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According to Barre Toelken, feathers, beadwork, dance steps and music, the events in a story, the shape of a dwelling, or items of traditional food can be viewed as icons of cultural meaning. Though some neighboring cultures hold similar beliefs, others can be quite different from one another. The most common myths are the creation myths, that tell a story to explain how the earth was formed, and where humans and other beings came from. Others may include explanations about the sun, moon, constellations, specific animals, seasons, and weather. Some are called "hero stories"; these are stories of people who lived at one time, and who were immortalized and remembered through these tales. There are "trickster stories", about the different trickster figures of the tribes, spirits who may be either helpful or dangerous, depending on the situation. There are also tales that are simply warnings; they warn against doing something that may harm in some way. Many of these tales have morals or some form of belief that is being taught. This is how the things were remembered.

Founding myths[ edit ] The founding of the United States is often surrounded by legends and tall tales. These narratives may be true and may be false or may be a little true and a little false; the veracity of the stories is not a determining factor. Christopher Columbus[ edit ] Christopher Columbus , as a hero and symbol to the then immigrants, is an important figure in the pantheon of American myth. His status, not unlike most American icons, is representative not of his own accomplishments, but the self-perception of the society which chose him as a hero. Having effected a separation from England and its cultural icons, America was left without history's heroes on which to base a shared sense of their social selves. Washington Irving was instrumental in popularizing Columbus. The book was very popular, and contributed to an image of the discoverer as a solitary individual who challenged the unknown sea, as triumphant Americans contemplated the dangers and promise of their own wilderness frontier. As a consequence of his vision and audacity, there was now a land free from kings, a vast continent for new beginnings. In the years following the Revolution the poetic device "Columbia" was used as a symbol of both Columbus and America. Too late in the season to plant crops, many were not accustomed to manual labor. Within a few months, some settlers died of famine and disease. Only thirty-eight made it through their first year in the New World. Captain John Smith , a pirate turned gentleman turned the settlers into foragers and successful traders with the Native Americans, who taught the English how to plant corn and other crops. Smith led expeditions to explore the regions surrounding Jamestown, and it was during one of these that the chief of the Powhatan Native Americans captured Smith. The Rock, or one traditionally identified as it, has long been memorialized on the shore of Plymouth Harbor in Plymouth, Massachusetts. The holiday of Thanksgiving is said to have begun with the Pilgrims in . Some friendly Native Americans including Squanto helped the Pilgrims survive through the first winter. The perseverance of the Pilgrims is celebrated during the annual Thanksgiving festival. His angry father confronted the young Washington, who proclaimed "I can not tell a lie" and admitted to the transgression, thus illuminating his honesty. This anecdote cannot be independently verified. Samuel Clemens Mark Twain is also known to have spread the story while lecturing, personalizing it by adding "I have a higher and greater standard of principle. Washington could not lie. With the House undecided on whether to mobilize for military action against the encroaching British military force, Henry argued in favor of mobilization. According to Wirt, Henry ended his speech with words that have since become immortalized: There is, however, no credible historical evidence that the story is true. Research conducted by the National Museum of American History notes that the story of Betsy Ross making the first American flag for General George Washington entered into American consciousness about the time of the centennial celebrations. In the book *The Star-Spangled Banner: The Making of an American Icon*, Smithsonian experts point out that accounts of the event appealed to Americans eager for stories about the revolution and its heroes and heroines. Tall Tales[ edit ] The tall tale is a

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fundamental element of American folk literature. A tall tale is a story with unbelievable elements, related as if it were true and factual. Some such stories are exaggerations of actual events; others are completely fictional tales set in a familiar setting, such as the American Old West, or the beginning of the Industrial Revolution. They are usually humorous or good-natured. The line between myth and tall tale is distinguished primarily by age; many myths exaggerate the exploits of their heroes, but in tall tales the exaggeration looms large, to the extent of becoming the whole of the story. Based on historical figures[ edit ] John Chapman September 26, 1774 – March 18, 1845, widely known as Johnny Appleseed, was an American pioneer nurseryman who introduced apple trees to large parts of Pennsylvania, Ohio, Indiana, and Illinois. He became an American legend while still alive, largely because of his kind and generous ways, and the symbolic importance he attributed to apples. Johnny Appleseed is remembered in American popular culture by his traveling song or Swedenborgian hymn "The Lord is good to me Daniel Boone November 2, 1733 – October 22, 1820" September 26, 1731 – September 26, 1837, was an American pioneer, explorer, and frontiersman whose frontier exploits made him one of the first folk heroes of the United States. He is commonly referred to in popular culture by the epithet, "King of the Wild Frontier". He represented Tennessee in the U. Martha Jane Canary May 1, 1832 – August 1, 1881, better known as Calamity Jane, was an American frontierswoman, and professional scout best known for her claim of being an acquaintance of Wild Bill Hickok. She is said to have also exhibited kindness and compassion, especially to the sick and needy. Jigger Johnson, was a lumberjack and log driver from northern New England who is known for his numerous off-the-job exploits, such as catching bobcats alive with his bare hands, and drunken brawls. The "Ballad of John Henry" is a musical rendition of his story. Fictional characters[ edit ] Paul Bunyan is a lumberjack figure in North American folklore and tradition. One of the most famous and popular North American folklore heroes, he is usually described as a giant as well as a lumberjack of unusual skill, and is often accompanied in stories by his animal companion, Babe the Blue Ox. The character originated in folktales circulated among lumberjacks in the Northeastern United States and eastern Canada, first appearing in print in a story published by Northern Michigan journalist James MacGillivray in The Lone Ranger is a fictional hero of the west who fought raiders and robbers in the Texas area. The sole survivor of a group of six rangers, he set out to bring the criminals who killed his brother to justice. John the Conqueror also known as High John the Conqueror, and many other folk variants, is a folk hero from African-American folklore. John the Conqueror was an African prince who was sold as a slave in the Americas. Despite his enslavement, his spirit was never broken and he survived in folklore as a sort of a trickster figure, because of the tricks he played to evade his masters. Since various Molly Pitcher tales grew in the telling, many historians regard Molly Pitcher as folklore rather than history, or suggest that Molly Pitcher may be a composite image inspired by the actions of a number of real women. The name itself may have originated as a nickname given to women who carried water to men on the battlefield during the war. Captain Stormalong was an American folk hero and the subject of numerous nautical-themed tall tales originating in Massachusetts. Legendary and folkloric creatures[ edit ] Bigfoot, also known as "Sasquatch", is the name given to an ape-like creature that some believe inhabit mostly forests in the Pacific Northwest region of, and throughout the entirety of, North America. Bigfoot is usually described as a large, hairy, bipedal humanoid. Generally, scientists discount the existence of Bigfoot due to the impact that it would have on the currently assumed evolutionary lineage of humans, that Homo Sapien is the last remaining species of Hominid. There are more than sightings that are reported yearly. Champ is the name given to a reputed lake monster living in Lake Champlain, a natural freshwater lake in North America. The lake crosses the U. The creature is often described as a flying biped with hooves, but there are many different variations. The most common description is that of a kangaroo-like creature with the face of a horse, the head of a dog, leathery bat-like wings, horns, small arms with clawed hands, cloven hooves and a forked tail. It has been reported to move quickly as to avoid human contact, and often is described as emitting a "blood-curdling scream". The White Lady is a type of female ghost reportedly seen in rural areas and associated with some local legend of tragedy. They are often associated with an individual family line or said to be a harbinger of death, similar to a banshee. Mothman is a mythical half

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moth half man from Point Pleasant, West Virginia described as a large humanoid with moth features on its face and large wings with fur covering its body. Mothman has been blamed for the collapse of the Silver Bridge. Hodag The Hodag is mythical beast that is said to inhabit the forests of Northern Wisconsin, particularly around the city of Rhinelander. The Hodag has a reptilian body with the horns of a bull, and is said to have a penchant for mischief. Other folkloric creatures include the fearsome Jackalope , the Nain Rouge of Detroit, Michigan, Wendigo of Minnesota and Chessie , a legendary sea monster said to live in Chesapeake Bay. Literature[ edit ] Santa Claus , also known as Saint Nicholas, Father Christmas, or simply "Santa", is a figure with legendary, mythical, historical and folkloric origins. The modern figure of Santa Claus was derived from the Dutch figure, Sinterklaas, which may, in turn, have its origins in the hagiographical tales concerning the Christian Saint Nicholas. Nicholas ", also known as "The Night Before Christmas" is a poem first published anonymously in and generally attributed to Clement Clarke Moore. The poem, which has been called "arguably the best-known verses ever written by an American", [7] is largely responsible for the conception of Santa Claus from the mid-nineteenth century to today, including his physical appearance, the night of his visit, his mode of transportation, the number and names of his reindeer, as well as the tradition that he brings toys to children. The poem has influenced ideas about St. Nicholas and Santa Claus from the United States to the rest of the English-speaking world and beyond. Is There a Santa Claus? The editorial, which included the famous reply " Yes, Virginia, there is a Santa Claus ", has become a part of popular Christmas folklore in the United States and Canada. Frank Baum and illustrated by W. Originally published by the George M. Hill Company in Chicago on May 17, , it has since been reprinted numerous times, most often under the name The Wizard of Oz, which is the name of both the stage play and the well-known adaptation film version, starring Judy Garland. The story chronicles the adventures of a young girl named Dorothy Gale in the Land of Oz, after being swept away from her Kansas farm home in a tornado. Thanks in part to the MGM movie, it is one of the best-known stories in American popular culture. American folk music Native Americans were the earliest inhabitants of the land that is today known as the United States and played its first music. Beginning in the 17th century, immigrants from the United Kingdom, Ireland, Spain, Germany and France began arriving in large numbers, bringing with them new styles and instruments. African slaves brought musical traditions, and each subsequent wave of immigrants contributes to a melting pot. Folk music includes both traditional music and the genre that evolved from it during the 20th century folk revival. The term originated in the 19th century but is often applied to music that is older than that. Their studies expanded to include Native American music, but still treated folk music as a historical item preserved in isolated societies.

### Chapter 2 : The History and Folklore of North American Wildflowers by Timothy Coffey

*The History and Folklore of American Wildflowers is a very informative book. It categorizes plants by family, then subcategories then several more times. It is a reference/textbook and is meant to be used as a resource, but I read it cover to cover.*

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*covers the popular lore, social history, and practical use of more than North American plant species from pre-colonial times to today.*

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*The History and Folklore is less than the title suggests. It is basically a compilation of folklore the author found in the sources consulted, including occasional poems. It is basically a compilation of folklore the author found in the sources consulted, including occasional poems.*

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