

Study Guide for Teachers

Seth Reichgott
The Appalachian Tale
presented by
Young Audiences New Jersey &
Eastern Pennsylvania
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ABOUT THE PROGRAM

Come on in, set down by the fire and hear an amazing tale! Take a journey with Young Audiences favorite Seth Reichgott to the heart of the Appalachian Mountains, where the rich heritage of America still lives in story and song. Through unparalleled storytelling, catchy music, and lively audience participation, *The Appalachian Tale* explores the unique history, vibrant culture, and amazing creativity of this distinctive region of the United States.

LEARNING GOALS

Students will

- Be introduced to the art of storytelling.
- Be exposed to Appalachian culture.
- Learn part of an Appalachian song.
- Be encouraged to improve oral communication skills.

BACKGROUND INFORMATION FOR STUDENTS

The Appalachian Mountains were named by the Spaniards after the Apalachee Indians of Northern Florida. Appalachia is a term used to describe a region in the eastern United States that stretches from southern New York state to northern Alabama, Mississippi, and Georgia. Although part of the Appalachian Mountain chain extends through New England and into Canada, they are not considered part of the Appalachia geographical region.

Prior to the 20th century, many pioneers stayed in the region and preserved the culture of their ancestors who settled the region in the 18th century. The region's culture has a strong oral tradition, including music and song.

The inhabitants of the region established log cabin colleges as early as the 1790s and instilled a strong sense of education, literature, music, and the arts. Appalachians have preserved much historical lore.

Traditional Appalachian music, including ballads and dance tunes, was mostly brought to the United States with Anglo-Celtic immigrants, and was in evidence from the early eighteenth century through 1900. Such music was important to its listeners, since at the time not everyone knew how to read, nor were there any radios or television. It was among the strongest threads of the social fabric.

BEFORE THE PROGRAM

1. Set up a chart listing what students **know** about Appalachian culture and what the **want to know**. Leave a blank column for what they **learned** to fill in after the show.

2. Show students a map of the Appalachian region of our country. Have students read some Appalachian folktales. Discuss life in this region as it is described in the tale. What can they add to their chart under **learned**?

3. Get the music teacher involved! Celtic ballads and African-American music both influenced the music of Appalachia. Listen to examples of all three and discuss similarities and differences. Can students describe aspects of the Appalachian music that are similar to Celtic or African-American music?

AFTER THE PROGRAM

1. Have students draw pictures of characters or scenes from one of the folktales they heard in the performance. Have the students explain why they chose the details in their pictures.

- Compare the different characters or scenes chosen by the students.
- Compare the different ways the students depicted the same scene or character.
- Which scenes or characters were the most popular amongst the students when they decided what to depict in their drawings? Why?

2. Get the art teacher involved! Look at the illustrations of various picture books and folktale collections. Have students choose a book in which they like the illustrations and have them discuss the elements that they like. Have students illustrate another scene or folktale in a similar style.

3. Discuss how Seth Reichgott was able to convey various aspects of the story. How was experiencing his performance different from reading the story in a book? How was it different from listening to a recording of it?

4. Have students write their own tall tales. See Resources for suggestions.

VOCABULARY WORDS

Appalachia

Banjo

Dulcimer

Exaggeration

Folklore

Jack Tales

Storytelling

Tall Tales

ARTIST INFORMATION

Seth Reichgott is a Philadelphia-based actor, director, and writer. He has worked extensively with theatre companies in Philadelphia and along the East Coast, and he tours his solo school programs throughout New Jersey, Pennsylvania, and Maryland. Seth has twice been a co-recipient of Philadelphia's Barrymore Award for Outstanding Ensemble, and was nominated for a 2010 Helen Hayes Award for Outstanding Actor in a Play. He also works as the Artist Services Manager for Young Audiences New Jersey & Eastern PA, helping to bring the arts into hundreds of schools every year. Seth is a graduate of Wesleyan University and the Dell'Arte International School of Physical Theatre.

RESOURCES

Richard Chase, *The Jack Tales: Folk Tales from the Southern Appalachians*, Houghton Mifflin, 1971.

Richard Chase, *Grandfather Tales*, HMH Books for Young Readers, 2003.

West Virginia's Appalachian Music and Literature: Folk Heroes study unit, "Write a Tall Tale," www.ferrum.edu/applit/studyg/West/htm/wrttb.htm

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