



★ P R E S E N T S ★

# AMERICAN TALL TALES



PHOTO BY: ALAN LOUIS

## STUDY GUIDE

Adapted by  
**Jon Ludwig**

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## A Note from the Education Director

Dear Educator,

Welcome to the Center for Puppetry Arts and our production of *American Tall Tales* adapted and directed by Jon Ludwig. Founded in 1978, the Center is **Celebrating 25 Years** as a cherished cultural and educational resource in Atlanta. We value your patronage and are delighted that you have chosen us as a teaching resource. Your students are in for a big treat!

This study guide was designed to enhance student learning before and after your visit to the Center for Puppetry Arts. *American Tall Tales* is a musical celebration of storytelling, history and cultural diversity. This imaginative show is the perfect accompaniment to a thematic unit on Patriotism, The Wild West, Tall Tales or American Folklore.

All three areas of programming at the Center for Puppetry Arts (performance, puppet-making workshops and Museum) meet Georgia Quality Core Curriculum Standards (GA QCCS). To access the GA QCCS that have been correlated to each programming area according to grade level, click the links below or visit:

<http://www.puppet.org/perform/talltales.shtml>.

[American Tall Tales, Pre-K & K](#)

[American Tall Tales, Grade 1](#)

[American Tall Tales, Grade 2](#)

[American Tall Tales, Grade 3](#)

[American Tall Tales, Grade 4](#)

[American Tall Tales, Grade 5](#)

To access a complete list of GA QCC Standards for all grades and subjects, please visit [www.glc.k12.ga.us](http://www.glc.k12.ga.us).

Thank you for choosing the Center for Puppetry Arts for your study trip. We hope that your students' experience here will live on in their memories for many years to come.

Sincerely,

*Alan Louis*

Alan Louis

Education Director

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## Style of Puppetry

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**A**merican Tall Tales is performed by five skilled puppeteers using a variety of puppetry styles: hand, hand-and-rod and shadow puppets. One example of a **hand puppet** is Yayali the ogre. Because this character is so large, it hangs by cables suspended from the top of the stage. A puppeteer uses his hands to open and close Yayali's enormous mouth in synchronization with its voice. **Hand-and-rod puppets**, such as Hot Biscuit Betty, are operated by placing one hand inside the head of the puppet to turn the puppet's head and open and close its mouth, while the puppeteer provides the character's voice. The puppeteer's other hand operates the control rods attached to the puppet's hands. By coordinating the movements of a puppet's head, mouth and hands, a puppeteer can make a hand-and-rod puppet come alive. You will also see **shadow puppets** in our show. Shadow puppets like John Henry are flat figures performed on an overhead projector. The audience never really sees the puppet itself, but its enlarged silhouette image on the shadow screen. **Character voices** are all performed live by the cast. Each puppeteer wears a cordless microphone to amplify her/his voice. **Music** is performed live by Atlanta musicians Scott DePoy, Bryan Mercer and Nevin Miller.

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## Synopsis

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**S**tep right up, Ladies and Gentlemen, because Dr. Hezekiah Bigelow's Wild West Puppet Show is a-rollin' into town. Tall Tales is what he's telling and Tall Tale Tonic is what he's selling. All of the great American Tall Tale heroes are here: Paul Bunyan, Pecos Bill, Hekeke of the Miwok, and of course, John Henry. You'll see each one of their tales brought to life by puppets large and small in this musical extravaganza. Sure, the stories are exaggerated, but in the words of Dr. Bigelow, "Why be normal when you can be great?"

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## About the Stories

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### Tall Tales

**T**all tales are humorously exaggerated, outrageously improbable stories of the larger-than-life adventures of American frontiersmen and women. Originating in the 1820s, this genre is still popular today. Although tall tales are not true, they reference actual circumstances from America's past. Also included in our show is a dramatic Native American legend that tells how a heroic and clever young woman saved her people from a monster.



Illustration by Jason Hines

## About the Stories

### John Henry

The story of John Henry is based on the traditional American folk song, “The Ballad of John Henry.” The lyrics to the song were collected from individuals in the West Virginia mountains in the 1920s. After the Civil War, construction began on the first American transcontinental railroad. This milestone in transportation was completed May 10, 1869, in Promontory, Utah, when the Union Pacific tracks joined those of the Central Pacific Railroad. Travelers could now go from ocean to ocean in under a week instead of six months. The job of steel-driving men such as John Henry was to drive holes in solid rock so that explosives could be placed in the rock to help carve out tunnels in mountains. The steel-driving man used a sledgehammer to pound a drill, or “steel” into the rock. In time, steel-driving men were being replaced by steam-powered drilling machines that did the work much faster. A researcher at the University of Georgia has uncovered evidence that suggests that John Henry was a real person and that a contest between man and machine actually did take place near Leeds, Alabama, in 1887.

### Paul Bunyan

One of the best-known American folk heroes is the giant lumberjack, Paul Bunyan. It is believed that loggers created the Paul Bunyan legend in the bunkhouses of logging camps while huddled around glowing wood stoves on cold winter evenings. Before long, stories about Paul and Babe the Blue Ox spread throughout the logging camps of Michigan, Wisconsin and Minnesota. The lumberjacks heard and then retold the fables, often weaving in local or personal embellishments as they passed the tales on.



Illustration by Jason Hines



## About the Stories

### Hekeke

The legend of Hekeke (Hee-kee-kee) and the Ogre is a tale from the Miwok people of the Pacific Northwest. Miwok comes from the Indian word “miwu,” meaning people. They consider themselves descendants of the grizzly bear. The Miwok were one of the most populous groups in California, occupying areas from the Pacific Coast to the Sierra Nevada foothills, where Yosemite National Park is today. The Miwok were called the Ahwaneechee (Ah-wah-nee-chee). Before the arrival of European settlers, the Ahwaneechee tribe lived peacefully in Yosemite for nearly 4,000 years. Miwok men hunted deer and fished along the California coast. Miwok women gathered and processed acorns (the mainstay of their diet) and produced beautiful baskets (see Internet Resources). Miwok children did their share of the work gathering wood and carrying water. They loved hearing the elders tell stories like the legend of Hekeke.

### Pecos Bill

The legend of Pecos Bill, a mythical Texas cowboy, grew out of the imaginations of range hands who told tall tales to pass the time on cattle ranches. Pecos Bill had been separated from his family as a baby and raised by coyotes. He possessed superhuman qualities that were attributed to his animal upbringing. He later became an expert cattleman credited with inventing the branding iron to stop cattle rustling and the cowboy song to soothe the cattle. Atop his mustang, Widow Maker, Pecos Bill became the quintessential cowboy taming everything from a mountain lion to a tornado.

## JUST FOR FUN!

DR. HEZEKIAH BIGELOW'S

AMERICAN

TALL TALE



### Mix together in a punch bowl:

- 1 quart cranberry juice
- 1 large can pineapple juice
- 1 large can apple juice
- 1 can frozen grapefruit juice concentrate
- 1 quart sparkling water

add fresh ground ginger if desired  
Serve with ice. **It's mighty nice!**

# Bibliography

## General Tall Tale & American Patriotism related books:

- Bang, Molly Garrett. *Wiley and the Hairy Man: Adapted from an African-American Folktale*. Macmillan, 1976.
- Barmeier, Jim. *Life in America 100 Years Ago: Manners and Customs*. Chelsea House Publishers, 1997.
- Cohen, Caron Lee. *Sally Ann Thunder Ann Whirlwind Crockett*. Mulberry, 1985.
- Dolch, Edward W & Marguerite P. *Stories from Alaska*. The Garrard Press, 1961.
- Hoggan, Pat. *Johnny Appleseed Goes A'Planting (A Troll First Start Tall Tale)*. Troll Associates, 1997.
- Kellog, Steven. *Sally Ann Thunder Ann Whirlwind Crockett: A Tall Tale*. William Morrow & Company, 1995.
- Lisker, Tom. *Tall Tales: American Myths*. Milwaukee: Raintree Children's Books, 1977.
- Perl, Lila. *From Top Hats to Baseball Caps, From Bustles to Blue Jeans: Why We Dress the Way We Do*. Clarion Books, 1990.
- Pope, Mary. *American Tall Tales*. Knopf, 1991.
- Ryan, Pam Muñoz. *The Flag We Love*. Charlesbridge Publishing, 1996.
- Sherman, Josepha. *Trickster Tales: Forty Folk Stories from Around the World*. August House Publishers, Inc., 1996.
- Sandak, Cass R. *Patriotic Holidays*. Macmillan, 1990.
- Schwartz, Alvin. *Flapdoodle: Pure Nonsense from American Folklore*. HarperCollins Publishers, 1980.

## John Henry related books:

- Blumberg, Rhoda. *Full Steam Ahead: The Race to Build a Transcontinental Railroad*. Scholastic Books, 1996.
- Fisher, Leonard Everett. *Tracks Across America: The Story of the American Railroad 1825-1900*. Holiday House, 1992.
- Jensen, Patsy. *John Henry and His Mighty Hammer (A Troll First Start Tall Tale)*. Troll Associates, 1995.
- Keats, Ezra Jack. *John Henry: An American Legend*. Knopf, 1987.
- Lester, Julius. *John Henry*. Dial Books for Young Readers, 1994.
- McNeese, Tim. *America's First Railroads*. Crestwood House, Macmillan Publishing Co., 1993.

## Hekeke, Miwok People related books:

- La Pena, Frank. *Legends of the Yosemite Miwok*. Yosemite Association, 1993.
- Sans Souci, Robert D. (Compiler). *Cut From the Same Cloth: American Women of Myth, Legend and Tall Tale*. Philomel Books, 1993.

## Paul Bunyan related books:

- Emberly, Barbara. *The Story of Paul Bunyan*. Half Moon Books, 1994.
- Rounds, Glen. *Ol' Paul The Mighty Logger*. Holiday House, 1976.

## Pecos Bill related books:

- Ancona, George. *Fiesta USA*. Dutton, 1995.
- Gunderson, Mary. *Cowboy Cooking. (Exploring History Through Simple Recipes Series)* Capstone Press, 2000.
- Gunderson, Mary. *Oregon Trail Cooking. (Exploring History Through Simple Recipes Series)* Capstone Press, 2000.
- Jensen, Patsy. *Pecos Bill: The Roughest, Toughest, Best (A Troll First Start Tall Tale)*. Troll Associates, 1995.

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## Internet Resources

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<http://www.summerscvb.com/henry.htm>

Discover the historic connection to John Henry the Steel Drivin' Man in Summers County, West Virginia.

[http://www.ibiblio.org/john\\_henry/index.html](http://www.ibiblio.org/john_henry/index.html)

Investigate this interesting John Henry Web site created by graduate students at the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill.

<http://pbskids.org/lions/pecos/>

Read the rhyming story "Pecos Bill Cleans Up the West" on the PBS KIDS site.

<http://www.abcteach.com/Activities/pecosbill.htm>

Download a free Pecos Bill coloring page.

<http://www.paulbunyantrail.com/talltale.html>

Read the adventures of Paul Bunyan, the Giant Lumberjack.

<http://www.roadsideamerica.com/set/bunylist.html>

Take a virtual tour of giant Paul Bunyan statues across America.

<http://www.americanfolklore.net/ss.html>

Visit this comprehensive American Folklore site to locate folktales native to each of the 50 United States.

<http://mariposa.yosemite.net/woodland/miwok.htm>

Learn about Hekeke's tribe, the Miwok Indians of Yosemite.

<http://www.californiabaskets.com/pages/miwokhome.html>

See beautiful Miwok baskets while learning about Miwok life.

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## Learning Activities

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### **Pre-K & K: Fact or Fiction? A Paul Bunyan Group Activity**

GA QCC Standards covered: Kindergarten, Social Studies (Core Social Studies Skills): 25, 30; Language Arts, Oral Communication (Listening/Speaking): 3, 8; Written Communication (Reading): 13, 15, 23, 30, 31; Fine Arts, Visual Arts (Artistic Skills and Knowledge: Creating, Performing, Producing): 4.

**Objective:** Students will distinguish between statements that are true and statements that are make-believe. Students will recognize "fact" and "fiction" as word opposites.

**Materials:** Fact/Fiction Hatchets handouts, white cardstock, yellow and light blue crayons (or two other pale colors), scissors, jumbo craft sticks (tongue depressors), glue or masking tape.

**Procedure:**

1. Attend a performance of *American Tall Tales* or read *The Story of Paul Bunyan* by Barbara Emberly (see Bibliography).
2. Photocopy Fact /Fiction Hatchet handout onto white cardstock (one per student).
3. Have students cut out each of their hatchets.
4. Ask students to color the fiction hatchet yellow and the fact hatchet light blue.

## Learning Activities

5. Have students glue or tape a jumbo craft stick to the back of each hatchet sign to create a handle.
6. Discuss the difference between true and make-believe. You may want to show a fairytale book and a non-fiction book as concrete examples. Explain to students that something true is called a fact and something make-believe is known as fiction. Have students practice holding up their blue “fact” hatchets and then their yellow “fiction” hatchets.
7. Explain to students that first you will read a statement aloud pertaining to the legend of Paul Bunyan and that they will then be asked to hold up the corresponding hatchet that describes the statement as either fact or fiction.
8. Statements:
  - The Grand Canyon is in Arizona.
  - Paul Bunyan dug the Grand Canyon in one day and colored the walls with the crayons in his pockets.
  - Paul Bunyan liked to eat 231 pancakes for lunch, each one with a pound of butter and a quart of maple syrup.
  - Minnesota is one of the 50 states.
  - When Paul Bunyan was born, he weighed 105 pounds and had a beard. It took 12 storks to deliver him to his parents.
  - A stork is a type of bird.
  - Paul Bunyan was so big that he used a pine tree to comb his beard.
  - A lumberjack uses an ax to chop down trees.
  - The story of Paul Bunyan is an American Tall Tale.
  - Tall Tales are exaggerated stories that are not true.
  - An ox is a four-legged animal with horns.
  - Paul Bunyan’s ox Babe could drink a whole river until it was dry.

**Assessment:** Check to see if any students are frequently responding incorrectly. Repeat the exercise with a small group if necessary.

### 1st & 2nd Grade: Winter of the Blue Snow Fraction Activity

GA QCC Standards covered: First Grade, Mathematics, Number Sense & Numeration; Fractions & Decimals (Fractions): 2; Language Arts, Oral Communication (Listening/Speaking): 3. Second Grade, Mathematics, Number Sense & Numeration; Fractions & Decimals (Fractions): 3; Language Arts, Written Communication (Reading): 17.

**Objective:** Students will relate fractions (halves, thirds, fourths, etc.) to concrete and pictorial models and relate the concrete and pictorial models to the fractions.

**Materials:** Blue crayons, Winter of the Blue Snow handouts (one per student).

**Procedure:**

1. After reviewing fractions with students, distribute handouts and crayons.
2. Ask students to color the number of snowflakes blue that will represent the fraction given for each group. For example, since  $1/2$  is one out of two, one snowflake should be colored blue.

**Assessment:** Collect student handouts. Review for percentage of correct responses.

## Learning Activities

### **3rd & 4th Grade: Reading a U.S. Railroad Map**

GA QCC Standards covered: Third Grade, Written Communication (Reading): 1 6, 22; Social Studies, Core Social Study Skills (Information Processing): 25, 29; (Maps and Globes): 50, 53, 56. Fourth Grade, Language Arts, Written Communication (Reading): 15, 21; Social Studies, Core Social Study Skills (Information Processing): 30; (Maps and Globes): 57, 58.

**Objective:** Students will reference an online U.S. map to answer questions about contemporary railroad transportation.

**Materials:** Computers with Internet access, Making Tracks Across America handouts (one per student), pens or pencils.

**Procedure:**

1. Distribute handouts to students.
2. Students should go to <http://www.amtrak.com/pdf/national.pdf>.
3. Students should zoom in using the “+” sign on the toolbar across the top of the screen to better read the map. (A 200% increase in size is recommended.) The up, down and side-to-side arrows will help them navigate the map.
4. Students should read the questions in the handout and refer to the map to find the answers.
5. **Answers:** 1) red 2) Montreal; Canada 3) 5 stops 4) no 5) Cleveland, Ohio 6) no 7) both; southeast 8) south 9) no 10) south

**Assessment:** Collect student handouts. Review for percentage of correct responses.

### **5th & 6th Grade: Reading Comprehension Online: Pancakes Aren’t Just for Lumberjacks!**

GA QCC Standards covered: Fifth Grade, Language Arts, Written Communication (Reading): 1 6, 18, 19, 20, 23, 24, 35, 36. Sixth Grade, Language Arts (Reading): 32, 36, 40, 44, 48, 49.

**Objective:** Students will read an online article and answer content-related questions.

**Materials:** Computers with Internet access, Pancakes, Flapjacks and Griddlecakes handouts (one per student), pens or pencils.

**Procedure:**

1. Distribute student handouts.
2. Have students go to <http://www.epicurean.com/articles/ie3.html> and read the article titled “Pancakes, Flapjacks and Griddlecakes” by Hardy Haberman. (If computers are in short supply, print the article and photocopy one for each student).
3. When finished, ask students to answer the questions on the handout. Students may refer back to the article if necessary.
4. Discuss the answers with students. **Answers:** 1) Sunday 2) On hot flat rocks 3) A chemical (enzyme) change that results in souring or curdling in a food product over time 4) Corn meal; enslaved African farm workers 5) The thin flat blade on farming tool used for tilling or raking 6) Vermont 7) Latkie 8) A Kimchee pancake made with pickled cabbage; comes from Korea 9) Moo-Shoo 10) Because Newfoundlanders place small symbolic objects in pancakes that relate to the recipient’s future

**Assessment:** Collect student handouts. Review for percentage of correct responses.

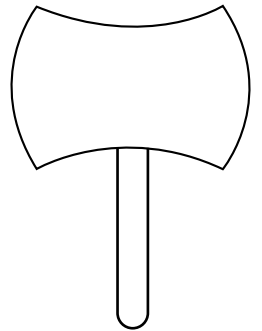
# Fact/Fiction Hatchets Sheet

## **Pre-K & K activity**

Directions for teachers: Photocopy onto white cardstock and cut out the hatchets below. See Pre-K & K Learning Activity for detailed instructions.

fact

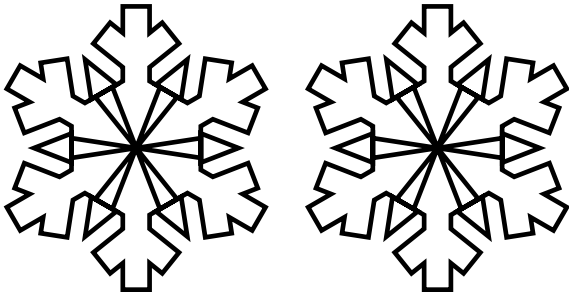
fiction



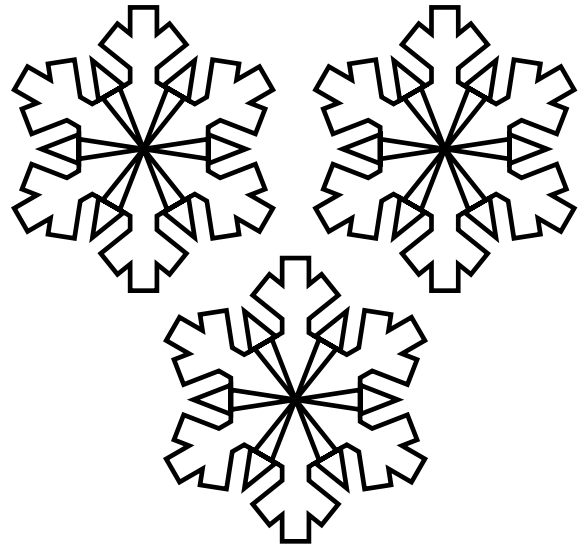
## Winter of the Blue Snow Fraction Activity

### 1st & 2nd grade activity

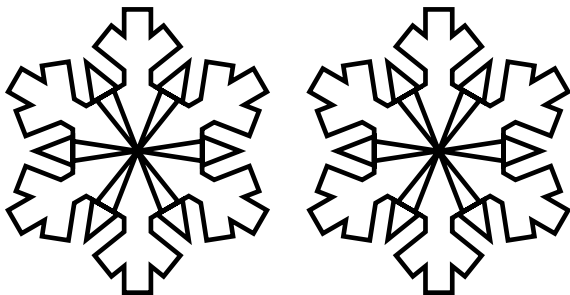
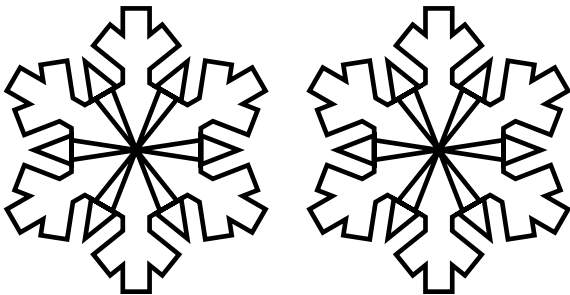
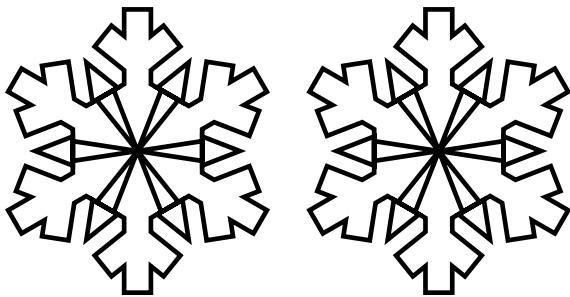
Directions: Color the correct number of snowflakes blue to represent the fraction shown for each group.



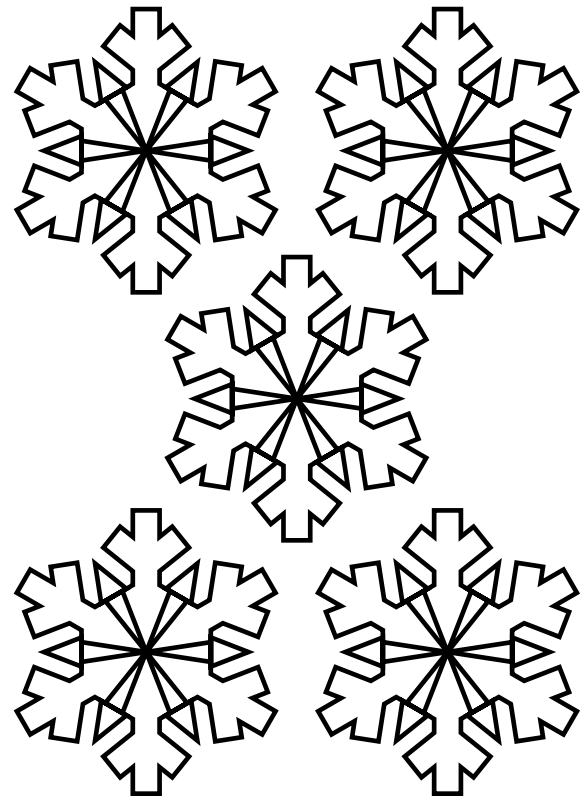
**1/2**



**2/3**



**6/6**



**1/5**

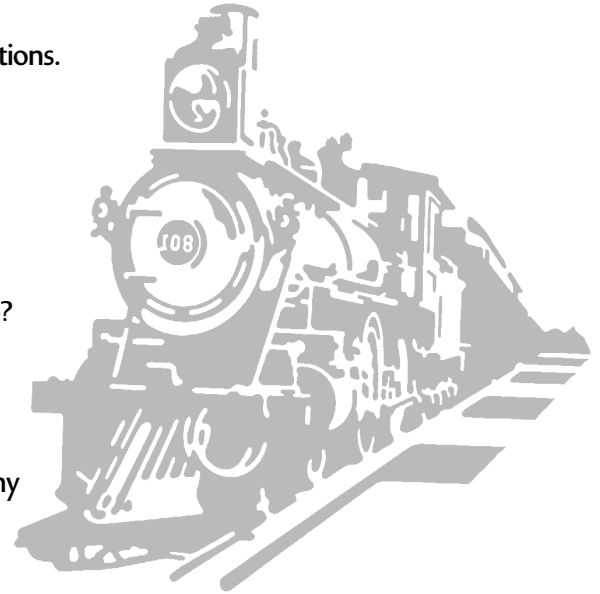
## Making Tracks Across America

### 3rd & 4th grade activity

**Directions:** Go to <http://www.amtrak.com/pdf/national.pdf>.

Using the railroad map enlarged to 200%, answer the following questions.

1. What color are the Amtrak rail lines on this transportation map?
2. What is the northernmost city that Amtrak travels to in the eastern part of the map?  
Is this city in the U.S. or Canada?
3. If you were traveling from Ft. Worth, Texas, to Oklahoma City, Oklahoma, how many stops would there be between the two cities?
4. According to this map, is there a quick way to get from Atlanta, Georgia, to Denmark, South Carolina, by train?
5. If you were traveling from Toledo, Ohio, to Buffalo, New York, you would stop in which lakeside city along the way?
6. According to this map, does Amtrak provide rail service from Yellowstone National Park in Wyoming to Badlands National Park in South Dakota?
7. If you were traveling from El Paso, Texas, to San Antonio, Texas, would you be traveling south, east or both (southeast)?
8. In which direction would you be traveling if you were going from Washington, DC, to Rocky Mount, North Carolina?
9. Is there a direct rail line connecting Tucson and Phoenix, Arizona?
10. Is San Diego, California, north, south, east or west of Los Angeles, California?



## Pancakes, Flapjacks and Griddlecakes

### 5th & 6th grade activity

**Directions:** Read the article “pancakes, Flapjacks and Griddlecakes” by Hardy Haberman at <http://www.epicurean.com/articles/ie3.html>. Answer the following questions about pancakes.

1. What day of the week does the author associate with eating pancakes?

2. How were the earliest pancakes probably cooked?

3. Look up the word “ferment.” What does it mean?

4. What were hoe cakes made of? Who made hoe cakes?

5. What is a hoe blade?

6. According to the author, which state produces the best maple syrup?

7. What is the name of the eastern European potato pancake?

8. What is a “Bindae Duk?” Where does it come from?

9. What do Americans call Chinese Mung Bean Pancakes?

10. How are “Shrove Tuesday” pancakes in Newfoundland like fortune cookies?

