

# TALL TALE Study Guide

## Ideas for Educators to use before, during and after “Tall Tales Day” -- a day-long residency by Author Rick Sowash, “Master of the Tall Tale”

### General Background on Tall Tales and Rick Sowash:

Children like Tall Tales. They are fun, funny, and exaggerated. Tall Tale heroes -- such as Johnny Appleseed, Sluefoot Sue, Paul Bunyan, John Henry, Annie Oakley, Pecos Bill, Mike Fink, Davy Crockett and his wife Sally Ann Thunder Ann -- are familiar to almost all children.

Because of this fondness and familiarity, an imaginative approach to Tall Tale literature presents a unique opportunity to help students sharpen their thinking, listening, discernment, language and communication skills.

Tall Tales (especially when told ‘live’ by a master storyteller) dramatically connect children with oral literature, theatre, listening skills, and American folklore -- besides generating a lot of laughter. This is why many schools emphasize Tall Tales. This Study Guide shows teachers some ways to make the most of Rick Sowash’s visit.

### Underlying messages of Rick’s work in schools:

- 1) Books, storytelling, reading and writing are fascinating and fun.
- 2) With the younger children Rick explores the difference between a tall tale and a lie -- tall tales are joyful and harmless, but other kinds of falsehood can be harmful.
- 3) With the older children Rick’s message is: Find what you love to do, learn all you can about it, become as good as you can at doing it, figure out a way to get paid to do it, and you’ll be happy in your work. Rick is skilled in writing, storytelling and piano-playing. He personifies this message. He also stresses the importance of writing skills to virtually all career paths.

**What to expect during Rick Sowash’s day at your school:** Rick prefers to perform two assemblies: a 25-minute assembly for the younger students (K-3) followed by a 40-minute assembly for the older students (4-6). If your school also serves grade K-8, Rick prefers to perform a third, separate 40-minute assembly for 7th & 8th graders. Rick enjoys eating lunch with the best student writers in your school. Rick makes time to personalize and autograph copies of his books “Ripsnorting Whoppers” and “Heroes of Ohio” which your school has sold to students and staff. And Rick offers three half hour “visits” with smaller groups, usually two or three classrooms combined. Rick can also visit briefly with afternoon the kindergarten classes who will have missed his morning assemblies.