

Babe, the Blue Ox and Vocabulary

Section Objective:

- Reading skills: Monitor reading comprehension; evaluate an author's argument; and identify cause and effect
- Vocabulary: Analyze similes; understand synonyms and epithets; understand words from folktales; and understand idioms
- Literary skills: Understand the way a work of literature is related to its historical period



Paul Bunyan

Paul Bunyan is a larger-than-life folk hero. He represents strength, vitality, hard work, someone who can overcome all obstacles, especially physical ones.

He is considered part of the Western tall tale. There is extreme exaggeration in all the tales involving Paul Bunyan – gigantic mosquitoes, month-long rainstorms, mountain to mountain strides, etc.

Around 1910, newspaper men help popularized these Bunyan tales.

Supposedly, Paul Bunyan was born in Bangor, Maine. Evidently, he was a huge baby. The following would describe him:

- Five storks delivered him.
- He had to sleep in big lumber wagon.
- Frogs had to wear ear muffs whenever Paul screamed for his birthday.
- He had to be fed every two hours because his rumbling stomach could knock down the house.
- His huge size proved a help and a hindrance all his life.

Did You Know...?

There are statues of Paul Bunyan and Babe the Blue Ox in Bemidji, Minnesota. Paul Bunyan is about 18 feet tall and Babe is about 10 feet tall. They have served as tourist attractions since the Great Depression.



Babe, the Blue Ox

“Babe, the Blue Ox”

Cause and Effect

Paul Bunyan was out walking in the blue snow (cause), he then found a small blue ox (effect). When Paul took the blue ox home and named him Babe, the Blue Ox (cause), Babe grew to enormous proportions (effect). Because Babe was so huge and a hard worker (cause), he really helped out with all the chores, especially hauling logs (effect). However, since Babe liked to work mostly in the winter (cause), Paul painted the logging roads white in the summer so that Babe would think it was winter (effect). When Babe spotted a “pretty yellor” calf (cause), Paul had to buy Bessie, the yellor cow, because Babe would not work without her (effect). Bessie too grew huge (cause). She provided all the dairy products for the lumber camp (effect). Bessie and Babe got along well except for one area. Because Bessie liked the summer and grew weak in the winter (cause), Paul had her wear a pair of green goggles so that she thought it was summer (effect).

Folklore

Tall Tale: Exaggerations:

- The winter was so cold, that everything turned blue.

Babe:

- It took crows a whole day to fly from one horn to another.
- People could see Babe grow right before their eyes.
- When babe got an itch and tried to scratch with a tree.
- The tree fell over and begged for mercy.
- He would eat thirty bales of hay a day.

Bessie:

- Her eyelashes were so long they tickled the men.
- She could provide all the dairy needs for the camp.

Legend

Naturally, none of this tale is real, but it has been told so much over the years, that Paul Bunyan and the Blue Ox are considered legends because they seem so real.

Vocabulary Practice

“Babe, the Blue Ox”

Epithet

An **epithet** is an adjective , noun, or phrase , often a disparaging (lower in esteem) one, used to characterize some person or thing.

Example: “egghead” for intellectual.

An epithet is a descriptive word or phrase used to characterize a person , place, or thing.

Examples: “heartfelt thanks”

“just man”

“verdant (green) lawn”

Directions: Choose phrasing that seems fitting for **“Babe, the Blue Ox.”**

Sample: “teeny-tiny blue ox”

Growth Activities

1. Read more tales involving Paul Bunyan.

