

Year of No More Corn

by Helen Ketteman and Robert A. Parker

The Year of No More Corn is an ideal book to read aloud to a class. Following the read-aloud, the students may want to read it themselves. A poster of the book is included with this book. It should be displayed on the wall of the classroom at the eye level of the students so that they may read, re-read, look at the pictures and discuss it among themselves.



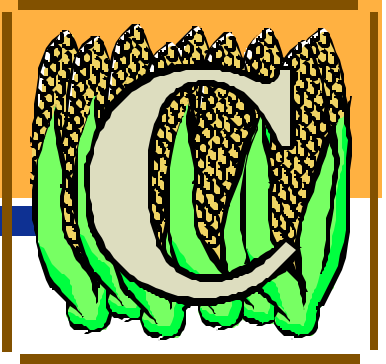
This story is a nineteenth century version an American tall-tale. Reminiscent of the time before mechanization in America, tall-tales were stories passed on by storytellers. Classic tall-tales about Paul Bunyan, Pecos Bill and John Henry posed these characters as heroes, saviors, and demigods. They exhibited the qualities of hard work, courage, strength, and cleverness during times when life was difficult. Whittling, cutting a piece of wood with a knife to make an object, was a familiar activity in many of the stories as it does in this one. Each time a story was told it came more alive and more exaggerated. Eventually, some of the stories became so exaggerated that there was little truth left in them, which pleased the audiences even more. Students aged 9-14 will thoroughly enjoy this tall-tale from America.

About the author and illustrator:

"Helen Ketteman has published two other picture books, **Not Yet**, **Yvette** and **Aunt Hilarity's Bustle**. She lives in Dallas, Texas.

"Robert Andrew Parker, well known for his fine art and illustrations, did pictures for Edna Mitchel Preston's **Pop Corn and Ma Goodness**, a Caldecott Honor Book. He lives in West Cornwall, Connecticut." From the jacket of the book.

Introducing the book to students:



You can begin to introduce the story by inviting the students to share what they already know about various aspects of the story. The discussion starters you use, will vary depending on the previous experiences of your students, but here are a few ideas:

What do you call your father's or mother's father? The boy in the story that we are going to read today calls this man his "Grampa".

Has anyone ever visited a farm? What is grown on the farms that you have visited? This story takes place on a farm where they grown corn (maize, in America it is called corn). Who eats corn? Why is it important?

Can anyone locate the United States for me on a map? (Use this question if you have a map or globe available in your class.) Can anyone locate the state of Indiana? Ohio? Illinois? (A map follows that maybe used.) These states are in the north central part of the United States. They are well known for their large farms. Indiana is were the story takes place. Indianapolis is the capital of Indiana but it is not where the story takes place. It is a large city and this story takes place in a rural area on a farm.

What is a natural disaster? Have there been any here, recently? A natural disaster involves the forces of nature - wind, rain, hail, drought, excessive heat, and destructional activities of animals, insects and birds. How have these natural disasters affected your life?

The Year of No More Corn, takes place on a farm in the state of Indiana in the United States. The author tells us that the story takes place in the year 1928. How many years ago was that? That was a time, before the big farms in America had tractors and the plowing was done with a plow pulled by a

Vocabulary for the Teacher:

Some of the words used in this story are not standard American English but rather a local venacular. Usually the students will understand this non-standard vocabulary from the context of the story. Most of this vocabulary is commonly understood by all Americans but is only used by people living in a certain region. Teachers may wish to ask the students to guess the meaning of these unusual words from the context of the story.

Listed below are some of the less common vocabulary from the story:

- • Beanie: name of the boy, may be analogous to bean or seed
- • Grampa: a shortened form of Grandfather
- • whittling, whittled: to cut a piece of wood with a knife to
- make an object.
- • poking out: (two word verb) sticking out or protruding.
- • reckon: think or believe.
- • pouting: to thrust out the lips in displeasure.
- • curled up: (two word verb) a position with the back curved and
- legs bent in close to the body.
- • leaned: to rest against.
- • patted: to tap lightly.
- • hail: small lumps of ice that fall from the sky, frozen rain.
- • elements: weather conditions.
- • kernels: the contents of a seed.
- • bunch of them: refers to a group of people.
- • receded: to move back or withdraw.
- • fierce: violent, cruel.
- • plumb out of the ground: not exactly vertical but up.
- • squeezing: to firmly grasp someone's hand.



- • Nosiree: slang, no sir slurred together with ___ for emphasis.
- • took to: (two word past tense verb) to begin.
- • popping: to burst or explode.
- • awful: exceedingly bad.
- • solitary: one, alone.
- • pecked: to strike with the beak of the bird.
- • waves: to move freely back and forth.
- • seasick: nausea and dizziness to due the motion of a boat.
- • livestock: domestic farm animals.
- • tuckered out: (two word verb, slang) tired.
- • poked: to push or prod.
- • bushels: a unit of dry measure containing 32 quarts (approximately 35 liters)
- • I figure: guess.
- • right as rain: as sure as it is that it will rain.

Describe the setting of the story.

What initial event did the author build upon throughout the story?

Was there a hero in the story? Describe his personality?

Name the natural disasters that occurred in the story?

What parts of this story may be exaggerated?

Why was every one so excited about the corn-trees?

What was Beanie's reaction to the story?

Did Beanie learn anything new from the story?

Extending the Story

Comprehension check after reading or listening to the story.

The class can be grouped. Each group retells the story in their own words. The members of the group can help each other with forgotten parts of the story. The group can select their favorite part of the story, draw a picture of it and write a few sentences explaining why they liked that part the best. These can be shared with the whole class later.



Write a Tall-Tale

Students can write their own tall-tales. They can be based on stories that their grandfathers or grandmothers have told them, traditional stories, or they can make up a story.

Each story should have a hero, who is hard working, clever and strong. The story can be written as it would be told using informal English, include descriptive language and contractions in the story. Draw at least one picture to go with the story.

The stories can be read aloud to the class by each author, then bound into a class *Tall-Tale Storybook*.

Descriptive Language

This book uses descriptive language to help the reader visualize the events. Ask the students to locate sentences in the story that are very descriptive. Examples:

“Fierce, hot, blowing winds that seemed to come from everywhere and nowhere all at once.”

“Chickens took to swimming just to keep from being baked alive, and their eggs came out hard-boiled.”

“Looked like the whole earth had turned black and was moving in waves. It made me seasick.”

Discuss the characteristics of descriptive language with your students. Ask them to make up their own descriptive sentences, orally first then write them.

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Contractions Worksheet

Contractions are a way of writing, two words that are spoken, like the speaker would actually say them. In a contraction letters that are not pronounced are replaced with an apostrophe. Can you find these contractions in the story:

past:

we've we have

present:

I'm I am

you're you are

that's that is

what's what is

it's it is

future:

we'll we will

with would:

I'd I would

you'd you would

with not:

don't do not

didn't did not

isn't is not

couldn't could not

Use some of the above contractions to write your own sentences.

1. _____

2. _____

3. _____

4. _____

5. _____

6. _____

7. _____

8. _____