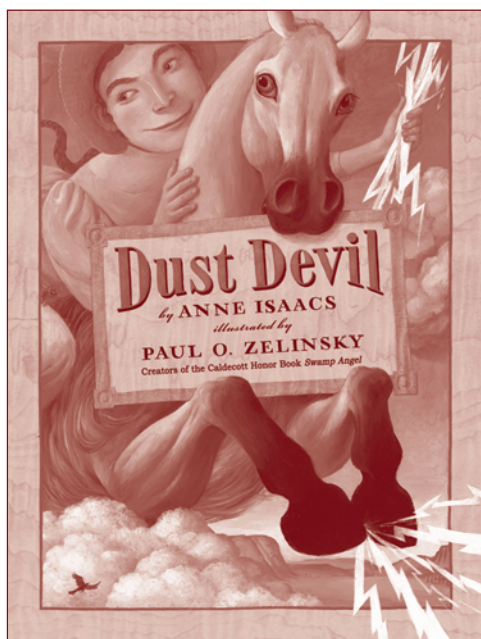


BIG IDEAS FOR THE CLASSROOM



Grades K–4 • Schwartz & Wade Books
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ABOUT THE BOOK

Here is the thrilling, thigh-slapping companion to Swamp Angel, the beloved Caldecott Honor-winning picture book.

Swamp Angel has a reputation as the greatest woodswoman and wildest wildcat in all of Tennessee. But when she grows too big for that state, she moves to Montana, a place so sizeable, even Angel can fit in. It's there that she wrestles a raging storm to the ground and, at its center, finds herself a sidekick—a horse she names Dust Devil. And when Backward Bart, the orneriest, ugliest outlaw ever known, starts terrorizing the prairie, it seems like Angel and Dust Devil may be the only ones strong enough to stop him.

Children will be captivated by the beauty and exaggerated humor of Paul O. Zelinsky's American primitive-style paintings and the wit and energy of Anne Isaacs's unparalleled storytelling. Here is an original folktale starring an extraordinary gal who is as feisty as she is funny and as courageous as she is kind.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR & ILLUSTRATOR

Anne Isaacs is the award-winning author of many books for children, including *Swamp Angel*, a Caldecott Honor Book, an ALA-ALSC Notable Book, and a *Boston Globe-Horn Book* Honor Book; *Cat Up a Tree*, a New York Public Library Title for Reading and Sharing; *Torn Thread*, an ALA-ALSC Notable Book and a National Jewish Book Award finalist; and *Pancakes for Supper*, winner of the Oppenheim Toy Portfolio Platinum Best Book Award. Ms. Isaacs lives in Berkeley, California. Visit her at **AnneIsaacs.com**.



Photo courtesy of the author.



Photo © Rachel Zelinsky

Paul O. Zelinsky is one of the most highly acclaimed illustrators working today. He has received a Caldecott Medal for his telling of *Rapunzel*, and three Caldecott Honors, for *Rumpelstiltskin*, *Hansel and Gretel*, and *Swamp Angel*, which the *New York Times Book Review* called “in all ways superb.” The illustrator of Emily Jenkins's popular *Toys Go Out* and *Toy Dance Party*, Mr. Zelinsky is also the creator of the bestselling mechanical

book *The Wheels on the Bus*. He lives in Brooklyn, New York. Learn more about him at **PaulOZelinsky.com**.



Illustration © 2010 by Paul O. Zelinsky



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PRE-READING ACTIVITY

Ask the class: What is a tall tale? What elements are usually included in a tall tale? What are some of your favorite tall tales? What clues is the reader given on the cover of this book that it could be a tall tale?

Read aloud the Notice before the story opens. What does it mean when it says, “either of them may lean a little, but they seldom flat-out lie.” How does this set up the story? Do people ever do this when they get ready to tell a story, too?

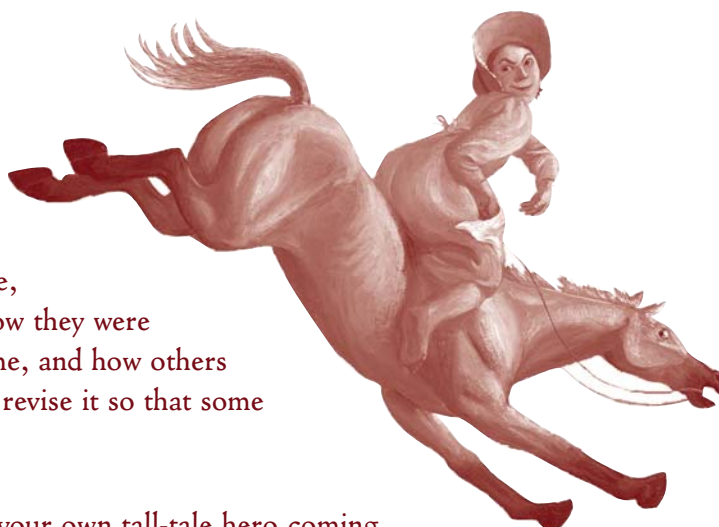
QUESTIONS FOR GROUP DISCUSSION

- ★ Describe Angelica Longrider. What type of character is she? When and where does this story take place? Why is it important to know about time and place for a reader?
 - ★ What action first shows us that Angel is special? How did she change the Montana landscape?
 - ★ Describe how things grew for Angel and other farmers out in the Montana soil.
 - ★ What did Angel need but couldn’t find? How important was this need in the West?
 - ★ Why did it stay dark both day and night? What types of storms do you have in your part of the country?
 - ★ How did Aunt Essie Bell try to help the settlers? How do you try to help others?
 - ★ Is this an example of a simile or a metaphor: “the wind shrieked like a thousand trumpets playing out of tune”? How can you tell the difference? Why do authors use these types of comparisons in their stories?
 - ★ Explain how Angel gets her sidekick and what she names her. Why is Dust Devil a great horse for her? What would you name your own sidekick?
 - ★ Summarize who the Flying Desperadoes are and what they are up to out in Montana. What’s the most unique thing about these meanies?
 - ★ Why do you suppose that Texans don’t agree about the size of Montana mosquitoes?
 - ★ Recall how Bart got his odd way of speaking. “Way this talk you can?”
 - ★ Identify why Sheriff Napalot in Billings won’t make Angel a deputy. How does that make Angel feel? How would you feel?
 - ★ Why is Bart so much trouble for the settlers? Who is he targeting next?
 - ★ Retell the most important parts of the battle between Angel and the Desperadoes. How is she able to defeat them?
 - ★ What natural elements in the Montana landscape does this tale account for? Which of them would you most like to see?
 - ★ Predict what story the author might tell next.
-

CURRICULUM CONNECTIONS

Challenge students with these activities

WRITING: Write a descriptive paragraph about an animal or person you know, but up the ante by adding tall-tale elements to your description. You might want to create a web with your character's name in the middle and shapes where you can brainstorm these things: what they look like, special skills and abilities, where they were born, how they were discovered to be special, phrases they say all the time, and how others think of them. Share with your writing partner and revise it so that some elements get even bigger and more outlandish!



ART: On a paper plate, draw or paint a scene of your own tall-tale hero coming to save the day. Back each paper plate with brown construction paper for an even more rustic effect (or try your hand at wood graining with markers and paint on heavy cream construction paper or cardboard). Be sure to study the illustrations by Zelinsky for inspiration. Back your descriptive paragraph with construction paper and add it below your plate for a great bulletin board or hallway display.

GEOGRAPHY: Create a map of the setting for your tall tale. Find at least three important natural elements from that area that you could possibly weave into your story.

MUSIC: Tell a short version of the story of *Dust Devil* in a song. Set the lyrics to a tune you already know, or write your own tune. Using household objects, create homemade instruments that would be great around a campfire to add depth to your song. Have your classmates join you in a sing-along.

HISTORY: Tall tales were originally stories that were part of an oral history—stories told to others without being written down. These were really important out West where books were scarce and precious and expensive! Tell your own tall tale to a friend or family member. You might be surprised with details and ideas that occur to you as you say the story aloud! Does your story change a little each time you tell it?

SCIENCE: Research and create a drawing of the life cycle of the mosquito. Develop a list of important facts that might help people deal with these pests!

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Name: _____

HOW TALL IS THIS TALE?

Tall tales are a special kind of fiction that exaggerate intentionally with unique, larger-than-life characters, and often explain how natural elements come to exist in a landscape. As you read *Dust Devil* keep track of your favorite descriptions of people and places in the chart below:


Fun descriptions or tall tale wording:	Why I chose it:
	

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EDUCATORS: Reproduce this activity sheet to use with students.



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