

Tall Tale

THE *Great Man* OF *Nebraska*



BY
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ILLUSTRATED BY
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**PAIRED
READ**

Westward Ho!

STRATEGIES & SKILLS

Comprehension

Strategy: Visualize

Skill: Cause and Effect

Vocabulary Strategy

Homographs

Vocabulary

plunged, prospectors, scoffed,
settlements, shrivel, territories,
topple, withered

Content Standards

Social Studies

History

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**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.



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Essential Question

What are some reasons people moved west?

THE Great Man OF Nebraska

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CHAPTER 1

Cold Snow, Hot Sand

Febold Feboldson was a big man, as broad as an ox. He lived in Sweden, and everywhere he went, he bumped into people. There just wasn't enough space for a man of Febold's size.

So Febold Feboldson left his home in Sweden and went to find a better life in the United States. He spent his first few years in a city on the east coast. But Febold had the same problem there. There were too many people and not enough space.

Febold had heard stories of the land out west. There were vast, open spaces. He would be able to go for days without bumping into anyone! Febold packed up his belongings, bought himself an ox and wagon, and headed west.



Febold traveled until he reached the wide open plains of Nebraska. There was plenty of space, and it was perfect for living on.

The first thing Febold did was build a house with trees he had uprooted with his bare hands. He planted an orchard, set up some beehives, and began growing crops.

Febold was happy living a simple life. He soon realized, however, that he needed money to buy tools, clothes, and other supplies.

At this time, many people were heading even farther west. They were hoping to find gold in California. Febold wasn't interested in gold, but he thought he could make a living as a guide. He began to lead prospectors over the Rocky Mountains, their covered wagons following behind him like a train.



One winter, the snow in the Rocky Mountains grew very deep. The air turned icy cold. All the other guides decided to spend the winter in California where it was warmer. Only Febold braved the freezing weather so that he could get back to his farm.

When he arrived home, he found some prospectors waiting for him. “Febold Feboldson!” one prospector exclaimed. “Will you lead us to California?”

Febold agreed, and the wagon train set off through the deep snow.

Febold didn’t mind the cold, but they hadn’t gone more than a mile when the prospectors said they could not go on. With their teeth chattering, they told Febold that they could not bear the freezing cold, even though they were desperate to get to California.

“Isn’t there anything you can do?” a woman asked. Clever Febold started thinking, and soon, he had an idea.

Death Valley in Nevada was the hottest place that Febold had ever been. He promised the prospectors he would quickly return, and he set off for Death Valley. When he got there, he loaded up his wagon with hot desert sand. Then he headed back to the prospectors.

“See, I didn’t desert you!” he told them. “Put this sand inside your wagons, and you’ll be warm for the whole trip!” They did as they were told, and the warm sand kept them cozy all the way to California.



CHAPTER 2

Febold, King of the Weather

Febold hadn't noticed that some of the hot sand had spilled onto his farm when he set off along the trail. When he returned from California, the hot sand had turned his farm into a desert!

Febold looked over his farm. All the hot sand from Death Valley had made his fruit shrivel. His corn plants had withered and died. Dried corncobs were scattered around.

As Febold wondered what to do, the corn kernels started jumping around like crickets on a hot plate. They were exploding into popcorn. Febold scooped up the popped kernels and invented popcorn right then and there!



Febold and his animals now had something to eat (until the popcorn ran out). His crops couldn't live without water, though. The hot sand had dried out the land. Febold knew that somehow he had to make it rain.

There was a lake near the farm. Febold uprooted some of the trees near the lake. Then he dragged the huge trees into piles on the shore.

Febold set each pile alight, turning them into massive bonfires. As the fires blazed, the lake began to boil. The water turned to steam, which rose into the air.

Soon the sky was filled with thick storm clouds. Febold waited for a downpour, but nothing happened. The gray clouds hung in the sky, but it didn't rain.

Febold decided he had to scare the clouds into raining. He needed to make a huge noise. He gathered all of his pots and pans and started banging them together. But still the clouds refused to release their water.

“Hmmm,” Febold thought. “Maybe it will rain if I make all the frogs croak.”

Febold raced inside and filled a bucket with water. It was the last water on the farm because the lake had evaporated into clouds. He grabbed one of the biggest frogs lazing next to the empty lake. Then he plunged the frog into the bucket.

Surprised, the frog began to croak. Soon the other frogs were croaking, too. The noise was so loud that the clouds opened up, and it began to rain. Febold was relieved. His crops would be okay.



Unfortunately, the sand was still very hot. As soon as the rain touched the ground, it turned into fog. The fog became so thick that Febold couldn't even see his house, but at least the temperature had cooled down.

Febold decided to replant his crops even though he couldn't see anything. Feeling his way through the thick fog, Febold began sowing seeds. Soon he had learned to work by touch. "The fog isn't so bad," he thought. It kept his skin cool, and when he was thirsty, Febold just opened his mouth and took a gulp of fog.

The fog settled over the land for weeks. When his seeds sprouted, Febold realized he had a problem. With no sunlight, the seeds didn't know which way was up. They had grown upside down, and their roots were sticking out of the soil! Even worse, his animals had wandered away and become lost in the fog.



Febold decided he'd had enough. It was time to get rid of that pesky fog. He got his shears and cut the fog into long strips. He buried each strip in the ground, where at last it turned into water. He flipped each of his plants over the right way and rounded up his animals.

The sun shone through the sky, warming the plants and helping them grow. Once again, thanks to Febold, everything returned to normal!

CHAPTER 3

Making a Beeline

One day a little while later, Febold was sitting on his porch, enjoying the spring sunshine. He was happy to see everything growing again.

Just then his neighbor galloped up on his horse. “Bad news!” he shouted to Febold. “A blizzard is blowing this way from Canada. All our crops will be destroyed!”

Febold couldn’t bear to lose his crops again. He promised his neighbor that he would fix that blizzard and protect their crops.

Febold went into the meadow and began to plant daffodils. He knew that there was nothing a spring breeze liked more than a field of flowers.

Soon a lovely breeze swept up. She danced among the daffodils, admiring their beauty. She was still there when the blizzard blew in, huffing and puffing his icy breath.



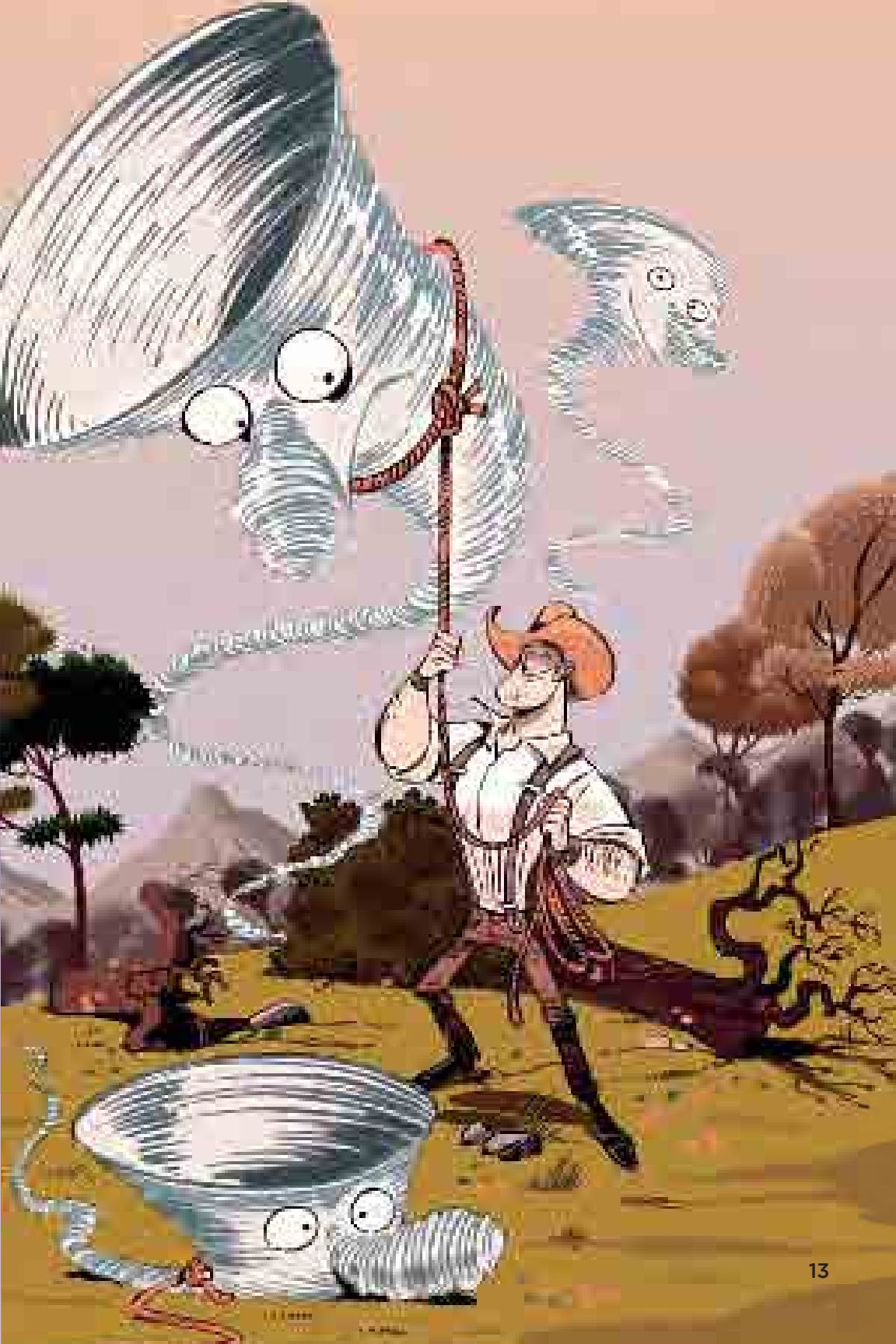
The blizzard stopped in his tracks. He was dazzled by the spring breeze. The two winds fell in love and went to Canada to get married, just as Febold knew they would. Febold had saved everyone's crops from the icy breath of the blizzard.

A year later, Febold wished he hadn't introduced the two winds! The breeze and the blizzard wanted their children to visit the place where their parents had met. They sent their three little tornadoes to Febold's farm.

The tornadoes whipped excitedly around the orchard. They made Febold's fruit trees topple over. They danced around his neighbor's place, too, uprooting all his crops.

Febold went to his barn and got some rope. He twisted it into a lasso and used it to catch the tornadoes. One by one, he tied a knot in the tornadoes' tails so that they couldn't move. Then he sat them down. "Now, I'm going to let you go," Febold told the mischievous tornadoes. "But you must promise to go to Kansas and never return to Nebraska."





The little tornadoes agreed to leave, but they didn't know how to tell the two states apart!

"I'll tell you what," said Febold. "I will plow a state line between Nebraska and Kansas. It will be perfectly straight so that you can easily tell which state you are in."

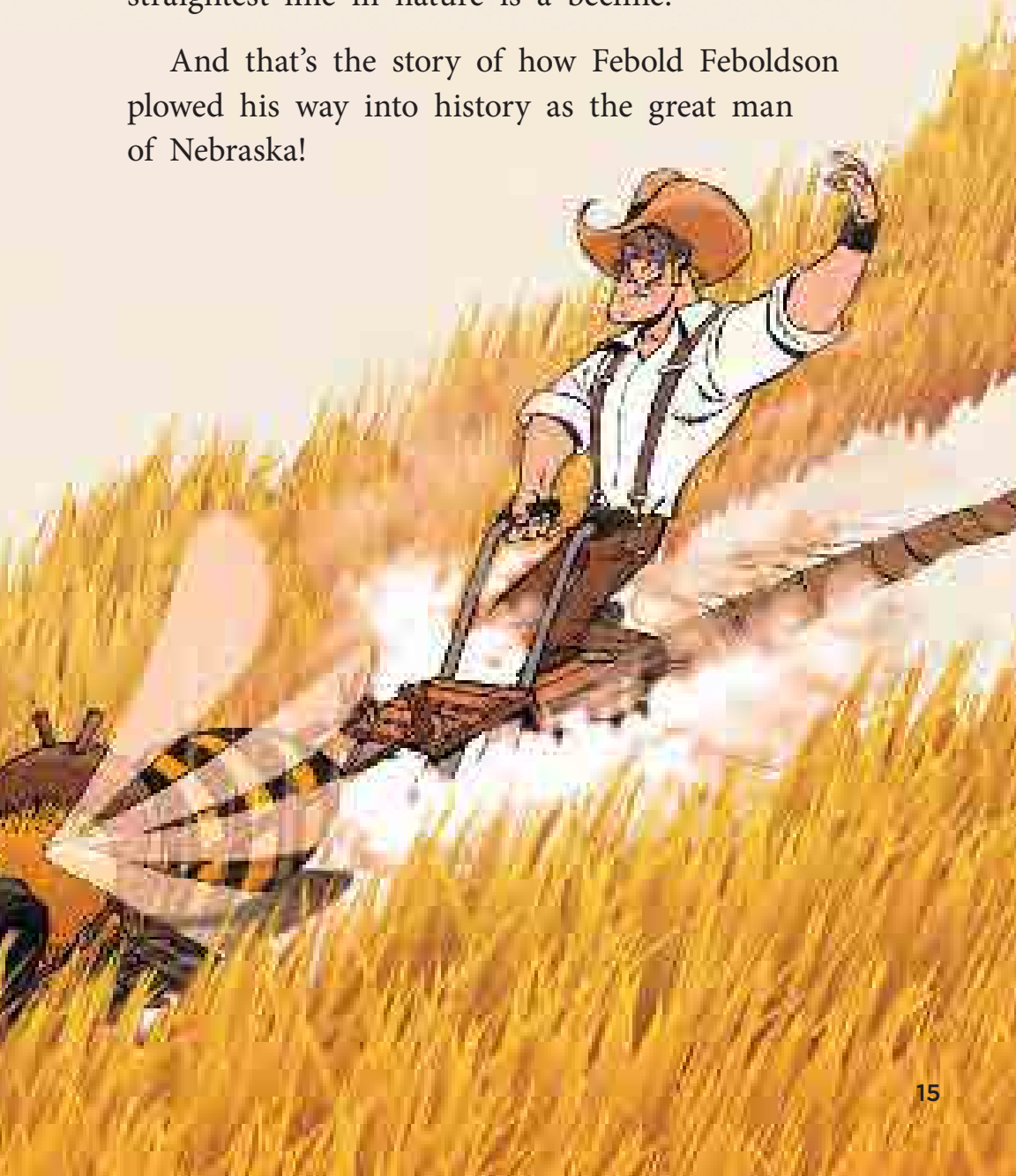
The tornadoes nodded, but Febold's neighbor scoffed. He had done a lot of plowing in his time and knew it was impossible to plow a perfectly straight line. "It can't be done," he told Febold.

Febold just smiled and got to work in his beehives. He began to breed some special bees. He chose all the big and strong bees until finally he had bred the biggest, strongest bee that ever lived.

Febold harnessed the giant bee to his plow. To everyone's amazement, his big, strong bee pulled the plow easily!

Soon Febold and the bee had plowed a perfectly straight state line. Febold had known that the straightest line in nature is a beeline.

And that's the story of how Febold Feboldson plowed his way into history as the great man of Nebraska!



Respond to Reading

Summarize

Summarize the reasons Febold Feboldson moved west. Details from your graphic organizer may help you.

Cause → Effect
→
→
→
→

Text Evidence

1. Why is *The Great Man of Nebraska* a tall tale?
GENRE
2. What events led to Febold's farm turning to a desert? **CAUSE AND EFFECT**
3. Febold loads up his wagon with "hot desert sand" on page 5. Then he says "I didn't desert you." What does each use of the word *desert* mean on this page? **HOMOGRAPHS**
4. Write about what happened after the hot sand spilled onto Febold's land. Use details from the text in your answer. **WRITE ABOUT READING**

Compare Texts

Read about the pioneers who made new lives in the west.



WESTWARD HO!

Like Febold Feboldson, many people traveled west in the 1800s to begin new lives as farmers on the Great Plains. When they arrived there, they faced many hardships.

THE CROWDED EAST

In the nineteenth century, millions of people from Europe immigrated to the United States looking for a better life. People arrived by ship on the east coast, and soon the cities there became crowded.

In 1862, the government passed the Homestead Act, which gave farmers free or cheap land if they made improvements to it. This encouraged thousands of people to move out west to farm on the Great Plains.

ON THE TRAIL

Traveling west wasn't easy. People put all their possessions in covered wagons. To make the load lighter for the animals to pull, people walked alongside the wagon for up to 15 miles (24 kilometers) a day.

It took months to reach the Great Plains. The route was dangerous. There were rivers to cross and many accidents.



***** WHOSE LAND? *****

Native Americans had been living in the west for generations. When the government offered their territories to new settlers, the Native Americans were forced to leave. Many had to live in new settlements called reservations. Their new life in the settlements was difficult. Many lost all their possessions and had to start completely new lives.

SETTLING THE PLAINS

People on the Great Plains had to build houses on their land.



When the settlers arrived on the Great Plains, they had to build their homes. They used the wood from trees or sod cut from the ground. Then they plowed the land and planted crops. They faced storms, prairie fires, droughts, and even swarms of locusts, which ate their crops.

Despite these hardships, many people were happy to have their own land. By moving west, they had gained more freedom and given their children opportunities for a better future.



Make Connections

Why did people move west in the nineteenth century? **ESSENTIAL QUESTION**

Why did people in the 1800s make up tall tales such as *The Great Man of Nebraska*? **TEXT TO TEXT**

Focus on Genre

Tall Tales Tall tales are stories about people who are supposed to have done incredible things. They often have great physical strength. A tall tale may be based on the life of a real person, but the person's feats are greatly exaggerated.

Read and Find This tall tale is full of examples of exaggerated feats performed by the main character. Febold Feboldson had great strength. He built a house "with trees he had uprooted with his bare hands" (page 3). 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 reporter interviews Febold. One person will play the reporter who asks Febold questions about the strange things that have been happening in Nebraska. The other person will play Febold, who gives explanations for the events. Use your questions and answers to write a newspaper article of your interview. Read your article to the class.

Literature Circles

Fiction

Thinkmark

Characters

How would you describe Febold Feboldson?

Setting

Where did *The Great Man of Nebraska* take place?

When did it take place?

Plot

What were some of Febold's problems in the story? How did he solve them?

Conclusions

What conclusions can you draw about life in the 1800s for people moving west?

Author's Purpose

Why do you think people tell tall tales?

Grade 4 • Unit 5 Week 2

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