

## Suggested Internet Resources

Periodically, Internet Resources are updated on our web site at [www.LibraryVideo.com](http://www.LibraryVideo.com)

- [www.americanfolklore.net/ss.html](http://www.americanfolklore.net/ss.html)  
This web site has links to tall tales and folklore from all 50 states and various regions of the country.

## Suggested Print Resources

- Borden, Louise & Erik Blegvad. *Sea Clocks: The Story of Longitude*. Simon & Schuster's Children's Books. New York, NY; 2004.
- Petrillo, Valerie. *Sailors, Whalers, Fantastic Sera Voyages: An Activity Guide of North American Sailing Life*. Chicago Review Press, Inc. Chicago, IL; 2003.
- Spinelli, Jerry. *Maniac Magee*. Little, Brown & Company, New York, NY; 1999. Modern-day tall tale about a boy dealing with race relations.
- Stetson, Emily. *40 Knots to Know: Hitches, Loops, Bends and Bindings*. Ideals Publications, Nashville, TN; 2002.



# Old Stormalong

## 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.

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### TEACHER'S GUIDE

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### COMPLETE LIST OF TITLES

- |                        |                       |
|------------------------|-----------------------|
| • ANNIE OAKLEY         | • MOSE HUMPHREYS      |
| • CREATING A TALL TALE | • OLD STORMALONG      |
| • DAVY CROCKETT        | • PAUL BUNYAN         |
| • JOHN HENRY           | • PECOS BILL          |
| • JOHNNY APPLESEED     | • REGIONAL TALL TALES |

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## Program Summary

In this program, students will travel the seven seas with the giant-sized salty sea dog, Old Stormalong and the crew of *The Courser*. Old Stormalong was born in Cape Cod, but he quickly outgrew his surroundings and headed for Boston, hoping to find a job shipboard. Stormalong proved his worthiness by becoming the lookout on *The Lady of the Sea* and saving her from certain destruction by wrestling a giant octopus with his bare hands! But Stormalong's extraordinary size kept him apart from the other men and his life was sad and solitary. Eventually, a new, gigantic clipper ship, *The Courser*, was built for Stormy and he navigated her around the world. Stormalong's quick thinking was said to be responsible for the creation of the White Cliffs of Dover, but he is most famous for racing and beating a steam-powered ship!

## Background to Old Stormalong

In the early and mid-19<sup>th</sup> century, New England was the shipping capital of the United States. Ships from around the world brought both goods and people to these ports, and American ships set sail from here carrying goods to Europe, China and Africa. The fastest cargo ships at that time were clipper ships. Many clippers had up to 35 sails. Even though they were fast for their time, it could take anywhere from 90 to 200 days to get to Africa or China. Clipper ships usually had a crew of 20 to 25 men, and their voyages were fraught with difficulty and danger. Hazardous weather, pirates, illness and plain, hard work made life on a clipper ship less than ideal. To pass the time and lighten the load, sailors often created and sang sea shanties. A popular one in the 1840s was called "Stormalong," and it tells the tale of a great sea captain. It is believed that this is the origin of the tall tales of Old Stormalong, the greatest sea captain who ever lived. Old Stormalong embodies the ruggedness, courage and ingenuity that was required of the seamen of yore.

## Pre-viewing Discussion

- 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.
- Using a large wall map, show students the areas in which the story of Old Stormalong takes place.
- Discuss with students the concepts of trade, importing and exporting and how important they were to America's growth and development as a nation.
- Have a discussion with students about sailing ships, the lives of sailors in the 19<sup>th</sup> century, and the types of attributes they had to have in order to live at sea.

## Follow-up Discussion

- Stormalong was often sad because he was so different from everyone around him. Encourage students to discuss how being or feeling different affects real people.
- Discuss with students how uniqueness can be turned to one's advantage. Can students think of any real-life examples of people who have unusual qualities that have helped them achieve something?

(Continued)

- Stormalong travels from the coast of New England to Kansas to try his hand at farming, but discovers that he is still unhappy. Have students discuss the connection between happiness/contentment and doing something that you love.

## Follow-up Activities

- *The Courser* had to be extra large to accommodate Old Stormalong. Pretend Old Stormy hired you to design a house for him. Where would the house be located? What would it look like? What special features would you include? Write a description of the house and include a detailed floor plan.
- Both *The Lady of the Sea* and *The Courser* were clipper ships that were powered by sails. In order to help students understand how sails work, have them make and test a model sailboat.
- Old Stormalong used a series of sailor's knots to defeat the giant octopus. Using lengths of rope have students learn some basic sailor's knots. Useful resource: [www.blacklakeny.com/boatknots.html](http://www.blacklakeny.com/boatknots.html)
- One of Stormalong's most famous adventures is his battle with an octopus. In small groups, have students research this animal to discover where it lives, what it eats, what its defense mechanisms are, and how it moves around. Students should include an illustration of the animal. Useful resource: [www.royalbcmuseum.bc.ca/programs/expert/octopus/index.html](http://www.royalbcmuseum.bc.ca/programs/expert/octopus/index.html)
- The plural form of the word octopus is octopi. In small groups, have students find other words that follow this pattern of irregular plurals.
- To help break up the monotony of long sea journeys, sailors often sang sea shanties. There are several shanties that are about Old Stormalong. Students can learn to sing a sea shanty and perform it for the classmates. Useful resource: [www.contemplator.com/sea/stormalong.html](http://www.contemplator.com/sea/stormalong.html)
- Stormalong was washed up on the shores of Cape Cod. Explain to students the meaning of this coastal landform. Using individual outline maps of the world and a large wall map, have students locate capes in other places, such as the Cape of Good Hope and Cape Canaveral. Useful resource: [www.youencyclopedia.net/cape.html](http://www.youencyclopedia.net/cape.html)
- When Old Stormalong washed up on the beach, Cape Codders fed him 600 gallons of clam chowder, a very popular dish in New England. Share some New England clam chowder and oyster crackers with your class.