

Suggested Internet Resources

Periodically, Internet Resources are updated on our web site at www.LibraryVideo.com

Note to Educators: Because firefighting often involves the loss of life, it is important to review these sites and direct your students accordingly.

- <http://www.american-firefighter.com/history/index.php>
This is a comprehensive web site of everything firefighting. A good resource for research.
- nyc.gov/html/fdny/html/home2.shtml
This is the official site of the New York City Fire Department. It has a lot of useful information about the history of firefighting in the city, along with information about fire safety and the events at the World Trade Center.

Suggested Print Resources

- Masoff, Joy, Barry D. Smith & Jack Reznicki. *Fire!* Scholastic, Inc., New York, NY; 2002.
- McGovern, Ann & Anna DiVito. *If You Lived 100 Years Ago*. Scholastic, Inc., New York, NY; 1999.
- Pope Osborne, Mary. *American Tall Tales*. Alfred A. Knopf, New York, NY; 1991.



Mose Humphreys

Grades K-4

Tall tales are stories in which the characters and their actions and adventures are extremely exaggerated, and the audience is aware of the exaggeration and therefore in on the joke. Most American tall tales grew out of specific parts of the country and are connected to particular lines of work: lumberjacks in the Midwest, cowboys in Texas, and frontiersmen and women in the South and along the Mississippi River. The tall tale is not static; it is a living thing. The tall tale is very much a part of American folklore tradition, constantly evolving as it is retold with the teller's own particular spin. American tall tales have been around for several hundred years. They began in the oral tradition, as a form of entertainment, and have continued to evolve ever since.

TEACHER'S GUIDE

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COMPLETE LIST OF TITLES

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|------------------------|-----------------------|
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Program Summary

In this program, students will meet the toughest man in New York City, fireman Mose Humphreys, who could cover an entire city block with one step and whose appetite was bigger than the island of Manhattan! Mose was born in the rough and tumble Bowery and grew up seeing the devastation that fires could cause. He decided, at an early age, to become a member of the Engine Company #40 and help protect folks from fires. Of course, Mose's large size meant certain accommodations had to be made at the firehouse, the invention of the fire pole, for instance, but nobody minded because Mose's bravery and ability to get to the fire first kept many a furious flame at bay. Mose became famous throughout New York City for his daring rescues, most notably saving an orphanage and all of its occupants. Despite the praise that Mose received, he always maintained that he was just doing his job.

Background to Mose Humphreys

Fire fighting in the early 19th century was difficult and dangerous work. At that time, most firefighters were volunteers, and the equipment they used was cumbersome and required great physical strength, stamina and speed. The engines were really nothing more than pumps on wheels that had to be dragged to the fire. Once there, if there were fire hydrants (very few existed at the time), hoses were hooked up to them. The men then had to hand-pump the water through the hoses. If there was not a fire hydrant, the ends of the hoses would be put into whatever body of water was available, and there, too the men would pump. They also often brought water trucks with them if they were unsure of whether there would be a source of water available. There was a lot of competition between the volunteer fire companies and their speed and endurance became not only a point of pride, but also a kind of spectator sport. Engine companies would race to see who could arrive at the fire first, and people would gather on the streets to cheer on their favorite company. Sometimes, fights over which company would get to use the fire hydrant broke out at the sites of fires. Fire companies often decorated their engines and gave them fanciful names. Mose Humphreys was a real person and volunteer firefighter who was born in the Bowery District of New York City around 1809. Mose Humphreys was an Irish printer who worked for the *New York Sun* and was the captain of Engine Company #40. It is said that he was "the toughest man in the nation's toughest city." Thematically, the tales of Mose Humphreys illustrate not only the willingness to do a dangerous job, but also the willingness to put others before oneself.

Pre-Viewing Discussion

- Using a large map, show students the area in which the Mose Humphreys story takes place.
- Have students brainstorm a list of qualities that they think firefighters would have. Encourage them to be aware of these qualities as they watch the program.
- Putting the needs of others before oneself is one of the themes of the Mose tale. Have students discuss instances when they or others have demonstrated this behavior.
- Remind students about the elements of fiction, such as characters, setting and plot (containing a problem and a solution), and explain the importance of exaggeration in tall tales.

Follow-up Discussion

- Have students discuss what motivated Mose to become a fireman. Encourage students to explore the relationship between personal experience and choice of career.
- Mose is known for his modesty. Have students discuss the nature of modesty and its opposite, immodesty. Under what circumstances is it wise to be modest? Under what circumstances is it acceptable to brag?
- Firefighting has changed dramatically from the time that Mose lived. Have students ponder how it may change within the next 100 years.

Follow-up Activities

- In order to help students more fully understand the job of the firefighter, have students take a trip to the local firehouse, or invite a real-life firefighter into your classroom. Have students write about what they have learned.
- At the end of the Mose tale, we hear that he may have gone to Hawaii to fight volcanoes. In small groups, have students write another tall tale that tells how Mose does this. Students can include illustrations with their new tall tales.
- In the story of Mose, we hear a barbershop quartet singing the praises of Mose Humphreys. Using a popular melody, have students write and perform a song that also sings the praises of the brave firefighter.
- Have students create a fire evacuation plan for their homes. Students should create maps of the inside of their houses or apartments and show how they and family members would safely get out of the house in case of an emergency. Encourage students to practice their evacuation plans with their families.
- There are many symbols associated with firefighting: the dalmatian, Maltese Cross, bagpipes and others. Have students research the significance of these symbols and create a book which illustrates their findings.
- Have students create a Mose Humphreys calendar. Each month of the calendar can illustrate a particular element of Mose's story, the tall tale, or fire history or safety.