

The Legend

Paul Bunyan is a fictional, giant lumberjack in American lore. Said to have been born with a full beard, Paul Bunyan could fell a dozen trees with a single swing of his oversized ax and could outperform “machines” that, at the time, threatened the livelihood of lumberjacks. Together, with his 5,000-pound blue ox named Babe, whose footsteps allegedly became Minnesota’s 10,000 lakes, the legendary pair accomplished superhuman feats that involved clearing the land of trees. Most of the tales involved the oversized Bunyan and his ox fighting fearsome creatures, clearing wide swaths of land, or fighting off severe weather. The tale of Paul Bunyan was similar to other folktales of the time that involved the settlement, growth, or industrialization of America such as those of John Henry and Johnny Appleseed.

The History

The legend of Paul Bunyan was thought to have been born in the lumber camps of Minnesota in the late 1800s, though some historians insist the legend of Paul Bunyan is nothing more than “fakelore,” a literary invention that claims to be authentic folklore. Paul Bunyan was first mentioned in print in the *Duluth News Tribune* in 1904. His legend grew as part of a promotional campaign for the Red River Lumber Company. In 1958, Disney produced the successful musical *Paul Bunyan*, making him a household name.

Was he Real?

Historians are not in agreement whether or not Paul Bunyan, as a regular human actually existed. Some believe Paul Bunyan was born from a tough French-Canadian logger nicknamed “Saginaw Joe.” Others believe he was derived from a different logger named Bon Jean and that Paul Bunyan was born from the merging of the legends of Saginaw Joe and Bon Jean. Whether he existed or not, the spirit of Paul Bunyan and his ox live on. Numerous “larger-than-life” statues of the pair exist today, including a 49-foot-tall Paul Bunyan in California.

1. Which is true about Paul Bunyan?

- A. He was a huge lumberjack that could do unimaginable things
- B. He was part of a folktale that explained how America was settled
- C. He was a French-Canadian logger
- D. He was an invention made up by the Red River Lumber Company

- 2. Which of the following would not be included in the story of Paul Bunyan?**
- A. Paul and Babe chopping down trees and clearing the land
 - B. Paul and Babe fighting off tornados
 - C. Paul and Babe fighting off deadly wildlife
 - D. Paul and Babe using modern machinery of their time
- 3. What would folktales involving John Henry, Johnny Appleseed, and Paul Bunyan have in common?**
- A. They all are folktales that involves animals
 - B. They all are folktales that lumberjacks
 - C. They all are modern folktales
 - D. They are folktales about America's development
- 4. Paul Bunyan...**
- A. may or may not be modeled from an actual person or people
 - B. was a "faketale."
 - C. first appeared in a Disney movie in 1958.
 - D. was first mentioned in a lumber company promotional campaign.
- 5. For which of the following could "Saginaw Joe" be the answer?**
- A. Who was Paul Bunyan?
 - B. Was Paul Burney a real person?
 - C. Who was one of the lumberjacks Paul Bunyan may have been modeled after?
 - D. Which of Bon Jean's friends was Paul Bunyan modeled after?
- 6. Which of the following could replace "merging of" in the following sentence?**

Others believe he was derived from a different logger named Bon Jean and that Paul Bunyan was born from the merging of the legends of Saginaw Joe and Bon Jean.

- A. explanation of
- B. combination of
- C. result of
- D. positioning of

7. What is a “household name” as used in the sentence below?

In 1958, Disney produced the successful musical *Paul Bunyan*, making him a household name.

- A. Someone everybody has heard of
- B. Someone people who live in houses have heard of
- C. Someone who owns one or more houses
- D. Someone who some homeowners have heard of