

The logo for MTSU Theatre and Dance, featuring the letters 'MTSU' inside a white circle, followed by the words 'THEATRE and DANCE' in a bold, sans-serif font. The background of the entire poster is a vibrant green illustration of a forest scene with trees, vines, and a log being cut by an axe.

MTSU THEATRE and DANCE

Jack's Tale

PERFORMANCE GUIDE

BOOK BY SCOT COPELAND
MUSIC BY PAUL CARROL BINKLEY
LYRICS BY PAUL CARROL BINKLEY AND SCOT COPELAND

OCTOBER 1-4, 2026
AT MTSU'S TUCKER THEATRE

THE *Musical & Mythical* TALE OF A MOUNTAIN HERO

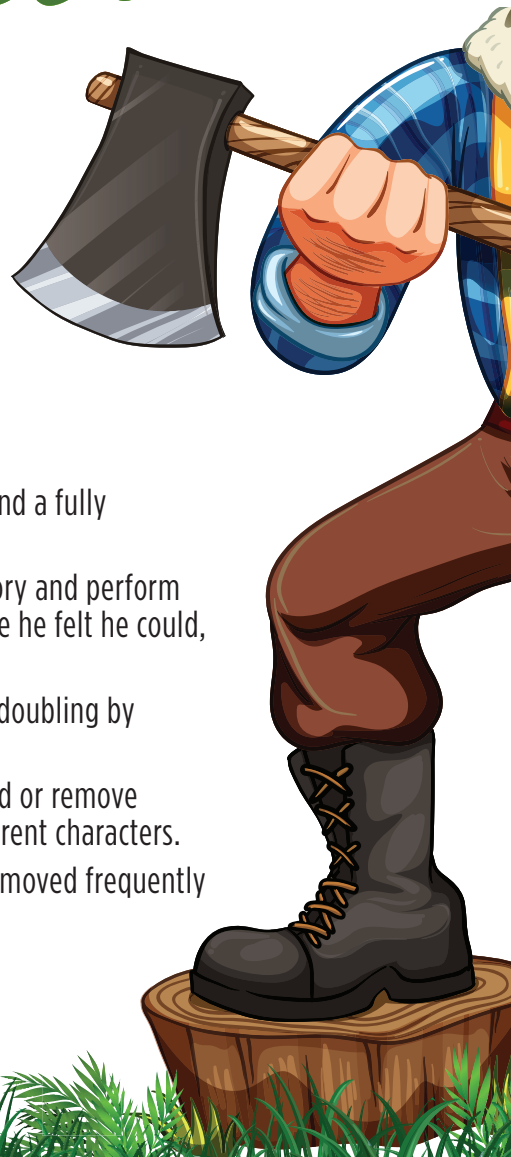
What Happens in the Story

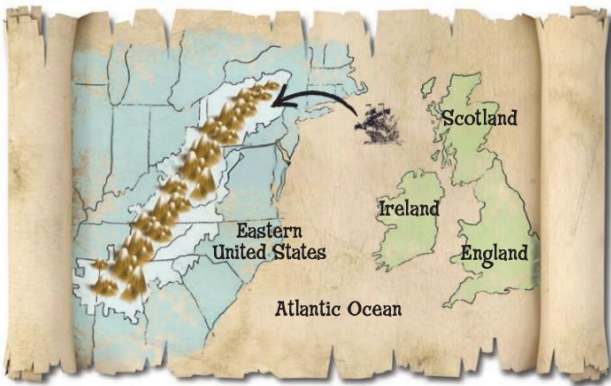
A king is about to make Jack, his mama, and his brothers Will and Tom leave the land they cleared, farmed, and lived on all their lives. In his quest to save the farm, Jack confronts a blue-bearded giant, a dishonest king, wars, and even Raggedy Bones (death himself)—all while falling in love with the king's daughter. Will Jack's magical axe, pickle jar, and gunnysack, along with his wits and good luck, help him triumph?

Telling the Story on Stage

Jack's Tale is a story theater performance (between storytelling and a fully performed play). It features:

- **Storytelling and Acting**—the actors both narrate (tell) the story and perform roles; for example, Jack might say: "Jack made the only choice he felt he could, and off he went to soldier... I'll be back directly."
- **Doubling**—some of the actors perform multiple roles (called doubling by quickly changing their voices, movements, and costumes).
- **Plain Costumes**—the performers wear plain costumes and add or remove simple costume pieces, like hats and scarves, to become different characters.
- **Simple Sets**—everyday items such as benches and chests are moved frequently to become different items, like a bed or a tree.





ABOUT THE SCOTS-IRISH

The people who first told these tales knew a lot about tough times. Back in the 1600s, they lived on the border of Scotland and England. Their king moved them to Ireland, where they worked hard, fought wars, and faced religious discrimination and rising rents (rack rents). In the 1700s, many settled on "new ground" in the mountains along the east coast of the United States and became known as Scots-Irish or Scotch-Irish Americans. During the performance, listen carefully for how Jack's story—being forced from his home, facing a greedy king, fighting war, and crossing the ocean—mirrors their story. And think about how the blue-bearded giant might represent (stand for) the wilderness.

Telling Stories Out Loud

For many years, early American settlers passed down stories through oral tradition (telling them aloud rather than writing them down). That's exactly how Jack's Tale writer Scot Copeland learned about the hero named Jack from his grandmothers. Now, they weren't talking about the Jack you may know from "Jack and the Beanstalk." No, they were telling stories about a character created by the people who settled along America's Appalachian mountains—a unique young man who is playful, kind, hardworking, practical, and honest and who always figures out what to do. As a grownup, Scot studied how these tales represented the history and values of his ancestors, the Scots-Irish Americans. He decided to write a new story combining and reworking several classic "Jack" tales to reflect that history, so pull up a chair and get comfortable. Imagine it's the 1930s, somewhere in the mountains on the east coast of America. Four actors and four musicians will tell and sing Jack's story. Through the voice, humor, and music of the mountain people, our young hero comes to life.

In a Manner of Speaking

Reckon you'll notice that the performers speak English a might different, with different vocabulary ("reckon" to mean "think" and "might" to mean "little"), pronunciation ("crick" for "creek"), grammar ("some days is a feast"), and expressions ("pretty is as pretty does"). This is called a dialect (pronounced DAHY-uh-lekt), and it's one you might hear in places like eastern Kentucky and eastern Tennessee.



A FEW WORDS TO KNOW:

"vittles" – food

"taters and maters" – potatoes and tomatoes

"rack rent" – unfairly high rent meant to force people from their homes

"gunnysack" – a large woven cloth bag

"blubbers" – bubbles



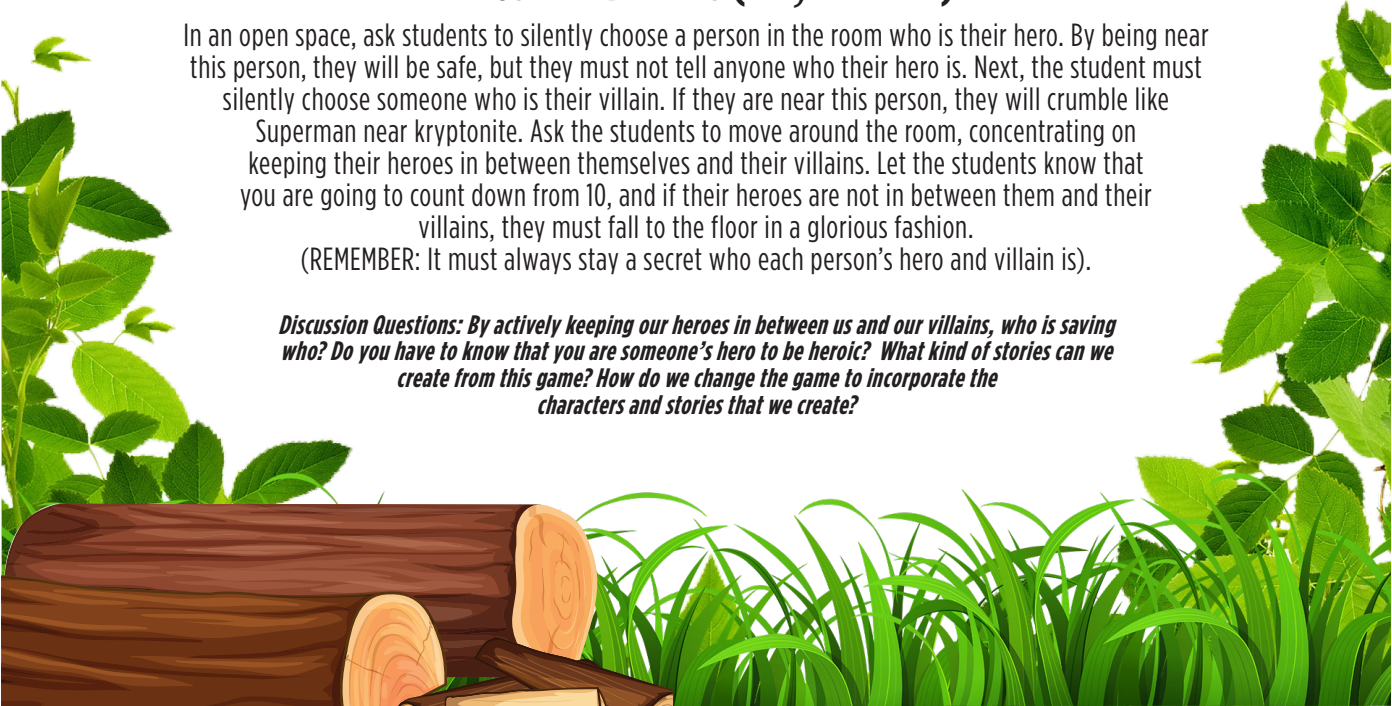
Be a Hero

Between superheroes and fairytales, young people are bombarded with the idea of heroism at a very young age. How do we explore what a hero can be, and how we can challenge ourselves to be heroic in our everyday lives?

WHAT IS A HERO? POSTER ACTIVITY (ELA, THEATRE)

Take three large pieces of paper and put them on different sides of the room. On each of these pieces of paper, write the name of a hero that your students would be familiar with. (Ex. Batman, Superman, and Spiderman) Divide the class into three groups and have each group stand by a different character's poster. Ask them to come up with qualities the characters possess that make them heroes, and to write these qualities onto the appropriate poster. After a few minutes, have the groups rotate to the next hero's poster. Continue this process until all three groups have been to all three posters. Now it's time to synthesize the results! -- Share with the class what everyone wrote. As a class or individually, create a Venn Diagram with three circles, and label each circle with one of the heroic character's names. Together, fill in the diagram, paying special attention to the qualities that all of the heroes have in common. Discussion Questions: What do these heroes have in common? What are the qualities that the characters share, which make them heroic? What is a hero? [Extra Credit: After seeing Jack's Tale, discuss what Jack's heroic elements are. What happens when you add him to your Venn Diagram?]

HEROS AND VILLAINS (ELA, THEATRE)



In an open space, ask students to silently choose a person in the room who is their hero. By being near this person, they will be safe, but they must not tell anyone who their hero is. Next, the student must silently choose someone who is their villain. If they are near this person, they will crumble like Superman near kryptonite. Ask the students to move around the room, concentrating on keeping their heroes in between themselves and their villains. Let the students know that you are going to count down from 10, and if their heroes are not in between them and their villains, they must fall to the floor in a glorious fashion.

(REMEMBER: It must always stay a secret who each person's hero and villain is).

Discussion Questions: *By actively keeping our heroes in between us and our villains, who is saving who? Do you have to know that you are someone's hero to be heroic? What kind of stories can we create from this game? How do we change the game to incorporate the characters and stories that we create?*



Storytelling

In the Scots-Irish culture, where the Jack Tales originated, an important tradition is oral storytelling. In this way, the history of the people was passed down through the generations as folktales without ever writing them down. What are different ways that we can explore creating and telling stories?

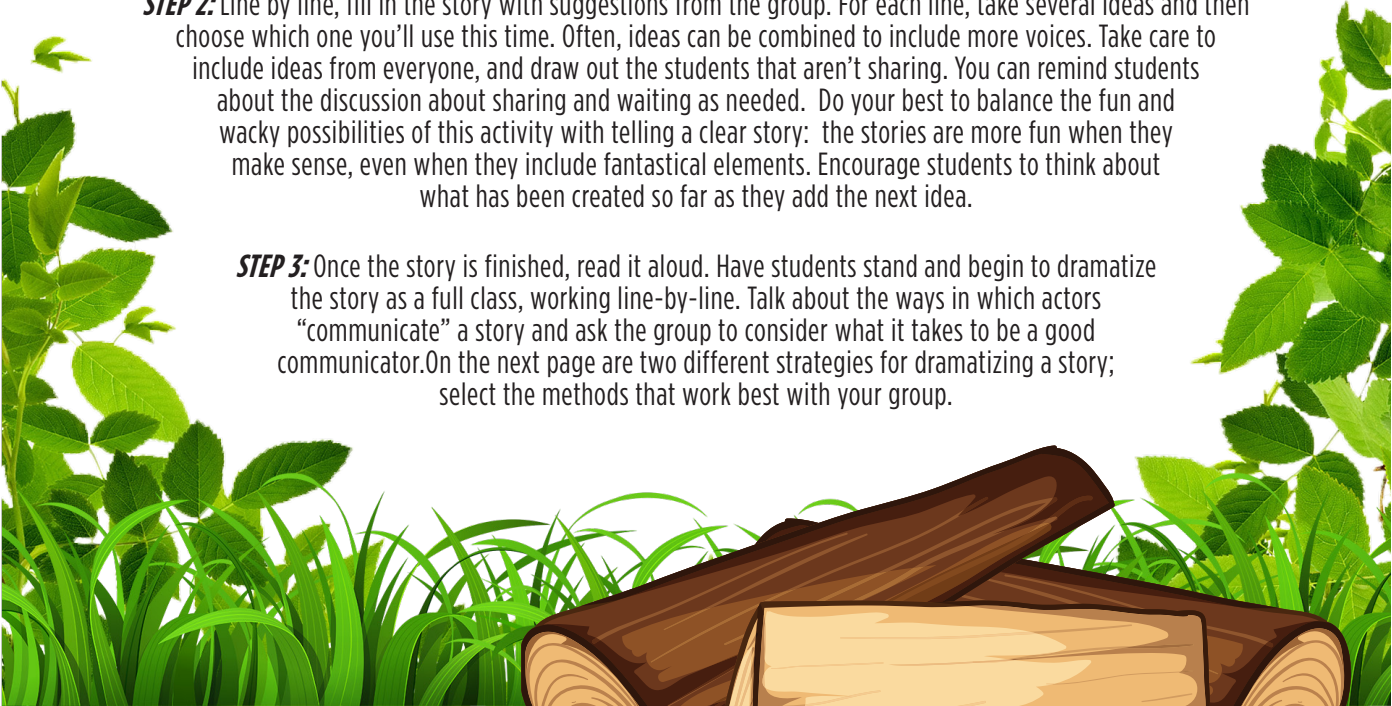
COLLABORATIVE STORY CREATION (*THEATRE, ELA*)

STEP 1: Share the Seven-Line Story Structure on a big piece of butcher paper, verbally filling in the blanks to explain what kind of information will go on each line:

Once there was _____	(A character or characters. Doesn't have to be human!)
Everyday _____	(something that character did daily)
Until one day _____	(Uh oh! Something happens to change things! A problem!)
Because of that _____	(Things are changing even more!)
Then _____	(Something ELSE happens!)
Until finally _____	(Something solves the problem.)
From then on _____	(There's a new thing that the character(s) does every day.)

STEP 2: Line by line, fill in the story with suggestions from the group. For each line, take several ideas and then choose which one you'll use this time. Often, ideas can be combined to include more voices. Take care to include ideas from everyone, and draw out the students that aren't sharing. You can remind students about the discussion about sharing and waiting as needed. Do your best to balance the fun and wacky possibilities of this activity with telling a clear story: the stories are more fun when they make sense, even when they include fantastical elements. Encourage students to think about what has been created so far as they add the next idea.

STEP 3: Once the story is finished, read it aloud. Have students stand and begin to dramatize the story as a full class, working line-by-line. Talk about the ways in which actors "communicate" a story and ask the group to consider what it takes to be a good communicator. On the next page are two different strategies for dramatizing a story; select the methods that work best with your group.



Guided Pantomime: The teacher reads through the story, while students silently act out what is happening. They can do this with every student standing in their own space or moving throughout the room.

Tableaux (or Frozen Pictures): In this approach, students create still pictures with their bodies to show the sequence of a story (like a slide show). Remind students that they can shape their bodies to become part of the environment as well as characters (for example, for a scene from Little Red Riding Hood, one student might be the woodcutter, another might be the ax, another a stump, and others trees in the forest). To help manage this process, you can tap students on the shoulder one at a time to send them to join the picture. You can also split the class into small groups and assign each group a section of the story to turn into a frozen picture, and then share them in sequence.

MUSIC AS INSPIRATION (*MUSIC, ELA*)

Music can inspire stories just as much as stories inspire music. Students will have the opportunity to create a story based on what music makes them think and feel. Choose three songs with distinctly different styles. You will only need one to two minute portions of each song. As you play each song, ask the students to write down any and every word that pops into their head. These could be adjectives, characters, verbs, places, feelings, etc. Using the 7-line format from the previous page, give students about five minutes to write a story using the 7-line format above.

Extra Credit: *After sharing their stories, place students in groups and have them choose one story to fully realize. These can be written as prose stories or as scripts to share through a play reading.*



More Information

ON HOW TO JOIN JACK'S TALE AT MTSU

DATES AND TIMES

October 1 and 2 at 7:30pm
October 3 and 4 at 2:00pm

LOCATION

Tucker Theatre -
615 Champion Way, Murfreesboro, TN
on the campus of MTSU

PARKING

Free parking available at Tucker Theatre.

TICKETS

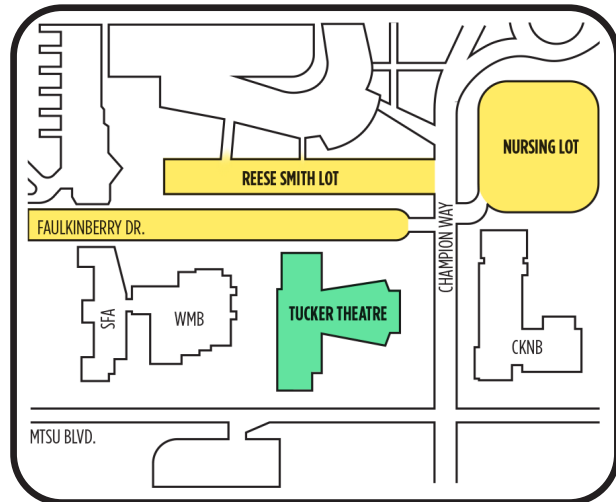
Tickets may be purchased in advance and at the door the night of the performance.

SPECIAL MATINEE PERFORMANCE

Local schools and small groups are encouraged to attend our special Friday morning matinee performance:
FRIDAY OCTOBER 2ND AT 10AM.

LEARN MORE

More information on ticketing, parking, and our special matinee performance can be found at
THEATREANDDANCE.MTSU.EDU or Call John Underwood at *(615) 904-8230*





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