

The Art and Craft of Telling A Tall Tale

So, what is a tall tale?

- Exaggeration by the narrator of an event or character that's larger than life.
- It challenges the listener with comic outlandishness. Often getting the audience so immersed that they believe the story to be true.
- A story with a sequence of related events with a beginning, middle and end, characters and action.
- **Speech must be substantially original – and of a highly exaggerated nature and have a theme or plot.**
- Tell the story like you believe every word and can't understand why the audience is laughing.
- Use short, simple sentences with vocal variety, pauses, variations of rhythm and timing, sharp images, and a plot easy to imagine.
- The tale's end usually ties in to the beginning of the story.
- Goal is to amuse your audience
- **Tall Tales speech is 3-5 minutes long.**

Judging the Tall Tale

Speech Development (30 points): the way a speaker put ideas together to immediately engage the audience, and smoothly build up to a climax and conclusion.

Speech Techniques (25 points): Use of exaggeration, irony, pun, humor and surprise twists, skillfully woven into the story.

Physical (15 points): Speaker's appearance should reinforce the story. Body language should support the story through gestures, expressions and purposeful movement.

Voice (15 points): Flexible, moving from one pitch level to another for emphasis, with a variety of rate and volume. A good voice can be heard throughout the audience and the words easily understood.

Language (15 points): choice of words appropriate to the story. Clear understanding of the tale being told. Good grammar, pronunciation, word selection.

Sources and/or examples of tall tales:

- Alice in Wonderland
- Pecos Bill
- Paul Bunyan
- Pinocchio
- 1001 Dalmatians
- Shrek
- Many children's stories
- Garrison Keillor
- John Henry
- Robin Hood
- *Gwango's Lonesome Trail*, Justin Parpan
- Nelson Mandela, *Favorite African Folktales*
- Kevin Kling
- www.buck-dog.com