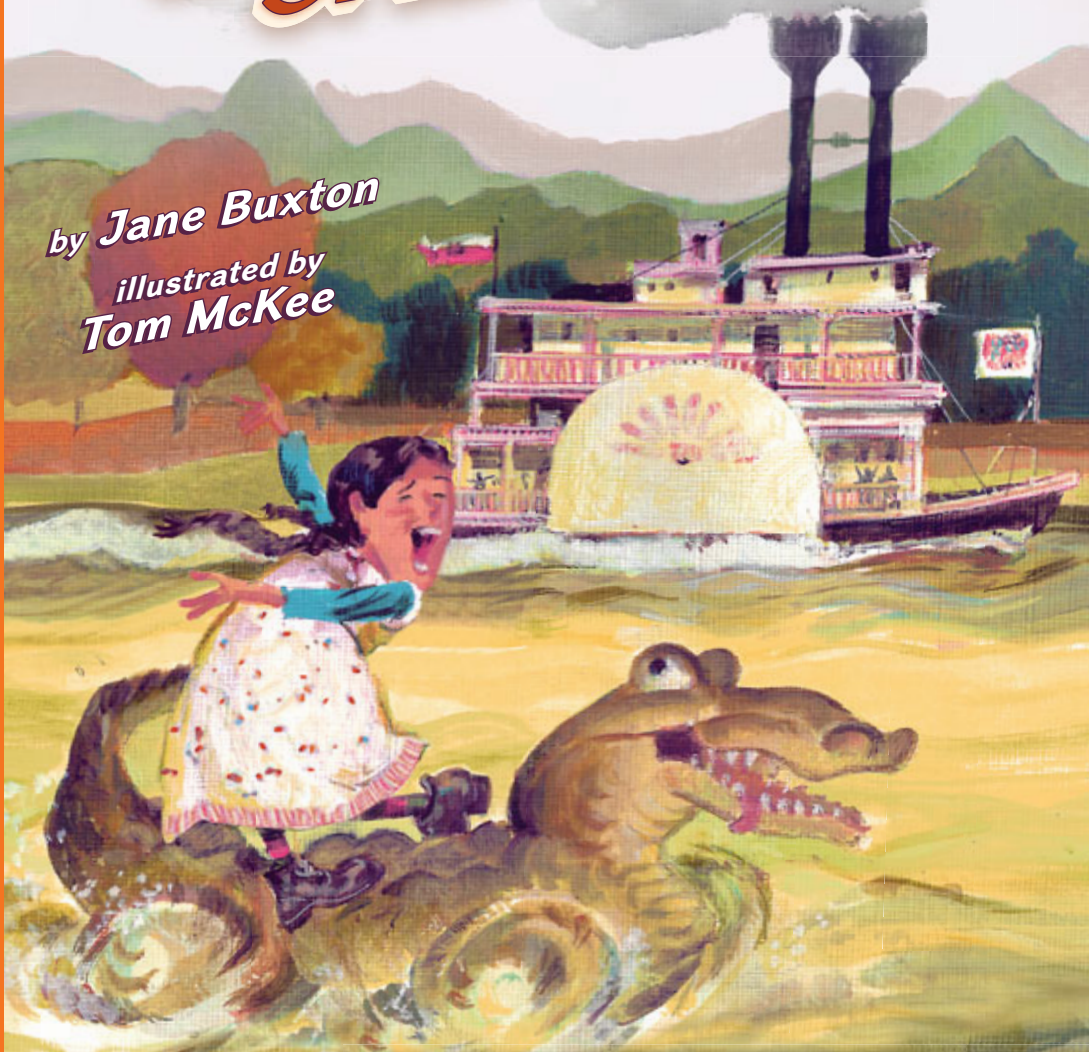


Tall Tale

THE ADVENTURES OF SAL FINK

by Jane Buxton

illustrated by
Tom McKee



Mc
Graw
Hill

PAIRED
READ

Traveling on the Mississippi

STRATEGIES & SKILLS

Comprehension

Strategy: Visualize

Skill: Cause and Effect

Vocabulary Strategy

Homographs

Vocabulary

plunged, prospector, scoffed,
settlement, shrivel, territories,
topple, withered

Content Standards

Social Studies

History

Word Count: 1,258**

**The total word count is based on words in the running text and headings only. Numerals and words in captions, labels, diagrams, charts, and sidebars are not included.



Essential Question

What are some reasons people moved west?

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CHAPTER 1
**AN
EXTRAORDINARY
GIRL**



Sal Fink was a tough, noisy, happy girl who lived by the Mississippi River in the 1850s.

When Sal yelled, people from one settlement to the next shook their heads and smiled. “What’s Mike Fink’s daughter up to now?” they would say.

Mike Fink was the most famous keelboat man who ever lived. He was the biggest, bravest, strongest man on the Mississippi River. He could topple the meanest river pirate with just one blow from his iron fist.

Sal's ma was tough, too. One look from her steely eyes and a robber would shrivel up, turn tail, and run.

Young Sal was a pint-sized version of her parents. When she was only six years old, she saw a huge snag, or branch, that had fallen into the river. Boatmen on the Mississippi hated snags because they could damage their boats. Sal decided to make a seesaw with it.

When she had finished riding the seesaw, Sal picked up that big, heavy snag in one hand. Then she tossed it onto the bank as though it were a tiny twig.

After doing this many times, some areas of the Mississippi became snag-free. The boatmen thought Sal was just the cat's pajamas for clearing the river of snags.

Sal had a pet alligator. One day they both plunged into the Mississippi River. Sal rode that alligator alongside a big steamboat. She let out a happy yell as she raced past.

The passengers gasped and put their hands over their ears. The steamboat blew its whistle, but it couldn't compete with Sal's yell.



Sal gave her loudest yell of all during a thunderstorm. Other people were sheltering in their cabins, as regular people do. But Sal wasn't a regular kid, of course. She was dancing in the rain and yelling louder than the thunder.

Suddenly a lightning bolt flew toward her. Sal grabbed it. "Don't think you're fast enough to zap me!" she scoffed. And she snapped it into little bits.

Yes—Sal Fink was an adventurous girl!

STOP AND CHECK

Why is Sal Fink extraordinary?





CHAPTER 2
LOOK OUT, SAL!

Most of Sal's adventures would have scared the socks off a regular kid, but not Sal.

Sal's scariest adventure happened in the woods one afternoon. She was kicking through the dry, withered leaves, looking for acorns for her pet pigs.

Suddenly, Sal stopped. What was that strange noise? She tiptoed to the foot of a giant oak. There was a wide hole at the bottom of the tree. Sal peered in and saw a huge mother bear and her two little ones.

Sal's mother had warned her to keep away from bears—especially bears with little ones. Her father had warned her, too. He had often told her the story of the prospector who had been killed by an angry bear trying to protect its little ones.



So Sal knew the dangers. But she had a soft spot for animals—especially baby ones. When she saw the little ones, her heart melted. “Awww, how cute,” she whispered.



The mother bear looked up and growled.

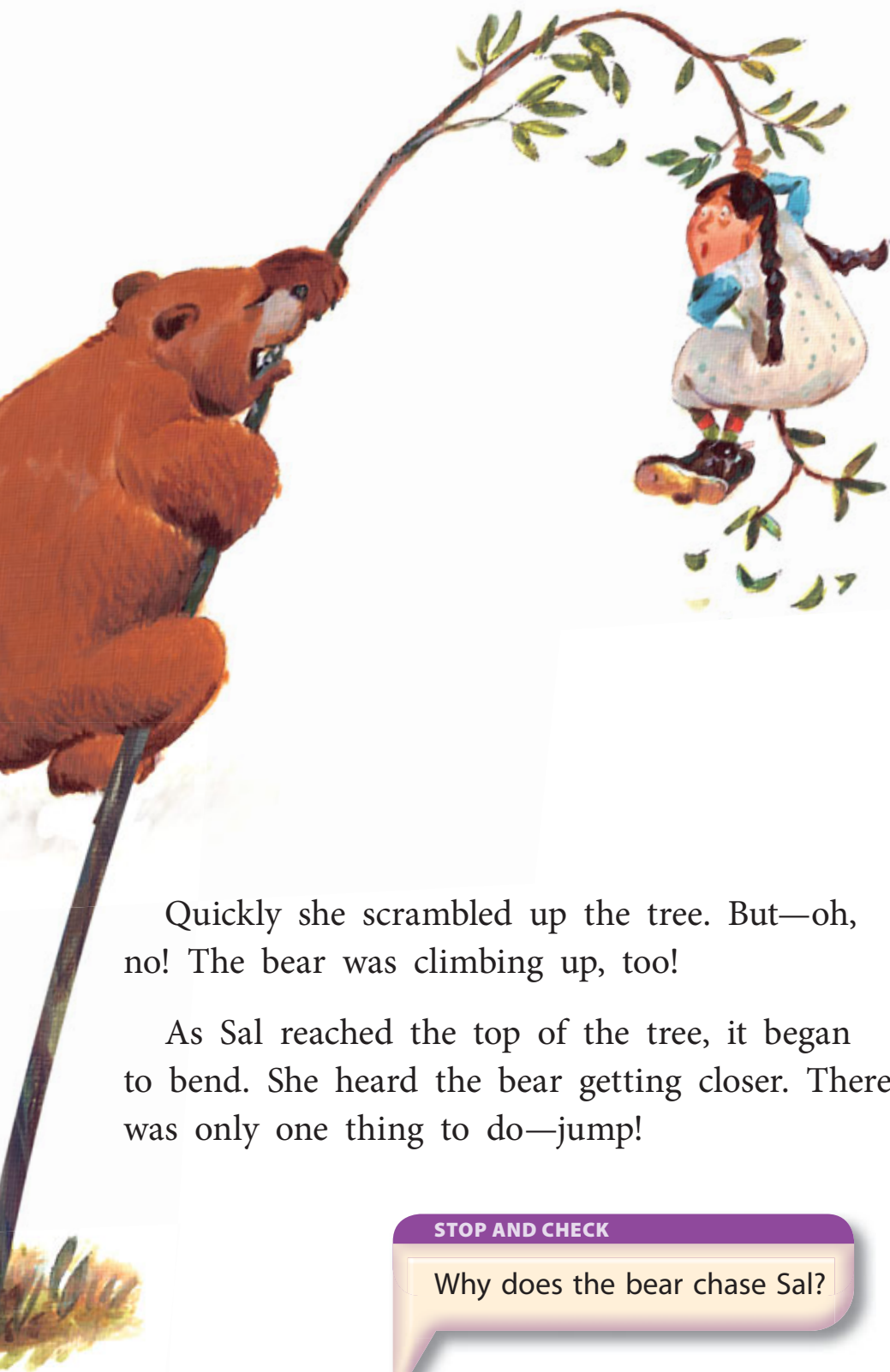
“It’s okay. I won’t hurt your babies,”
Sal promised.

The mother bear wasn't interested in Sal's promises. It opened its mouth in an angry snarl.

"You have nice teeth, but your breath's terrible," said Sal, backing away. The bear stood up. It was about to leap on Sal, but Sal leaped first. She held the bear's mouth closed as they wrestled. "I don't want to smell that breath!" she said.

Sal and the bear fought for 20 minutes. But Sal was getting hungry for dinner, so she tickled the bear's armpits. The bear hated being tickled. It just had to let Sal go.

Sal took off, but the bear took off after her. As she ran, Sal saw a tall, thin tree ahead of her. She jumped, grabbed hold of a branch, and pulled herself up.



Quickly she scrambled up the tree. But—oh, no! The bear was climbing up, too!

As Sal reached the top of the tree, it began to bend. She heard the bear getting closer. There was only one thing to do—jump!

STOP AND CHECK

Why does the bear chase Sal?

CHAPTER 3

SAL AND THE THREE BEARS



As Sal jumped, the tree broke under the bear's weight. They hit the ground together. Sal stood up, but the bear just lay there.

"Are you all right?" Sal asked, but the bear didn't move. Even when Sal stroked its paw, it didn't move. Then she noticed a big rock beside the bear's head.

"Oh, no!" cried Sal. "The bear hit its head. It's dead! Those poor cubs have no mother!" She opened her mouth and gave a long, loud howl.

Back at the cabin, Sal's mother was cooking dinner on the woodstove. She looked up when she heard Sal's cry and smiled. "Sounds like our Sal's having another adventure," she said.

Out on the wide Mississippi River, Mike Fink grinned at his men on the keelboat. "That's my daughter!" he said proudly.



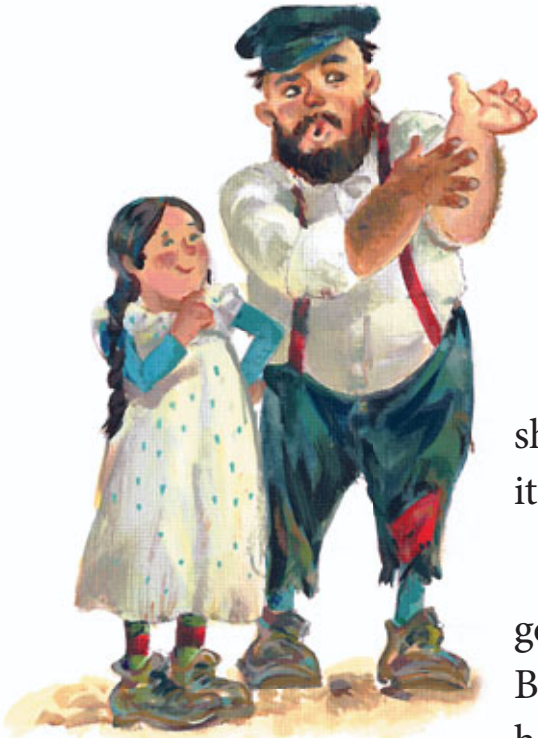
Sal knew she couldn't bear to leave the cubs all alone. "Come on, babies," Sal said to them. "We're going home." She gathered up the cubs in one arm and grabbed hold of the mother bear's front legs with the other.

Dragging a huge bear was no problem for Sal. She was home by dinnertime.

Her father was impressed. "That's a massive bear!" he said. "It'll make a good rug for my floor."

"Goodness, look!" said Sal's mother suddenly. "It's moving!"





“It’s still alive!”
shouted Sal. “Look at
its face! It’s smiling!”

Mike Fink said, “It’s
gone all tame and gentle.
Bumping its head must
have stunned it!”

“Can I keep the bears as pets?” Sal asked,
stroking the mother bear’s shaggy coat.

Her father shook his head. “What we love
about living out west is the freedom and the
space. The animals love it, too, Sal.”



Sal knew her father was right. So after dinner, she led the bears back to their den.

“See you soon, bears,” she said. She gave them each a big bear hug and skipped off toward home.

On the way, she stopped and gave a mighty yell of pure joy. It had been another wonderful, adventurous day.



STOP AND CHECK

Why does Sal's father say she must let the bears go?

Respond to Reading

Summarize

Summarize *The Adventures of Sal Fink*. Use your graphic organizer to help you.

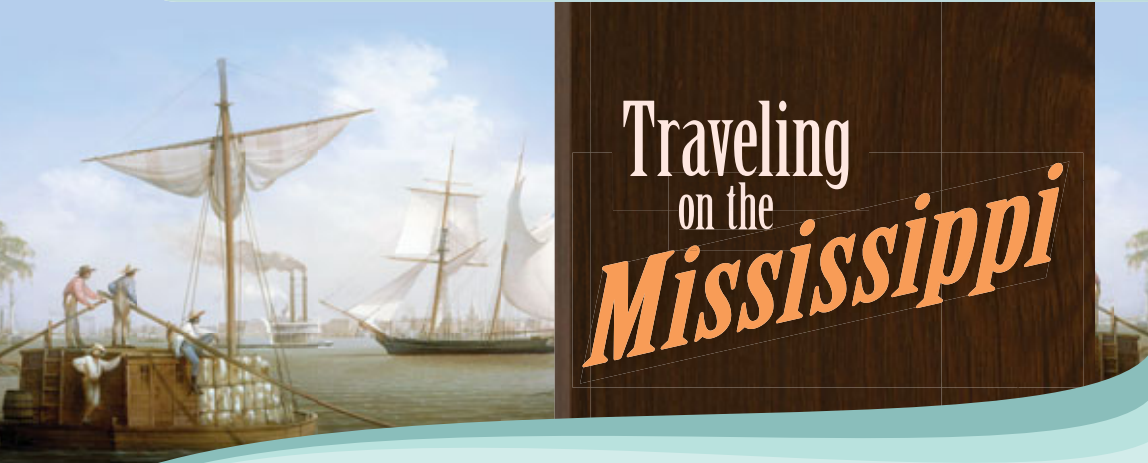
Cause → Effect
→
→
→
→

Text Evidence

1. Why is *The Adventures of Sal Fink* a tall tale?
GENRE
2. What events led to Sal bringing the bears home?
CAUSE AND EFFECT
3. Sal “couldn’t bear to leave the cubs all alone” on page 12. What does *bear* mean in this sentence?
HOMOGRAPHS
4. Write about what happened as a result of Sal’s soft spot for animals. Use details from the text in your answer.
WRITE ABOUT READING

Compare Texts

Read about life on the Mississippi in the 1800s.



The Mississippi River has long been like a highway through the United States. Long ago, Native Americans used canoes on the river to get from place to place.

In the 1700s, settlers began using the Mississippi to move crops and other goods to market. In the 1800s, settlers used flatboats and keelboats on the Mississippi to transport furs, timber, and other freight.

A flatboat was like a raft with low sides. It drifted slowly down the Mississippi River to New Orleans.

It was impossible to take the flatboat back up the river, because the current was too strong. So flatboat owners usually took their boats apart and sold them as lumber. Then they either walked hundreds of miles home or traveled by keelboat.

Keelboats were bigger and faster than flatboats. They were rowed with a pole or sailed like a sailboat. Men had to be strong, like Mike Fink, to pole a keelboat against the current.





Steamers and flatboats were a common sight on the Mississippi River.

In 1811, people began using steamboats on the Mississippi. Steamboats could carry more goods and travel much faster than keelboats, so they were able to open up new territories.

By the 1870s, railroads were being built and steam trains began to take over from steamboats as a way to transport goods.

Today freight is carried on the river by barges and tugboats. Tourists can also take a trip on the Mississippi and imagine the bustling river highway of the past.



Make Connections

How was the Mississippi River important to settlers moving west? **ESSENTIAL QUESTION**

How does *Traveling on the Mississippi* help you to understand the work Sal's father did in *The Adventures of Sal Fink*? **TEXT TO TEXT**

Focus on Genre

Tall Tales Tall tales are stories about people who are supposed to have done incredible things. The heroes of these tales often had great physical strength in a time when life was hard. A tall tale may be based on the life of a real person, but their feats are greatly exaggerated.

Read and Find This tall tale is full of examples of exaggerated feats. Sal Fink had great strength. She picked up a huge snag and tossed it over her shoulder as though it were a tiny twig (page 3). Sal rode her pet alligator up the river and yelled louder than the steamboat's whistle (page 4). Find other examples in the text that show the features of a tall tale.

Your Turn

With a partner, role-play a situation in which a teacher asks Sal about her life outside school. One person plays the part of the teacher, asking Sal questions about her adventures. The other person plays Sal, telling true but tall tale stories about her life. Write down your questions and answers, and read them to the class.

Literature Circles

Fiction

Thinkmark

Characters

How would you describe Sal Fink?

Setting

Where did *The Adventures of Sal Fink* take place?

When did it take place?

Plot

What was Sal's problem in the story?

How did she solve it?

Conclusions

What conclusions can you draw about life in the 1800s for people living by the Mississippi River?

Author's Purpose

Why do you think people tell tall tales?