

## ACTIVITY 2

### ROLL OUT OR ROLL UP

In Chapter 2 of *Wisconsin Forest Tales*, students experience lumber camp life through the eyes of a young man named Johnny. In this activity, students put themselves in Johnny's shoes by choosing a camp job and nickname and writing a story about their first day at work.

## BACKGROUND

During the lumberjack era of the late 1800s, lumber camps had a culture all their own. Made up of men of different nationalities, the crews had to find ways to get along and communicate with one other while getting their work done.

Since the men frequently spoke different languages, lumbermen made up new words

to communicate with one another. From *agropelter* to *zippo*, lumberjacks created more than 4,000 new words. Most of these words, however, have faded along with the lumberjack era.

In addition to creating new words to communicate better with one another, lumberjacks also created their own fun and their own sense of community. Upon returning to camp each night, lumbermen peeled off several layers of wet wool clothing and hung them on balsam racks over the hot stove to dry out. After dinner they passed the time talking, storytelling, singing, or playing the fiddle and harmonica.

Since lumberjacks only had each other, they found creative ways to entertain themselves when they got a break from work. A common form of entertainment was playing games. One such game is described in the book *Lumberjack Lingo* by L. Sorden and J. Vallier. In a game called "rooster fight," broom handles were placed under the knees of two squatting men. Each man's hands were then tied to either side of their broom handle. The two men butted into each other to see who would tip over first. Games such as this were probably as entertaining to watch as they were to participate in.

### LESSON OBJECTIVE

Upon completion of this activity, students will be able to:

- Describe what life was like in a lumber camp.

### TIME

Introduction.....10 minutes

Activity.....45 minutes

Conclusion.....30 minutes

### MATERIALS

- Writing paper and pencils
- Drawing paper and crayons, markers, or colored pencils
- Overhead projector
- Overhead transparency of the Lumberjack Story
- One worksheet per student

### SUBJECT AREAS ADDRESSED

Language Arts  
Social Studies  
Visual Arts



# INTRODUCTION

Explain to your students that lumberjacks came from many different backgrounds. Thus, they spoke different languages. There were many things they needed to communicate about, so they made up a language of their own. Tell your students that words like “flitch” and “salusiver” sound silly to us now, but they had meaning to the lumberjacks. Project the Lumberjack Story on an overhead projector.

## LUMBERJACK STORY (see page 11)

A lumberjack sat in a hospital. When a nurse asked him how he got hurt, he replied, “The **ground loader** threw the **beads** around a pine log. He claimed he had called for a **Saint Croix** but he received a **Saginaw**; she gunned, broke three of my **slats** and one of my **stilts**, and also a very fine **skid**.” The nurse said, “I don’t understand.” His reply was, “I don’t either. He must have been **yaps**.”

Ask a student to read the story out loud to the class. Then go back and point out the words that are in bold print. Ask if any of your students know what the term “ground loader” means or if anyone has ever heard of the word “yaps.” Now, pass out the worksheets to your students and point out the definitions at the top of the sheet. Have another student read through the story again, but this time ask him/her to stop at each word in bold. Ask different students to read the definitions for each word before continuing with the story. Once your students know what all the bold words mean, see if anyone can tell the story in their own words.



## ACTIVITY

1) Discuss with your students that within each lumber company there were many different jobs. Have your students look back through Chapter 2 of Wisconsin Forest Tales to list and describe as many different jobs as they can. As your students describe the jobs, have everyone write the descriptions down under each job title on their worksheet. (*Boss was in charge*

*of everything, cookees helped serve the meals, foreman was the leader of the crew, jacks cut trees, swampers and skidders trimmed logs and hauled them to the trail using oxen, teamsters loaded logs on the sleighs, road monkeys kept the sleigh road in good shape, hay man on the hill spread hay to slow the heavy sleds going downhill, chickadees shoveled horse manure off the track, sky loaders loaded logs on top of sleighs and river pigs rode logs down the river.*)

2) Remind students that at the end of Chapter 2 Red offers Johnny a job in his new lumber company. Have your students imagine they are Johnny. Ask them, “If you could choose any job in Red and Ole’s new company, which job would it be? Why?”. Give your class time to think about their answer and then ask them to write their answer down on their worksheet. Allow several students tell which job they would want and why.

3) Next ask students to look back through the chapter and list all the nicknames they can find for different characters from the story. (*Boss Larson, Cook, Red, Little Ole, and Three-Finger Ole are some of the nicknames used in the story.*) Show your students the list of nicknames on their worksheet and explain that these are examples of nicknames given to real lumberjacks. Give your students time to review the list of nicknames and create a unique nickname for themselves. Remind your students that their nicknames should somehow reflect themselves or the lumberjack job they chose. When everyone has something written down, ask several students to share their nicknames with the class.

4) Now explain to your class that they will draw a picture of themselves doing the job they chose. Ask them to write their nickname above the drawing at the top of the paper. Below the drawing, they should write the name of their job. Explain to your students that when they are finished with their drawing, they need to get out a second sheet of paper and write a one-page story describing their first day on the job. Each student should use at least three lumberjack words in their story. Remind them to refer back to the definitions given on their worksheet and in their books.



# CONCLUSION

After each student has had time to complete a drawing and write a story, have your students choose one of the following two activities as a conclusion to the lesson.

1. Choose a character from Chapter 2 of Wisconsin Forest Tales. Draw a caricature of what you think that character looked like. Include the tools they used to do their job in the drawing.

Or

2. Imagine that you are starting your own lumber company. You will need to have an individualized timber mark to keep track of your logs. Draw a picture of what your timber mark would look like.

When everyone has had a chance to complete their final drawing, ask several students to share their drawings from the main activity and from the concluding activity with the entire class. Ask questions like: Why did you choose that job? Why did you choose to draw that character from the story? How does your timber mark reflect you?



# ASSESSMENT

Remind your students that a lumber camp had a culture all its own, including its own language. Now that the lumber era is over, many parts of that culture no longer exist except in history books. Ask each student to make a list of things that were a part of the lumbermen's daily lives that are no longer a part of our daily lives today.

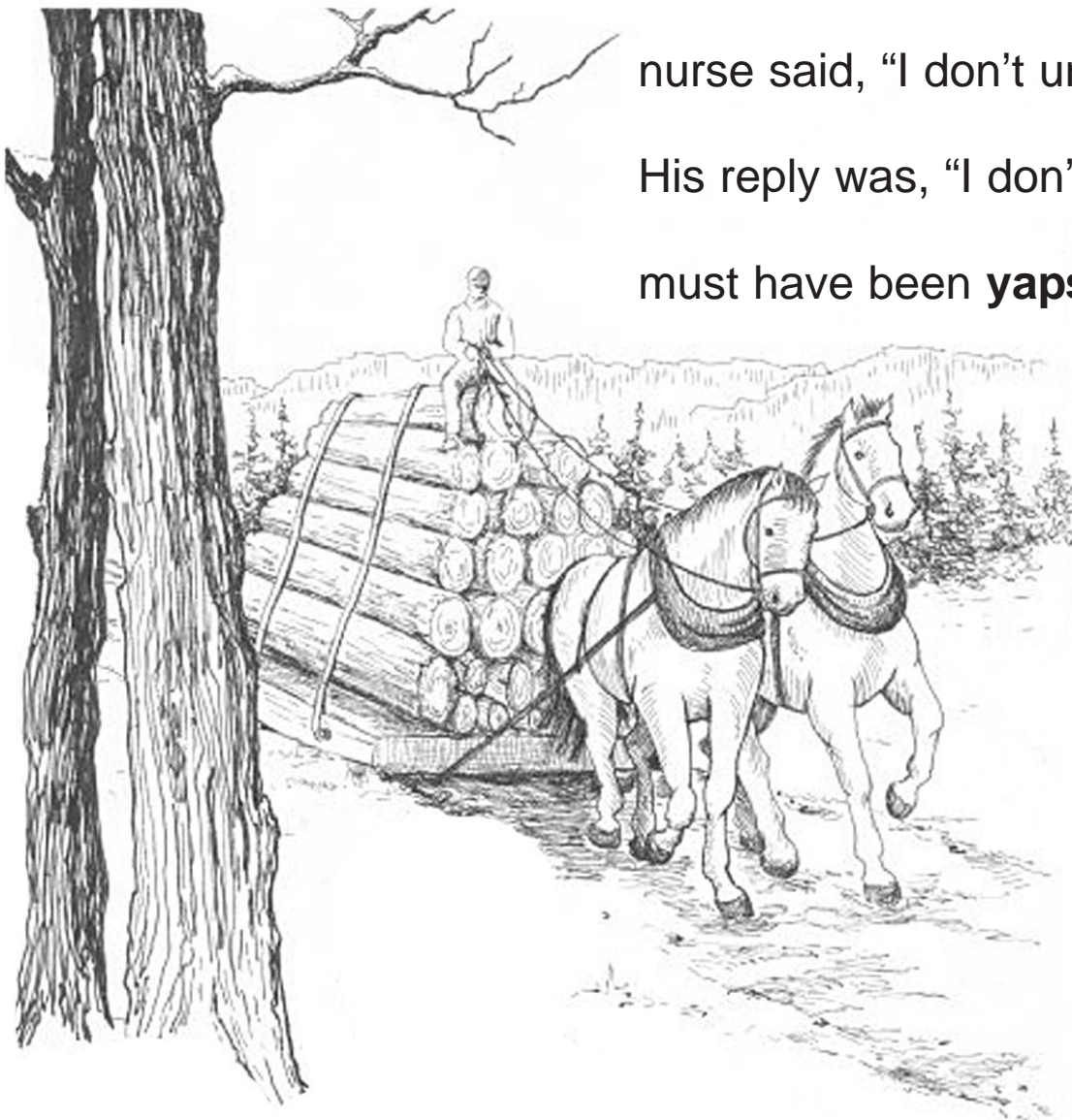


# LUMBERJACK STORY

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nurse said, “I don’t understand.”

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# LINGO - Additional definitions are listed on page 42 of Wisconsin Forest Tales.

**Agropelter** - A horrible animal that lived in hollow trees mostly in Minnesota. Any lumberjack walking near its home was killed by a falling limb.

**Beads** - A chain used in loading logs.

**Flitch** - Part of a hog prepared for eating; bacon.

**Ground Loader** - A member of the crew who guides the logs up on the skids.

**Saginaw** - The larger end of a log. Opposite of Saint Croix.

**Saint Croix** - The smaller end of a log. Opposite of Saginaw.

**Salusiver** - A match.

**Skid** - Large timbers used to hold and support logs before loading.

**Slats** - A person's ribs.

**Stilts** - A person's legs.

**Yaps** - Crazy; someone out of their mind.

**Zippo** - A small logging company.



# JOBS - Write a description of each job.

**Boss**

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**Cooke**

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**Foreman**

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**Jacks**

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**Swampers and skidders**

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**Teamsters**

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**Road monkeys**

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**Hay man on the hill**

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**Chickadees**

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**Sky loaders**

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**River pigs**

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Which job would you want to do? Why?

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**NICKNAMES** – Nicknames of real lumberjacks:

**Jimmie on the Trail**  
**Pancake Billie**

**Rattlesnake Pete**  
**Dirty Bill**

**Whispering Bill**  
**Clothes Pin Ole**

What would your nickname be? Create a nickname for yourself that describes you or relates to the job you would want in a lumber company.

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