

AMERICAN  
TALL TALES

# 美国民间传奇

英语课外读物



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〔美〕艾德里安·斯托坦伯格

许正本 许瀚云 译注

上海译文出版社

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## 译者的话

每个国家都有自己的文化传统。其中，神话、传说占有不可低估的地位。美国是一个年轻的国家，限于历史，它没有流传悠久的神话；它的民间传说也是年轻的，数量不多，然而却具有独特的浪漫色彩，丰富的想象力。我们介绍这本小册子是想把读者带到一个传奇世界，随着作者的笔触海阔天空地去漫游。

原著问世后颇受读者欢迎，多次重版。现根据一九七六年版本译出。全书包括八个短篇，记述的都是美国建国初期普通的劳动者：伐木工人、牧民、猎手、海员、船工、铁路工人、钢铁工人以及苹果种植者。美国一位评论家威克利指出：“这里记述的是美国民间传说中最坚强的英雄人物。这些当年美国拓荒时代的流浪汉，今天通过一位诗人细腻传神的笔触，海阔天空，自由自在地活跃在纸上，正如同他们当年活跃在美国海阔天空、自由自在的拓荒时代那样。”

本书由邵京、梁正方等同志校阅指教，谨此致谢。

一九八七年一月

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## Sky-bright Axe — Paul Bunyan

Some people say that Paul Bunyan wasn't much taller than an ordinary house. Others say he must have been<sup>1</sup> a lot taller to do all the things he did, like sticking trees into his pockets and blowing birds out of the air when he sneezed<sup>2</sup>. Even when he was a baby, up in Maine,<sup>3</sup> he was so big he knocked down a mile of trees just by rolling over in his sleep.<sup>4</sup>

Everyone was nervous about what might happen when Baby Paul grew older and started crawling. Maine wouldn't have any forests left<sup>5</sup>.

Paul's father, who was an ordinary-sized<sup>6</sup> man, was a bit nervous about it all himself. One night he had wakened to find his bed down on the floor<sup>7</sup>. There beside it sat Baby Paul, a crosscut saw in one hand<sup>8</sup>. In the

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1. must + have + 过去分词: 想必, 表示对过去事情的推测。 2. to do ... sneezed: 不定式短语作结果状语, 修饰 taller. 其中 sticking ... blowing ... 两个动名词短语作介词 like 并列宾语, 构成介词短语, 作 things 的同位语。 3. up in Maine: 远在缅因州, up 往往指“向(在)…的内地”。 4. so ... that ... 句型; 本书中, 此类句型往往省略 that。 5. wouldn't have ... left: 不会剩下..., 虚拟语气, 表示与过去事实相反。 6. ordinary-sized: 普通身材的。 7. to find his bed down on the floor: 发觉他的床倒塌在地板上。不定式短语作结果状语。 8. a crosscut saw in one hand: 独立主格结构, 主格名词(作逻辑主语)+介词短语(作逻辑谓语), 在句中作状语, 表示伴随动作或情况。

other hand he held one of the sawed-off legs of the bed. He was chewing on it to help his teeth grow.

"I'll have to put him somewhere safe," Paul's father decided, "where he won't be a public nuisance."

He cut down some tall trees growing near his own cabin and built a boat shaped like a cradle<sup>9</sup>. Paul's mother tucked Paul into it. Then Paul's parents put a long rope on the floating cradle and let it drift out to sea a little way.

It was a lovely, blue-green place for a cradle, with fish flashing around and the waves making small hump-backed motions underneath<sup>11</sup>. Baby Paul sucked his thumb and watched the seagulls flying over, light shaking from beneath their wings<sup>12</sup>. Paul smiled, and then he hiccupped. The hiccup started a gale that nearly blew a fishing boat all the way to the North Pole.

Finally, Paul went to sleep. He snored so loudly the gulls went flapping<sup>13</sup> toward land for they thought a thunderstorm was coming. Then young Paul had a bad dream, brought on by<sup>14</sup> the extra-large ham his mother had given him for breakfast. He tossed about<sup>15</sup> in his

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9. safe: 作后置定语。单个形容词或分词在修饰不定代词(不定副词)时, 一般都后置。 10. growing ...: 现在分词短语作定语, 修饰 trees; shaped ...: 过去分词短语作定语, 修饰 boat。 11. (with) fish flashing around ... underneath: 闪闪发光的鱼儿在周围游回, 波浪在下面轻轻起伏。独立主格结构, 作状语, 表示伴随情况。 12. light shaking ... wings: 它们的翅膀下闪出亮光。 13. go flapping: 振翅飞去。go + -ing 结构, go 在这词组中表示方向。 14. brought on by: 引起, 导致。 15. toss about: 辗转反侧。

sleep and started the cradle rocking. Each time the cradle rocked it sent a wave as big as a building toward shore. Paul tossed harder, and the waves grew even larger, bigger than cities. They smashed against the shore and threatened to drown everything on land.

People scampered up church steeples. They scrambled onto roof tops. They clawed their way up into trees, and they yelled for the government to save them. The settlers for miles around<sup>16</sup> put rifles on their shoulders and marched up to Paul's father.

"Get that baby out of here!" they shouted. "He's a danger to the whole state. A baby like that is against the Constitution!"

Paul's father, and his mother, too, couldn't help feeling<sup>17</sup> a bit proud of how strong Paul was. But they knew that the smartest thing to do was to move away. No one seems to know exactly where they went. Wherever it was, Paul didn't cause too much trouble for the rest of the time he was growing up. His father taught him certain things which helped.

"Don't lean too hard against smallish trees or buildings, Son," his father told him. "And if there are towns or farmers' fields in your way,<sup>18</sup> step around them."

And Paul's mother told him, "Never pick on anybody

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16. for miles around: 周围几英里内的。介词短语作定语,修饰 settlers; for 表示距离。

17. couldn't help + 动名词作宾语,意为“抑制不住”,“不禁…”。

18. in one's way: 拦(挡)住某人的路。



who isn't your own size, son."

Since there wasn't anyone his size around,<sup>19</sup> Paul never got into fights. Being taller than other boys, by about fifty feet or so, he was naturally the best hunter, fisherman, walker, runner, yeller, or mountain climber there was. And he was best of all at cutting down trees and turning them into lumber. In those days, when America was new, people had to cut down a lot of trees. They needed the lumber for houses, churches, town halls, ships, bridges, ballrooms, stores, pencils, wagons, and flag poles. Luckily, the trees were there, stretching in tall wind-shining rows across America<sup>20</sup>. The trees marched up mountains and down again. They followed rivers and creeks. They massed up together in purple canyons and shoved each other out of the way<sup>21</sup> on the shores of lakes. They pushed their dark roots down into rock and their glossy branches into the clouds.

Paul liked to flash a sky-bright axe over his head. He loved the smell of wood when it was cut and the look of its sap gleaming like honey. He didn't chop trees down in any ordinary way. With four strokes<sup>22</sup> he would lop all the limbs and bark off a tree, making it a tall, square

---

19. Since there wasn't anyone his size around: anyone 后省略 like 或 who was. 20. stretching ... America: 现在分词短语作状语. stretch across America: 连续不断, 横亘美国; in rows: 一行行地; wind-shining: 风吹日晒的. 21. shove each other out of the way: 你推我挤, 互不相让. 22. With four strokes: 四斧(斧头挥动四下).

post. After he had squared up<sup>23</sup> miles of forest in a half-hour, he would take an axe head and tie a long rope to it. Then he would stand straddle-legged<sup>24</sup> and swing the axe in a wide circle, yelling, "T-I-M-B-E-R-R-R! Look out!" With every swing and every yell, a hundred trees would come whooshing down.

The fallen trees had to be hauled down to a river so that they could be floated to a sawmill. Paul grew a bit tired of lugging bundles of trees under his arms, and he wished he had a strong friend to help him. Also, at times he felt lonely, not having anyone his size around<sup>25</sup>.

About the time he was feeling loneliest, there came the Winter of the Blue Snow. Paul, who was full-grown<sup>26</sup> by then, had never seen anything like the blue flakes falling from the sky. Nobody else had either, and perhaps they never will, unless it happens again. The blue snow fell softly at first, like bits of sky drifting down<sup>27</sup>. The wind rose and the flakes grew thicker. The blue snow kept falling, day after day. It covered branches and roof tops, hill and valley, with blue, and Paul thought it was about as beautiful a sight as anyone could want.

One day when Paul was out walking<sup>28</sup> in the blue

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23. square up: 摆好架势。 24. straddle-legged: 叉开双腿。复合形容  
容词作半系动词 stand 的表语, 此种结构有双重谓语功能, 言简意赅, 形象生  
动。 25. not having ... around: 周围没有象自己那号身材的人。现在分词短  
语, 作原因状语。 26. full-grown: 完全长成。是副词+分词构成的复合形  
容词。 27. drifting down: 是现在分词短语作介词宾语 bits of sky 的补  
足语。 28. be out doing = go doing: 出去干某事。

snow, he stumbled over something the size of a mountain. The mountain made a faint mooing sound and shuddered.

"Excuse me," said Paul and looked closer.

Two huge, hairy ears stuck up above the snowdrift. The ears were as blue as the snow.

"Who are you?" Paul asked. There was no answer. Paul grabbed both of the ears and pulled.

Out of the snow came a shivering, clumsy, completely blue baby ox.<sup>29</sup> Even its round, blinking eyes and its tail were blue. Only its shiny nose was black. The calf was the largest Paul had ever seen. Strong as he was,<sup>30</sup> he felt his muscles shake under the creature's weight.

"Ah! Beautiful blue baby!" Paul said. He cradled the half-frozen calf in his great arms and carried it home. There he wrapped the baby ox in warm blankets and sat up all night taking care of it. The calf did not show much sign of life until morning.<sup>31</sup> Then, as the dawn light came through the window, the ox calf stood up. The calf stretched its neck out and sloshed its wet tongue lovingly against Paul's neck<sup>32</sup>.

Paul gave a roar of laughter,<sup>33</sup> for his one ticklish spot

---

29. Out of the snow ... baby ox: 是主谓颠倒的倒装句, out of the snow 这一介词短语作状语, 放在句首, 表示强调。 30. Strong as he was: 是连词 as 的一种用法, 表语提前放在句首, 意为“尽管他如此健壮有力, 他还是...”。正常语序为 as he was strong, 意为“因为他健壮有力”。两者意义大不相同。 31. not ... until ...: 直到...才...。 32. sloshed ... against...: 吮...发出泼溅声。 sloshed its wet tongue lovingly against Paul's neck = lovingly lap Paul's neck with its wet tongue. 33. give a roar of laughter = let out a roar of laughter: 一阵大笑。

was his neck.

Paul patted the baby ox and scratched his silky, blue ears. "We will be wonderful friends, eh Babe? You will be a giant of an ox and carry forests for me on your back."

That is how it happened that Babe the Blue Ox went with Paul Bunyan when Paul started out into the world to do his mighty logging work. By that time, Babe had his full growth. People never could figure out how long Babe was. They had to use field glasses even to see from one end of Babe to the other. And there were no scales large enough to weigh Babe<sup>34</sup>. Paul did measure the distance between Babe's eyes, and that was exactly forty-two axe handle lengths and one plug of tobacco<sup>35</sup>. Every time Babe needed new iron shoes for his hoofs, a fresh iron mine had to be opened. The shoes were so heavy that a man couldn't carry one without<sup>36</sup> sinking up to his knees in solid rock.

Paul and the Blue Ox logged all over the northern timber country, from Maine to Michigan, Wisconsin, and Minnesota<sup>37</sup>. Paul hired many men to help him. These lumberjacks liked working for Paul Bunyan, because he was always good to them and made sure that they

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34. no + 名词 + 形容词(副词) + enough to; = not + 形容词(副词) + enough to. 35. plug of tobacco: 烟草块。供口嚼的烟。 36. not... without: 不...便不能, 只有...才能... 37. Michigan, Wisconsin, Minnesota: 都是美国州名。

had plenty of food.

The lumber crews liked pancakes best, but they would gobble up and slurp down the pancakes so fast that the camp cooks couldn't keep up with them, even when the cooks got up twenty-six hours before daylight<sup>38</sup>. The main problem was that the griddles the cooks used for frying the pancakes were too small!

The winter that Paul was logging on the Big Onion River in Michigan, he decided that he had to do something about making a big enough griddle. He went down to the plow works at Moline, Illinois,<sup>39</sup> and said, "I want you fellows here to make me a griddle so big I won't be able to see across it on a foggy day."

The men set to work. When they were finished, they had built a griddle so huge there was no train or wagon large enough to carry it.

"Let me think what to do," said Paul. "We'll have to turn the griddle up on end,<sup>40</sup> like a silver dollar, and roll it up to Michigan." He hitched the Blue Ox to the upturned griddle, and away they went<sup>41</sup>. It wasn't any job at all for Babe and Paul,<sup>42</sup> though they had to hike a couple of<sup>43</sup> hundred miles. A few miles from the Big Onion lumber camp, Paul unhitched Babe and let the

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38. twenty-six hours before daylight: 这里意在夸张。 39. Illinois: 美国州名。 40. turn...up on end: 把...直竖起来。 41. away they went: = they went away: 把away提前,表示强调。 42. It wasn't ... Paul: 对于宝贝和保罗来说,这根本算不了什么。 43. a couple of: 一对,两三个; a couple of hundred miles: 二三百英里。

griddle roll on by itself. When it stopped rolling, it started to spin as a penny does when it's ready to fall. It spun around and around and dug a deep hole in the ground before<sup>44</sup> it flopped down like a cover over the hole.

The lumberjacks cheered and rushed off to haul a few acres of trees into the hole for a fire. The cook and a hundred and one<sup>45</sup> helpers mixed tons of batter. When everything was ready, with the flames under the griddle blazing like a forest fire,<sup>46</sup> Paul picked out a crew of men who could stand the heat better than others. He had them strap fat, juicy slabs of bacon on their feet.<sup>47</sup>

"You men skate around on that griddle and that'll keep it well greased,<sup>48</sup>" he told them.

The men skated until the griddle shone with bacon fat. White batter came pouring<sup>49</sup> out onto the griddle and soon the smell of crisp, brown, steaming pancakes was drifting across the whole state. There were tons of pancakes — with plenty left over for Babe, who could eat a carload in one gulp.

There wasn't much Paul couldn't do, especially with Babe's help. But there was one job that seemed almost

---

44. before: 在此处作“然后”解。 45. a hundred and one: 一百零一个。也可解释为“许多”。类似的用法为: *The thousand and one nights* “一千零一夜”。 46. (with) the flames under the griddle (主格名词+定语)+ blazing like a forest fire (现在分词短语), 独立主格结构。 47. had them strap fat, juicy slabs of bacon on their feet: 把肥厚的熏肉绑在他们脚上。 48. keep it well greased: keep+宾语+宾补句型, 意为使人或事物保持在某种状态。 49. come pouring: 用法类似 go doing, come 也只表示方向, 但指朝这儿的方向, 与 go 不同。

too hard even for him.<sup>50</sup> That was in Wisconsin, on the St. Croix River. The logging road<sup>51</sup> there was so crooked, it couldn't find its own way through the timber. It would start out in one direction, then turn around<sup>52</sup> and go every which way<sup>53</sup> until it grew so snarled up it didn't know its beginning from its end<sup>54</sup>. The teamsters hauling logs over it would start home for camp and meet themselves coming back.

Maybe even Babe couldn't pull the kinks and curves out of a road as crooked as that one, Paul thought, but there was nothing to do but try<sup>55</sup>.

He gave Babe several extra pats as he put the Blue Ox's pulling harness on. Then he hitched Babe to the end of the road and stood back.

Babe lowered his head and pushed his hoofs into the earth. His muscles stood out like rows of blue hills. He strained forward, pulling at the road. He stretched so hard that his hind legs spraddled out until his belly nearly scraped the ground. The road just lay there, stubborn as could be<sup>56</sup>.

"You can do it, my big beautiful Babe!" Paul said.

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50. But there was ... him: 是 too ... to 句型, 太...以致办不到; for him 是不定式的逻辑主语, 后面省略不定式 to do. 51. logging road: 伐木的道路. 52. turn around: 转圈子, 转来转去. 53. go every which way: 乱七八糟地伸展开去. 54. snarled up it didn't know its beginning from its end: 连它(道路)自己也分不清哪儿是开头, 哪儿是结尾. 55. nothing to do but try: 但除了试一试外, 别无他法. 56. (as) stubborn as (it) could be: 顽固透顶, 要多执拗有多执拗.

Babe tried again. He strained so hard that his eyes nearly turned pink. He sweated so that<sup>57</sup> water poured from the tips of his horns. He grunted and pulled, and his legs sank into the ground like mighty blue posts.

There was a snap, and then a loud C-R-A-C-K<sup>58</sup>! Paul saw the first kink come out of the road, and he cheered. The road kept fighting back, flopping around and trying to hold on to its crooked twists and turns,<sup>59</sup> but it was no match for Babe. At last, the road gave a kind of shiver and then lay still. Babe pulled it straighter than a railroad tie.

Paul Bunyan's chest swelled up so with pride that it broke one of his suspenders.<sup>60</sup> The broken suspender whizzed up into the sky like a long rubber band. Just then, thousands of wild ducks were flying overhead. The suspender wrapped itself around the ducks and strangled the whole flock. Paul felt sorry for the ducks, but there was nothing to do but gather them up and hand them over to the cooks.<sup>61</sup>

That night, after a wonderful duck dinner, Paul's bookkeeper John Inkslinger started writing down all that had happened. He was busily scratching away<sup>62</sup> with

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57. He sweated so that: so that = so... that, so 后应有停顿。 58. C-R-A-C-K: 拟声词。

59. keep + doing: 持续做某种动作。句中 fighting ... flopping ... trying ... 三个动名词短语, 作 keep 的并列宾语。 60. Paul Bunyan's ... suspenders: 是 so ... that 句型, so 修饰作状语的介词短语 with pride。 61. but there was nothing ... cooks: 第一个 but 作连词, 表示转折。第二个 but 与 nothing 构成句型, 意为“除了...别无...”, “毫无...只有...”。 62. scratch away: 胡乱涂写。



his pen when he saw that he had only two barrels of ink left. He asked Paul what to do.

“That’s easy,” said Paul. “Don’t bother to dot your *i*’s or cross your *t*’s.<sup>63</sup> You’ll save enough ink that way to get by<sup>64</sup> until we can haul in another load of ink in the spring<sup>65</sup>. Then you can fix up the *i*’s and *t*’s.”

Winters could be very cold there<sup>66</sup> in Wisconsin and Minnesota. One year, Lake Superior<sup>67</sup> froze solid from top to bottom. In the spring, Paul had to haul all the ice out of the lake and stack it up on shore to thaw.

That same winter, men’s words froze in front of their mouths and hung stiff in the air. Brimstone Bill, who was a great talker,<sup>68</sup> was frozen in by a solid wall of words all turned to ice<sup>69</sup>. Paul had to chip the ice from around Bill’s shoulders, tie a rope to him, and have Babe pull him out.

The greatest logging job Paul ever did was in North Dakota,<sup>70</sup> where some of the trees were so tall it took a man a whole day to see up to their tops. Shortly after Paul had finished logging off<sup>71</sup> most of the white pine,

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63. Don't bother ... *t*'s: 别费心思去点 *i* 上的那一点, 划 *t* 上的那一横。

64. get by: 对付过去。 65. in the spring: 来年春天。季节名词前一般不加冠词, 如 in spring。特指时加定冠词 the。下面一段中的 in the spring 指“那年春天”。 66. Winters could be very cold there: 那里的冬天有时会非常冷。

67. Lake Superior: 苏必利尔湖, 世界最大的淡水湖, 位于美国北部。 68. a great talker: 吹牛大王。 69. all turned to ice: 过去分词短语作定语, 修饰 words。

70. North Dakota: 北达科他, 美国州名。 71. finished logging off: finish 后要跟动名词作宾语, 不能跟不定式。