

TEACHER'S GUIDE



Railroad John and the Red Rock Run

Written by Tony Crunk | Illustrated by Michael Austin

HC: 978-1-56145-363-4

Ages 4–8 | Fantasy
AR • F&P • GRL R; Gr 4

ABOUT THE BOOK

Lonesome Bob is preparing for his wedding to Wildcat Annie in Red Rock with Granny Apple Fritter. Railroad John, the train conductor, promises Lonesome Bob to have him in Red Rock at precisely 2:00 when his wedding is to start. Problems are constantly arising aboard the train that threaten to make Lonesome Bob late, even though Railroad John has never been late to a destination in forty years! Will Lonesome meet Wildcat Annie on time for their wedding?

Young readers will be captivated by the fun and exciting twists of the story that are delightfully illustrated by Michael Austin. The charming characters paired with the fantastical environments will keep readers in full suspense until the very last page.

THEMES

Railroad History | Tall-Tales | Time
Fantasy vs. Realism | Music

BEFORE YOU READ

- Ask students why it is important to be on time for school and other events. Discuss how one can ensure that they are on time.
- Ask students about trains and the railroad and have students discuss why they think the railroad is important. Record their answers for later reference of comparison to the story.
- Show students the cover of the book and have them choose whether they think the book is fantasy or realism.

AS YOU READ

- Discuss the point-of-view of the illustrations and how each perspective allows insight into a certain character's feelings or a notion of space.
- Discuss how the illustrations portray fantasy rather than reality in the book.
- Note the changing time and question students as to whether they think Lonesome Bob will be on time.

INTERDISCIPLINARY CONNECTIONS

SCIENCE & SOCIAL STUDIES

- Use food as a means to begin discussion by first asking the students about the various foods they eat. Lead into a discussion of the transcontinental railroad by presenting students with a map of the railroad route through the United States to allow them a visual reference for the size of the railroad. Continue to discuss how foods that were native to certain areas were then able to be transported across the nation.
- Divide students into groups based on regions of America and, using shoe boxes and other art supplies, have each group decorate their boxes and place the specific food in the box that is found in their region. Link all the boxes together to create a transcontinental train.

LANGUAGE ARTS

- Begin a discussion of tall-tales by exploring various stories that are already known to students. Ask students: What is the difference between a true story and a tall-tale? Within the classroom, create a cardboard or wooden “train” in which the students can come aboard to travel, and then write their own tall-tales about the places they have seen, who they met, and what they did.
- Onomatopoeia – A grouping of words, that imitates the sound it is describing, and thus suggests its source object, such as “bang” or “click”, or animal such as “moo”, “oink”, “quack”, or “meow”. Discuss how the use of onomatopoeia better illustrates that which is being explained. Reading the book aloud, have students designate whenever onomatopoeia is used and what the onomatopoeia is describing.

MATH

Using paper plates, construction paper, and paper ties, have students construct their own clocks for use in the classroom. Use the clocks to accompany the tall-tale exercise for language arts. Have students decide what time they must leave for lunch to be on time. For homework, have students work with parents to determine the time they have to be at school and what time they should leave. Have students turn in their records.

ART

Have students look through the artwork present in the book and compare the artwork with more scientific illustrations from other books used in class. Explain how the illustrations use fantasy to further the objective of the text. Does the element of fantasy used in the artwork add to the theme of the text? How would more realistic illustrations interact with the text and change the tone of the book? How does the element of fantasy present in illustrations relate to the elements of tall-tales?

MUSIC

- Discuss the importance of the banjo tunes for Lonesome Bob.
- How do Lonesome Bob's songs help him to cope with what is going on around him?
- How does Lonesome Bob use his tunes to face his challenges?
- Can you hear a certain pattern in the tunes he plays?
- Discuss the importance of music within pioneer life and how the specific genre assisted those in the challenges they faced. Explain how music in pioneer life, and in various other instances of American

history, has been a reflection of a struggle for the people who create it.

- Hand out the lyrics to “I’ve Been Working on the Railroad” and discuss how the tune tells a story and helps the author cope with his workday. Play the melody and have students sing along.

REVIEWS

“Crunk’s original tall-tale gets a big boost from Austin's unusual and exuberant illustrations... An effective match of illustrations with a high-spirited story.”

—**Booklist**

“Its mighty tall-tale telling, just waitin’ for a teller and a passel of kids.”

—**Kirkus Reviews**

“Austin’s sepia-toned acrylics amplify the energy, drama and hyperbolic humor of Crunk’s rollickin’, rail-ridin’ romp... Kids will eagerly climb aboard for repeat rides.”

—**Publishers Weekly**

“The text moves along at a rollicking clip and has a true tall-tale tone.”

—**School Library Journal**

AWARDS

- Emphasis on Reading Program (nominee, grades K–1) —Alabama Department of Education
- Storytelling World Resource Awards (honor, Stories for Pre-Adolescent Listeners) —Storytelling World magazine
- Georgia Children’s Picture Storybook Award (nominee) —University of Georgia

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Tony Crunk is a poet and children's book author. He holds degrees from Centre College, the University of Kentucky, and the University of Virginia, and currently teaches at the University of Alabama Birmingham. He lives in Alabama.

ABOUT THE ILLUSTRATOR

Michael Austin is a graduate of the University of Southern Mississippi, a creative director, and the illustrator of several books. He lives in Georgia.

www.austinillustration.com



Peachtree Teacher's Guide for
RAILROAD JOHN AND THE RED ROCK RUN
prepared by Kenyette Kilpatrick

Copyright ©2017 by Peachtree Publishers. All rights reserved. For instructional uses only and not for resale. Except for the printing of complete pages, with the copyright notice, no part of this publication may be reproduced, stored in a retrieval system, or transmitted in any form or by any means—electronic, mechanical, photocopy, recording, or any other—without written permission. Requests for permission to use of any section of the work should be mailed to Permissions Department, Peachtree Publishers, 1700 Chattahoochee Avenue, Atlanta, GA 30318-2112.

phone 404-876-8761 • 800-241-0113
fax 404-875-2578 • 800-875-8909
www.peachtree-online.com

updated 4/14/17