

Tales from the Valley

Follow-up Activities, for grades 4 through 8

Please photocopy or print these activities.

Credit : Eleanor Crowder, of Salamander Theatre 2002.

Salamander Theatre for Young Audiences

2 Daly Avenue

Ottawa, ON K1N 6E2

(613) 569-5629

(613) 569-5631

www.salamandertheatre.ca

Teachers are encouraged to use parts of any activity with younger children, using their drawings and descriptive sentences where this outline suggests a written exercise.

We have used all these activities with students in the junior and intermediate grades at those schools which helped us to create the play.

Curriculum goals:

Drama

to understand a narrative sequence

To create a play from a story

To develop characters

To write script

Language Arts

to understand the difference between first person story telling and third person narration

To use first person narrative (as a writer, as a speaker)

To appreciate the folk tradition of the tall tale

To try telling a tall tale

Canadian Heritage

to explore the folk traditions of the Ottawa Valley

To recognise one's own family stories as an integral part of the settlement history of the Ottawa Valley

Creation of the Play

Tales from the Valley was our response to touring across Ontario for the last 7 years. Every time we came home, we were aware of our place as different from the other parts of the province. Geographically, we are nestled into the flood plains either side of an old river valley. Culturally, this area has been home to many waves of immigrants coming after Algonkian (Ojibway, Pottawatomi and Oddawa) peoples. The selection of Ottawa as a non-divisive nation's capital celebrated this complex heritage in 1850. The valley continues to express its distinct legacy, particularly today as newcomers drawn to work in the IT industry make it their home too.

In our research work, we were aware of the Algonkian heritage; the arrival of English military settlers, Irish workers, Scots refugees from the Highland clearances, Loyalist pioneers from the United States. We heard stories from Chinese, Italian and Polish settlements. We met people of Vietnamese, Cambodian, Somali, Eritrean, Russian and Croatian heritage.

Within the company, our actors share British, Scots, Irish, Russian, Greek, and West Indian heritage. Some of us are immigrants; all of us know our peoples' stories of arrival and adjustment to a new land. Our discovery of stories across the valley tied into our own experience. This was most noticeable in the Ice Storm stories. We too went to bed with everyone in the family under one massive pile of quilts and coats, and wondered how long we could survive without heat and light.

Grants from the Ontario Arts Council allowed us to spend 6 weeks in residencies with Ottawa Valley Schools. We visited Arnprior, Renfrew, Wilno, Round Lake Centre, Carp and Maxville. At each school, we asked students to bring their favourite stories from their area. In return, we taught them how to create a play from a story. We worked in role within each story. You will have seen some of the stories in the play. The version you saw was written by playwright Eleanor Crowder after watching the students work on their plays.

Purpose of the Play

Tales from the Valley is our celebration of the unique flavour of the Ottawa Valley. We were surprised when we realised how much of the play is about surviving the weather. Living here, we had never thought of our climate as extreme.

We intend the play as a catalyst to you and your students. Which stories from your place does it remind you of? Which stories are very different? We hope you will tell each other tales from your families and from your place. Use them to make plays. Use them to draw picture books. Celebrate your town's rich heritage.

When we dream, we imagine plays sent to us from students across the valley and beyond, with the offer that we might pass them on to other students. And that we might then put you in touch with students engaged in the same process somewhere else. To actually

perform a play taken from your own story builds a confidence in your place in history. To then understand that every story we hear happened to people very like us faced with other circumstances, is probably the most valuable history lesson we can offer you.

Story telling : Truth and Tall Tales

One of the stories which we finally edited out of the mix, is the story of Joe Mufferaw and the fish. Students in Arnprior who told it to us really like it. We simply could not keep all the stories in the play and have it last the hour needed to tour to schools. Joe *is* still in the play. He is the big logger who listens to Shorty's story. Our first version had them telling their stories in a story contest.

This is an integral part of the Tall Tale tradition of logging camps. One logger tells a tale of his experience. The next bests it. And so on. The knack is to keep your audience with you: each new element makes the story more fantastic, but along the way the listeners must willingly accept every little stretch of the normal world proposed by the storyteller. You'll find books about Paul Bunyan, the American logger, as well as about Joe Mufferaw, the giant logger of the Ottawa Valley, who in real life was Joseph Montferrand. The French Canadian tale about the Devil's Christmas is a pinnacle of the tradition.

Here is Eleanor's version of the story:

Joe: Stories? That might be fine for some folks. Stories.

Now I'm Joseph Montferrand and I always tell the truth.

Big Joe Mufferaw, that's me. My word is trusted the length and breadth of the Ottawa Valley. Wherever I go, they know I'm coming.

In Renfrew, they say: Joe Mufferaw, you can take his word for it.

They hear my name in Arnprior: Joe, we'll take his word for it.

I go up to the woods with the lads in the fall, need to buy 'em a round at Shawville, I put my boot on the ceiling and I say,

I'll pay you in the spring, Annie. And she knows.

"That's Joe's boot print on the ceiling, he's as good as his word, and he'll pay me in the spring when the logs go out "

AND I always do.

My word is the truth, every last syllable of it.

And it's not even boasting to tell you I am known as the strongest and the biggest lumbering man in the Ottawa Valley, because that's true too. Now I have a reputation as a fighting man. But I'm not one to go looking for trouble. I only fight if there's a guy really spoiling for trouble. And even then, I'll take him and toss him on his head just to keep him out of harm's way.

You oughta see us take out the drive in the spring. Well there's hard work for you.

But the best of all, that's when there's a day when I can just take a fishing rod and go off by myself a ways and sit in the sun and just let the rod dip in the water.... Now that's living.

I was doing that one day, just enjoying myself sitting in the sun and thinking to catch dinner maybe while I'm at it, when WHAM.

My rod jerked out of my hands. I only just caught it in time and boom, the water cracks with the tail slap of the biggest fish I seen in a long time.

I am gonna catch me that fish.

I grab the rod with both hands and dig my heels down into the bank.

But no! that fish lights out of there so hard and fast he's pulling me after him. I'm not about to lose my best fishing rod, no sir, so I hang on tight and sploosh,

I'm halfway down the stream and that fish, he's pulling me along so fast I'm not even sinking in the water. We're zooming down between the cliffs so fast, they're blurring on either side. I can't even grab a tree to hang on to.

Ooh oh. Here's the log boom coming up. Woooooh! we're over the boom and out onto the lake and still that fish doesn't stop going. He starts off round the lake with me hooting and hollering after him. Wooh ah. Slow down there, fish.

Not a hope. The sun starts to go down and still that fish is going. Now I'm beginning to get tired, but am I going to let that fish go? I said I'd catch him, and I never go back on my word.

All night long, that fish, he's round the lake, all along one shore and down the other. The next morning the sun comes up, and that fish he just keeps on going. Do you suppose he gets thirsty? No sir, he's drinking all the time. Do you suppose I get thirsty? You betcha. And I got no dinner yet. But am I going to give up? Big Joe Mufferaw never goes back on his word. And I said it: I am going to catch that fish.

That's a long day. And so is the next one. That fish just keeps on going. Finally. On the evening of the third day, I can feel him slowing down. And so I tug real hard on the line. And the fish, he tugs back. And I tug harder. And the fish gets real mad and swims faster than ever straight for the shore. And BOOM, he smacks straight into the shore! I go flying over his

head still hanging on to that fishing line. I land my two feet hard in the ground, and I yank that fish over my head. Where he lands, he made such a big dent in the ground, it filled up with water and now it's Dents Creek. And I fry that fish for my dinner, and that was the best supper I ever had. And every word of that story is the truth.

Acting clues

An audience does not know what you will do. So start from stillness, and then make each action and line count. What you choose to show of a character should give the audience a growing picture of the character's situation.

When you can feel the audience's interest in the person you are portraying, you can take them with you on the character's adventure. Keep seeing the world of the story in your mind's eye. Your speech will communicate the story if you are concentrated in its reality.

Joe's story is a classic tall tale. Here are some activities to explore in partners:

Narrative Sequence

1. Tell the story as a straight third person narrative.
2. Can you tell it in one sentence? Work in pairs. Tell Joe's tale in one sentence.
3. Tell it in a version that takes three minutes.
4. Everyone take this text and read / act it out loud. Take 5 minutes at least. What actions must you add to the story?

Tall Tales vs. true tales

Do you have an outdoors story? Even a fishing story?

1. Practice first by telling one after the other in partners.
2. Switch partners and tell your story again. Now you have a sense of how it works.
3. Switch partners again and tell your story with some embellishment. Are you in tall tale territory yet?
4. Switch again and tell your story in high style to each other. Act out any details which need full effect.

Tales to plays

Choose several stories from the class. They each need to have 4 or 5 people in them. Give the stories titles, and write their names on a piece of paper.

Form groups in the class of 4 or 5 actors. Each group draws a title from a hat.

Make a play from your story by using each of the following steps:

1. Sit in a circle in your group. Tell the story in turns around the circle. Then try to tell it one sentence at a time each. Then tell it one word at a time each. Now you are all really clear about the story
2. What is the most exciting moment in the story? With the members of your group, create a freeze frame with your bodies which shows the action at that moment of the story.
3. What is the end point of the story? Create a physical freeze frame of this moment.
4. Exactly what happens at the start? Build a freeze of this moment.
5. Now you have 3 pictures made with your bodies like a cartoon strip. For each frame figure out what everyone says. Draw this as a cartoon strip. Expand the strip. Add intervening pictures to make a chain of 5 or 7 frames.
6. Each actor now knows their movement through 7 frames of the story. Taking their own space, everyone speaks aloud their thought bubble from each frame for 15 seconds. It helps to stay with the story if each frame has a title.
7. Now everyone knows what their character does in the story. Give each group 10 minutes to play their story start to finish. If they get lost, they go back and play out the 7 frames which form the scenario of the story.
8. At this point, repeating and rehearsing each action to polish the playing is important. Give the play 3 rehearsals where no one comments, but everyone tries to play the story as well as they can. Then stop and discuss what to leave out, what to show more of, how to show characters.

Scripting the play

At the point where the group can repeat much the same play every time, and that they are satisfied that it tells the story in the best way possible, you are ready to script.

A simple format is to draw cartoons for each frame, and to draw in the thought bubbles or speech bubbles for each character.

The standard script format lists each character's words one after the other. The character name is written, then a colon, then what they say. Eg.

Jack: Give me a pencil and I'll show you what happens in our scene.

Jane: I already saw your scene.

Jack: But I want to email this story to other kids, so they can act it out too. I need to write it down like a script.

Jane: Here's a pencil. But it would be easier to change it if we wrote it on the computer.

Test your script by offering it to another group to play out. Does it do what you want? Rewrite each line until you are satisfied with the way it tells the story.

Monologue exercise

Take on the role of a central character in any of the stories told by your class. Acting out the story, tell it all in your words, from your perspective. Repeat. Then pair up. Each partner watches and listens to the other tell their monologue. Switch partners and do this again. Then you are ready to perform in front of the whole class, or to write down your monologue and to exchange with another actor to perform their script.

FOLKSONGS

We worked from songs which many people in the Ottawa Valley know and love. We have included the words for some of the best known songs. You'll probably find you know the tunes well already.

STORY to SONG

For one song, we used a very old folk process. Eleanor took the tune for a Scots song, *The Land of McLeod*, and wrote words to it to illustrate the story about the school house blowing over. Chris and Hannah sing it to be the sound of the wind in that terrible June storm. They are part of the noise which Mrs Wallace just wants to have stop.

Here are the original words and Eleanor's new folk song. You might try taking a story from your school or village, and writing it as a song. Use a tune you know well.

You'll know you have a hit on your hands if it keeps sneaking back into your head in the next few weeks.

The Land of McLeod

*I will go, I will go
When the fighting is over
To the land of McLeod,
Where I left to be a soldier
I will go, I will go*

1. Well, the king's man he came down
And he called us all together
He said " My brave Island boys
Will ye fight for the father?"
I will go, I will go

2. Well I've a buckle for my belt
And a sword for my scabbard
I've a red coat for my back
And a shilling for my pocket,
I will go, I will go

3. Well we fought that foreign foe
All on that foreign heather
And some were cut down
And they'll stay that way for ever
I will go, I will go

4. When we came back to our glen
The snow it was a-falling
And our goods lay on the ground
And our crops they were a-burning
I will go, I will go

The Windsong

Blow wind blow (double counts)
Tear the roof from the school house
Throw nails to the ground
Run screaming through the valley
Blow wind blow, blow wind blow

*The wind tore off the roof
It locked us in the school house
Threw the ceiling to the ground
It caused us consternation
Blow wind blow, blow wind blow*

*Mrs Wallace lined us up
She said: I'm sure the door will open
She cried: Run for your lives
Her mind it is quite broken
Blow wind blow, blow wind blow*

Continue with tune hummed on MMMMM

SONG to STORY

Old songs do all tell stories. Take *The Land of McLeod*, and work backwards from the haunting song to the real events:

Who is the King's Man?
Why do you get a buckle and a belt and a scabbard?
Where do you go to fight?
Why would they burn your village when you were gone?
Where would your people go then?

The song tells of the recruiting officers of King George (1, 2 and 3) who persuaded Catholic, Gallic speaking Highlanders to join the British army. They left to fight in Spain, in France, in wars in North America and India. The Scots troops always gained a reputation for extreme bravery, and for outlandish battle music (the pipes) and dress (their kilts).

The destruction of Highland homes happened in relation to Scots rebellions to restore the Stuart monarchy. After Culloden, 1713, and again in 1745, soldiers of the king razed Scots villages. The pipes were banned, Gallic was banned from public settings. Laments like the *Skye Boat Song* were revolutionary expressions of hope for victory some day.

Drama:

Play solo:

A boy herding sheep up the mountain who sees the recruiting troop of soldiers coming. Speak his thoughts a loud as he races to warn the village.

Play in pairs:

2 men hauling up a fishing boat and gutting their meagre catch. There's not many fish this year. It's cold and summer is late. The barley won't be good nor the potatoes. They are worried.

Play a crowd scene:

The recruiting officer demands food for his men, then makes a speech about the advantage of joining the army. (steady pay; glory; exciting foreign places)

Groups of 4:

Inside the shieling(hut), the boy has announced he will go to be a soldier. His mother is not happy. The father would go instead, but he is lame. The old grandmother sees with the second sight and warns him of the future.

Writing exercise:

From the perspective of any of these characters, write out their thoughts at a critical point in the drama so far.

Next session, read aloud what you have written as script. Check the punctuation suits the way your character needs to breathe.

Freeze frame sequences (and hence cartoon or art assignment later):

The men leave with the troop.

The battle on the foreign heather.

The men return to find the smouldering ruins of their village. Who greets them?

Ottawa Valley Settlers

The valley was settled by French, by Metis, by Scots Highlanders and by Irish after the Great Famine. Here are some of our better known songs from those cultures.

V' LA LE BON VENT

V'la le bon vent, v'la le joli vent

V'la le bon vent, m' amie m' appelle

V'la le bon vent, v'la le joli vent

V'la le bon vent, m'amie m' attend

AH SI MON MOINE VOULAIT DANSER

Ah si mon moine voulait danser
Ah si mon moine voulait danser
Un capuchon je lui donnerais
Un capuchon , je lui donnerais

Danse , mon moine, danse
Tu n' entends pas la danse
Tu n' entends pas mon moulin lon la
Tu n' Entends pas mon moulin marcher

Capuchon, froc de beurre,

ceinturon, grand chapeau

each item of clothing is offered at capuchon in verse 1. Un moine is both a monk and the spinning treadle on a spinning wheel.

These are old clog dancing songs from Normandie, which were later paddling songs for the voyageurs. In the log chantiers (*shanty* in English), the old songs became the music for step dancing competitions accompanied by fiddle and spoons.

Skye Boat Song

*Speed bonnie boat like a bird on the wing
Over the sea to Skye. or
Carry the lad that is born to be king
Over the sea to Skye.*

Onward , the sailors cry.

Loud the winds howl, loud the waves roar
Thunderclouds rend the air
Baffled our foes stand on the shore
Follow they will not dare

Tho' the waves leap, soft shall ye sleep
Ocean's a royal bed
Rocked in the deep, Flora will keep
Watch by your weary head

Many's the lad fought on that day
Well the claymore could wield
When the night came, silently lay
Dead on Culloden's field

Burned our are homes, exile and death
Scatter the loyal men
Yet ever the sword sleep in the sheath
Charlie will come again

WILD MOUNTAIN THYME

O the summer time is coming
And the trees are sweetly blooming
And the wild mountain thyme
Blows among the blooming heather
Will ye go, lassie, go?

*And we'll all go together
To pick wild mountain thyme
All around the blooming heather
Will ye go, lassie, go?*

I will build my love a bower
By yon clear and crystal fountain
And on it I will place
All the flowers of the mountain
Will ye go, lassie, go?

And if ye'll not go with me
I will surely choose another
To pick wild mountain thyme
All around the blooming heather
Will ye go, lassie, go?

DANNY BOY

Oh Danny boy, the pipes, the pipes are calling

From glen to glen and down the mountainside.

The summer's gone, and all the flowers are dying

Tis you, tis you, must go and I must bide.

But come you back when summer's in the meadow

Or when the valley's hushed and white with snow;

Tis I'll be there in sunshine or in shadow

O Danny boy, oh Danny boy, I love you so.

And if you come when all the flowers are dying

And I am dead, as dead I well may be,

You'll come and find the place where I am lying

And kneel and say an AVE there for me.

And I shall hear, though soft you tread above me,

And all my dreams will warm and sweeter be

If you 'll not fail to tell me that you love me,

Then I will simply sleep in peace, until you come to me.

THE BLACK VELVET BAND

Her eyes they shone like the diamonds

You'd think she was Queen of the land

With her hair thrown over her shoulder

Tied up with a black velvet band

As I was walking down Broadway

Not intending to stay very long

I met with a frolicsome damsel

As she came strolling along.

A watch she pulled out of her pocket

And placed it right into my hand

The very first day that I met her

Bad luck to the Black Velvet Band

Fore judge and jury next morning

Both of us did appear

A gentleman claimed his jewellery

And the case against us was clear

Seven long years' transportation

Right on down to Van Dieman's Land

Far away from my friends and companions

To follow the Black Velvet Band.

Loggers made up their own songs about the hard work they took on as they carved out a stake from the land. Here is one which was sung all over Canada from the early 1800s on.

A Shantyman's Life

A shantyman's life is a wearisome one
Though some say it's free from care
It's the ringing of an axe from morning until night
In the middle of the forest drear

Its sleeping all night in our bunks without cheer
Though the cold wintry wind do moan
And as soon as the morning star does appear
To the wild woods we must go

Transported as we are from the maidens so fair
To the banks of some wintry stream
Where the wolves and the owls with their terrifying howls
Disturb our nightly dreams.

When spring it does come in, double hardships then begin
And the waters are piercing cold
Soaking wet are all our clothes and our limbs they are half froze
And our peavies we scarce can hold

The rocky shores and sands give employment to all hands
Our well manned raft to steer
Every rapid that we run, we think it is but fun
We are free from all slavish fears.

Now rafting I'll give over, and I'll anchor safe on shore
And there live a different life
No more I think to ram, but contented stay at home
With a pretty little smiling wife.

The logging tradition continued until trucks replaced rafting logs down stream. The last logs floated down the Gatineau River in the early 1990s. To this day, giant logging trucks roll through the centre of Ottawa, and the smell of pulp dominates several valley towns.

Wade Hemsworth wrote his songs as one of the last of the shantyboys. You may well know this one from an NFB short which airs on television. His *Black Fly Song* has become the anthem of many summer camps!

The Log Driver's Waltz

Wade Hemsworth

You ask any girl from the parish around
What pleases her most from her head to her toes
She'll say I'm not sure that its business of yours
But I do like to waltz with a log driver

For he goes burling down
And down white water
That's where a log driver learns to step lightly
Burling down and down white water
A log driver's waltz pleases girls completely

When the drives nearly over they like to go down
And watch all the lads as they work on the river
They know that come evening they'll be in the town
And they'll all get to waltz with their log driver.

To please both my parents I had to give way
And dance with the merchants the doctors and lawyers
Their manners are fine but their feet are clay
There's none with the style of a log driver

Now I've had my chances at all sorts of men
There's none to compare with my lad on the river
And when the drives over, if he asks me again
I think I will marry my log driver

The Black Fly song

Wade Hemsworth

'Twas early in the spring, when I decide to go
To work up in the woods in North Ontario
And the unemployment office said they'd send me through
To the Little Abitibi with the survey crew

But the black flies, the little black flies
Always the black fly no matter where you go
I'll die with the black fly a-picking my bones
In North Ontario (x 2)

Now the man Black Toby was the captain of the crew
And he said "I'm gonna tell you boys what we're gonna do
They want to build a power dam and we must find a way
For to make the Little Ab flow around the other way"
So we surveyed to the east & surveyed to the west
And we couldn't make our minds up how to do it best
Little Ab. Little Ab, what shall I do?
For I'm all but going crazy on the survey crew.

It was black fly, black fly everywhere
A-crawlin' in your whiskers, a-crawlin' in your hair
A-swimmin' in the soup, and a swimmin' in the tea
O the devil take the black fly and let me be.
Black Toby fell to swearin' cos the work was getting slow
And the state of our morale was gettin' pretty low
And the flies swarmed heavy, it was hard to catch your breath
As you staggered up and down the trail, talkin' to yourself.

Now the bull cook's name was Blind River Joe
If it hadn't been for him, we'd ve never pulled thru
For he bound up our bruises and he kidded us for fun
And he lathered us with bacon grease and balsam gum
At last the job was over. Black Toby said" we're through
With the Little Abitibi and the survey crew."
'Twas a wonderful experience and this I know
I'll never go again to North Ontario.