#10036
THE SAGA OF WINDWAGON SMITH

DISNEY EDUCATIONAL PRODUCTIONS, 1971
Grade Level: 2-5
13 mins.
1 Instructional Graphic Enclosed

DESCRIPTION

The tall tale of former sea captain Windwagon Smith who arrives in a Kansas town on a sail-driven prairie schooner. His unique mode of transportation intrigues the town. While his modest-sized Conestoga wagon is a success, the town fathers' vision of fast transportation, combined with their greed for high profits, has unexpected results. Rex Allen narrates and sings this restored version.

ACADEMIC STANDARDS

Subject Area: Language Arts—Reading

- Standard: Uses reading skills and strategies to understand and interpret a variety of literary texts

    - Benchmark: Uses reading skills and strategies to understand a variety of literary passages and texts (e.g., fiction, nonfiction, myths, poems, fantasies, biographies, autobiographies, science fiction, tall tales, supernatural tales) (See INSTRUCTIONAL GOALS 1 and 3.)

    - Benchmark: Knows the defining characteristics of a variety of literary forms and genres (e.g., fiction, nonfiction, myths, poems, fantasies, biographies, autobiographies, science fiction, tall tales, supernatural tales) (See INSTRUCTIONAL GOALS 2.

Subject Area: Grades K-4 History—The History of People of Many Cultures Around the World

- Standard: Understands the folklore and other cultural contributions from various regions of the United States and how they helped to form a national heritage

    - Benchmark: Understands how stories, legends, songs, ballads, games, and tall tales describe the environment, lifestyles, beliefs, and struggles of people in various regions of the country (See INSTRUCTIONAL GOALS 1.)

INSTRUCTIONAL GOALS

1. To illustrate the story of Windwagon Smith.
2. To explore elements of tall tales.
3. To promote the reading of children's literature.

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

American tall tales are unique in the world of literature for the way in which humor and exaggeration are used to recount the exploits of legendary heroes. This exaggerated form of storytelling began in the 1800s as a way for early American settlers to bolster the pioneer spirit that was needed to face the dangers of the wilderness.

Tall tales include the traditional story elements of folktales: characters, setting, and plot. Some tall tale characters are real people whose exploits have been embellished by storytellers. Other characters are pure fiction. Most tall tales use the American frontier as the setting and most take place during the time period of American westward expansion.

All tall tales use humor, exaggeration, and acts of bravery as elements of the plot to explain how the main characters confronted the uncertainty of exploring the North American wilderness. Tall tales invited new retellings, with each narrator freely expanding favorite parts and incorporating his unique sense of humor.

VOCABULARY

1. board of directors
2. course
3. covered wagon
4. cruise
5. daughter
6. deck
7. freight
8. haul
9. maiden voyage
10. mast
11. mayor
12. prairie schooner
13. sail
14. steer
15. stowaway
16. tiller
17. twister
18. wheel
19. wind

BEFORE SHOWING

1. Discuss life during the frontier times. Consider what daily life was like and the hazards that people faced. Review sailing ships from that time period.
2. Read at least one of the following book versions about Windwagon Smith. Fill out the "Elements of a Tall Tale" chart. (See INSTRUCTIONAL GRAPHIC.) Discuss the elements.
   a. *When Windwagon Smith Came to Westport* by Ramon Maher.
   b. *Windwagon Smith* by Ennis Rees.
   c. *Mr. Yowder and the Windwagon* by Glen Rounds.
   d. *Windwagon Smith* by Edna Shapiro.

AFTER SHOWING

Discussion Items and Questions

1. Describe the town and region where the tall tale takes place.

2. Describe the prairie schooner that sailed into town. Compare and contrast it to a regular covered wagon.
3. Why did Captain Smith use seafaring language?
4. Who spoke to Captain Smith for the town?
5. Who did Captain Smith meet when he ordered food? What happened?
6. What made the people in Westport interested in building a bigger windwagon? What did the people in the town decide to do?
7. Who was allowed to go on the maiden voyage of the new bigger windwagon? What did Molly do when her father told her she couldn't go? Why?
8. Describe the trip that the windwagon took. Why did it end up going around in circles? How did the members of the board get off the windwagon? Who stayed on board?
9. What happened when the twister got to the windwagon?
10. What story did the people in the town tell after that?

Applications and Activities

1. Analyze the video of the tale by adding to the "Elements of a Tall Tale" chart. (See BEFORE SHOWING 2 and INSTRUCTIONAL GRAPHIC.)
2. Compare and contrast a book and the film version of the tale. Consider using a Venn diagram. Discuss why similarities and differences might exist.
3. Investigate more about Windwagon Smith. The story may be based on an incident involving Thomas Smith who did build a windwagon that crashed on the prairie.
4. Design your own version of a windwagon, making a detailed, well-labeled diagram showing what it would look like and how it would work.
   a. Construct a model using a shoebox fitted with wheels, fabric or paper sails, and a rudder.
   b. Set up a table fan, pretend the classroom floor is the prairie, and let the prairie schooner races begin.
5. Report on Windwagon Smith's adventures in the form of a newspaper article or in a mock TV newscast.
6. Create an original tall tale to tell the further adventures of Windwagon Smith that might include other innovations devised by the ingenious pioneer. Consider:
   a. What might he have rigged up to make covered wagons more comfortable and less bumpy?
   b. How could the wagons be adapted to allow them to more easily cross rivers or traverse ravines?
7. Write a tall tale based on the lives and inventions of real people, such as Ben Franklin, Eli Whitney, Thomas Edison, or Henry Ford.
8. Explain some of the unique phrases and unusual word choices in the program. Watch the video again and note seafaring expressions. Other examples include:
   a. "The townsfolk said nary a word."
   b. "He cleared his throat before he spoke."
   c. "A beautiful craft was she." (the daughter)

9. Watch the video again, pausing to write down some stanzas. Identify the rhyming words and the rhythm of the poem. Write some original rhyming lines to add to the story.

CMP RELATED RESOURCES

- *John Henry* #10028
- *The Legend of Johnny Appleseed* #10034
- *Paul Bunyan* #10029
- *Pecos Bill* #10030

World Wide Web

The following Web sites complement the contents of this guide; they were selected by professionals who have experience in teaching deaf and hard of hearing students. Every effort was made to select accurate, educationally relevant, and "kid safe" sites. However, teachers should preview them before use. The U.S. Department of Education, the National Association of the Deaf, and the Captioned Media Program do not endorse the sites and are not responsible for their content.

- **THE INTERACTIVE SANTA FE TRAIL**

http://www.ukans.edu/heritage/research/sft/

This site contains stories, biographies, Internet projects, maps, and links to other resources.

- **THE OREGON TRAIL**

http://www.isu.edu/~trinmich/Oregontrail.html

Look under "Fantastic Facts" and then "Weird Wagons" to see a picture of a wind-powered wagon.

- **WESTWARD HO!**

http://oncampus.richmond.edu/academics/education/projects/samplers/westward.html

This site has many activities and Web sites to help students learn about westward expansion.

- **THE WESTPORT HISTORICAL SOCIETY**

http://www.westporthistorical.org

Read the true history of the town of Westport and the people who were there.

- **TALL TALES**

http://www.hasd.org/ges/talltale/talltale.htm

Although this site doesn't have information specific to Windwagon Smith, it does have general information about tall tales and information about some other famous tall tale characters. It also has a tall tale template that can be copied and pasted into a word processing program to assist students in writing an original tall tale.

INSTRUCTIONAL GRAPHIC

- ELEMENTS OF A TALL TALE

Elements of a Tall Tale

Directions: List the elements of book versions in Column 1 and Column 2.
List the elements of the video version in Column 3.

	Column 1 Book Version	Column 2 Book Version	Column 3 Video Version
Character			
Time Period			
Setting			
Plot			
Use of Exaggeration			
Hazards			
Phenomena Explained			