



SAM PATCH: DAREDEVIL JUMPER

JULIE CUMMINS

ILLUSTRATED BY MICHAEL ALLEN AUSTIN

About the Book

This picture book about a nineteenth-century daredevil will captivate young readers.

GRADES
PREK–3

SUGGESTED CLASSROOM ACTIVITIES

Language Arts

Vocabulary—The author uses several words that may be unfamiliar to students. Students may use a dictionary to find the definitions for the following words: brash, bravado, cataract, chasm, constable, daredevil, dauntless, jaunty, mettle, prophetic, ravine.

Discussion—Students can express their opinions on why they think Sam needed to jump, starting when he was very young. Is there a comparison with people who show talent as artists, musicians, athletes, etc. when they are children? Have students known personally any such “gifted” people?

Writing—Students can rewrite the story of Sam Patch as a tall tale (see below) using the concept of exaggeration and making him even more superhuman.

Research—Another well-known American daredevil is Evel Knievel. Students can find information about him using print or online resources and can compare his life with that of Sam Patch.

Literature

Tall Tales—Although true, *Sam Patch* follows the format of a tall tale, since it includes many of the same characteristics: (seeming) exaggerations, main character has a problem to solve, superhuman abilities, funny plot points, action. Students can read stories about well-known tall tale characters such as Paul Bunyan, Mike Fink, Pecos Bill, Johnny Appleseed, Calamity Jane, John Henry, or Davy Crockett, many of which were based on real people.

Biography—Students can search in their school or public libraries for the heroes and heroines mentioned above to determine which were actually real people. Have them compare the facts about their lives with those passed down in tall tales.

Geography

Students may use an atlas or a wall map of the northeastern United States to locate the places named in the story: Pawtucket, RI; Paterson, NJ; Passaic Falls, NJ; Hoboken, NJ; Niagara Falls, NY; Goat Island, NY; Rochester, NY; Genesee Falls, NY; and the Erie Canal.

Students can look at photographs of Niagara Falls, Passaic Falls, and Genesee Falls at <http://images.google.com/images> by entering each name (separately).

Mathematics

Younger students often do not have a clear concept of distances such as Sam’s jumps (70-125 feet). Students can divide each of Sam’s jumps by 3 and then use a yardstick to measure out (perhaps on the school playground) exactly how far Sam jumped.

Art

The story of Sam Patch would make a good movie. Students can pick the most important scenes of Sam’s story and create a storyboard of his life and feats. They can then dramatize it for the class.

SAM PATCH: Daredevil Jumper 978-0-8234-1741-4

Classroom activities prepared by Sandy Schuckett, school library consultant.