

## American Folk Tales: Mirror of Ourselves

Dr. Elissa Kaplan

### **Week 1: Native American Folk Tales**

According to Justine Johnson, “In a land full of rivers, mountains, lakes, and forest animals, the indigenous people used folk tales to pass down traditions.” We will learn the fascinating accounts in stories like *Crow Brings Daylight*, *The Maid of the Mist*, *Pele’s Revenge* and more. We will seek to identify some traditions of Native Americans.

### **Week 2: Uncle Remus Stories**

We will celebrate the timeless legacy of the Brer Rabbit tales. We will discover that the Uncle Remus tales are African American trickster stories about the exploits of Brer Rabbit, Brer Fox, and other "creeturs" that were recreated in black regional dialect by Joel Chandler Harris. We will identify African American traditions and delve into social history.

### **Week 3: Historical Figures**

We will look at tall tales based on historical American figures. Who were Calamity Jane, Daniel Boone, John Henry, and Davey Crocket? We will learn about their legendary exploits and marvel at their adventures.

### **Week 4: Fictional Characters**

We will look into tall tales based on fictional characters who seem very real to us! Who were Molly Pitcher, Pecos Bill, The Lone Ranger and Paul Bunyan? Although these stories are fictional, they may tell us more about ourselves than the real characters as we hold the mirror up to ourselves.

### **Week 5: Legends and Folklore**

We will delve deep into legendary and folklore creatures as we seek to understand ourselves. What can we learn about and from such legends as Bigfoot, the White Lady, the Jersey Devil, or Mothman? They sound like Marvel Comics characters!

### **Week 6: People in Songs**

We will sing our way into the last session. Folksongs are a rich source of tall tales. Have you ever heard of Darling Clementine, Casey Jones, the Yellow Rose of Texas, or Johnny (who comes marching home again)? They live in our American “folklore DNA.” We will discover which traits we share!

Lifetime Learners Institute at NCC

[www.Lifetimelearners.org](http://www.Lifetimelearners.org)