDS OUT.
HE'S STRONG AS AN OX.
SHE'S THIN AS A RAKE.** ”



FUN ACTIVITY

Have kids make up their very own tall tales. Ask them to take an ordinary happening in their lives and tell or write it in an exaggerated way to make it wilder and funnier.

RESOURCES

Tall Tales Reading Comprehension-Passages and Organizer

These reading passages are wonderful for your students in 3rd, 4th and 5th grade to study these famous people including: Pecos Bill, Johnny Appleseed, Molly Brown and more!

Teaching Tall Tales in the Upper Grades

A great website with suggestions for tall tale books to read, tall tales and teach about figurative language

Tall Tale Packet

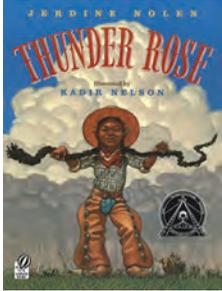
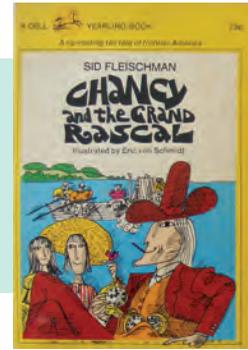
The Tall Tale Packet includes tall tale posters, graphic organizers, and writing prompts that are a great extension to your tall tale study. Changing characters, cause and effect, making connections, analyzing the setting, and more are covered in this packet.

MORE TALL TALES

Here are a few other tall tales to whet your children's tall tale appetite:

CHANCY AND THE GRAND RASCAL

A rip-roaring tall tale of frontier America, by Sid Fleischman, *Dell Yearling*, 1972.

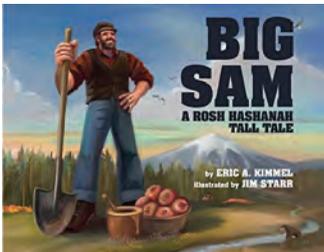


THUNDER ROSE

An American tall tale with an African American heroine who accomplishes amazing, larger than life, deeds, by Jerdine Nolan, *HMH Books for Young Readers* 2007.

DONA FLOR- A TALL TALE ABOUT A GIANT WOMAN WITH A GREAT BIG HEART

An original tall tale, peppered with Spanish phrases about a larger-than-life woman in Mexico by Pat Mora and Raul Colón, *Dragonfly Books*, 2010.

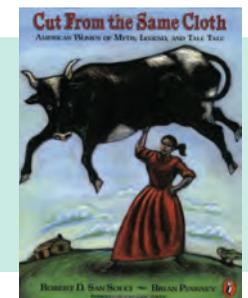


BIG SAM: A ROSH HASHANAH TALL TALE

How does Big Sam make a giant-sized challah for Rosh Hashanah? He digs an enormous hole in the ground to use as a mixing bowl. It's still there today we call it the Grand Canyon, by Eric A. Kimmel and Jim Starr, *Apples and Honey Press*, 2017.

CUT FROM THE SAME CLOTH: AMERICAN WOMEN OF MYTH, LEGEND, AND TALL TALE

Here you can learn about our American tall tale heroines: Star Maiden, Old Sally Cato, and Sweet Betsey from Pike, by Robert D. Sans Souci and Brian Pinkney, *Puffin Books*, 2000



LOOKING FOR YET MORE TALL TALES?

On the Reading Rocket site, you can find other classic American tall tales as well as tall tales from other countries.

[>> Reading Rocket Tall Tales Book List](#)