**Wisconsin Lumberjack Songs (4th – 12th Grades)**

Four songs representing Wisconsin lumberjack life and work were chosen for this unit, “Wisconsin Lumberjacks: Their Songs, Work, and History.” The first two, “Lost Jimmy Whalen,” and “Driving Saw Logs On the Plover,” speak to the physical and mental demands of logging work and the hazards of the occupation. “Little Brown Bulls,” and “Shantyman’s Life” offer an insider’s view into the life and work of a lumberjack – the tools of trade, the different jobs and responsibilities, life in the shanties, and contests between lumber camps and crews. All songs and instrumental selections are resourced from the Local Centers, Global Sounds UW Digital Collections at <https://uwdc.library.wisc.edu/collections/localcenters>. Follow “Audio file” for the audio recording of each individual song.

As Jim Leary writes, “Wisconsin’s vast north woods, the ‘pinery,’ was harvested mostly between the 1860s and the first decade of the twentieth century. The shanty boys or lumberjacks worked in the woods from late fall through early spring, occupying camps and moving felled timber when the ground was frozen… among them were musicians and singers aplenty.” According to folksong collector Franz Rickaby, ‘…in the logging camp the hegemony in song belonged to the Irish.’ There is, therefore an unmistakable imprint of the Irish street song on the lumberjack tunes” (Leary, 2015, pp. 270 - 271).

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Wind-powered lumberjack, built by Eino Parkinen Photo: Matthew Gallmann, July 16, 1979

Songs

**1. Lost Jimmie Whalen,** Sung by Robert Walker. Recorded by Sidney Robertson, Crandon, Wisconsin, July 1937

<http://digicoll.library.wisc.edu/LocalCenters/data/audio/MmBib/FSOAA/reference/fsoaa0005r.mp4>

As slowly and sadly I strayed by the river,

A-watching the sunbeams as evening drew nigh,

As onward I rambled I spied a fair damsel,

She was weeping and wailing with many a sigh.

Sighing for one who is now lying lonely,

Sighing for one whom no mortal can save,

For the dark rolling waters roll sadly around him,

As onward it rolls o’er young Jimmy’s grave.

“Jimmy,” said she, “won’t you come to my arrums,

And give me sweet kisses as oft-times you’ve done?

You promised you’d meet me this evening, my darling,

O come dearest Jimmy, love, come from your grave.”

Slowly there rose from the depths of the river

A vision of beauty far brighter than sun,

While red robes of crimson encircled around him,

Unto this fair maiden to speak he’d begun.

“Why did you call me from the rellums of glory

Back to this cold earth that I’ll soon have to leave,

To clasp you once more in my fond loving arrums?

To see you once more I have came from my grave.”

“Jimmy,” said she, “won’t you stay on earth with me?

Do not leave me here for to weep and to rave.

But if you cannot stay on this cold earth with me,

Oh Jimmy, take me to your cold silent grave.”

“Darling to me you are asking a favor

That no earthly mortal could grant unto thee.

For death is the dagger that holds us asunder,

And wide is the gulf, love, between you and me.

“One fond embrace, love, and then I must leave you,

One loving kiss, pet, and then we must part.”

And cold were the arms he encircled around her,

While cold was the bosom she pressed to her heart.

Then straightway he vanished before her,

Straight to the clouds he appeared for to go,

Leaving his loved one distracted and lonely,

Weeping and wailing with anguish and woe.

Throwing herself on the banks of the river,

A-weeping and wailing as though she would rave,

Sighing, “My loved one, my lost Jimmy Whalen,

[Spoken:] I will sigh ‘til I die by the side of your grave.”

2. **Driving Saw Logs on the Plover**, written by William Allen, 1873. Sung by Oscar Grogan.

Instrumentalists: Ben Salving, and Robert Hood Bowers. Recorded: ca. 1928.

<https://search.library.wisc.edu/embed/audio/LocalCenters06/uwm_columbia_15278d_01_w146620_03_audio>

There walked on Plover’s shady banks one evening last July

A mother of a shanty boy and doleful was her cry

Saying God be with you Johnny, although you’re far away

Driving saw logs on the Plover and you’ll never get your pay.

For Johnny I gave you schooling, I gave you a trade likewise

You need not been a shanty boy had you taken my advice

You need not gone from your dear home to the forest far away

Sawing saw logs on the Plover and you’ll never get your pay.

Oh Johnny you were your father’s hope, your mother’s only joy

Why is it that you ramble so, my only darling boy

What could induce you Johnny from your own dear home to stray

Driving saw logs on the Plover, and you’ll never get your pay.

Why didn’t you stay on the farm and feed the ducks and hens?

And drive the sheep and pigs at night and put them in their pens?

For better for you to help your dad to cut his corn and hay,

Then to drive saw logs on the Plover and never get your pay.

A log canoe came floating a down the quiet stream

As peacefully it glided as some young lover’s dream

A youth crept out upon the bank and thus to her did say

Dear mother I have jumped the game and I haven’t got my pay.

The boys call me a sucker and a son of a gun to boot.

I said to myself “Oh Johnny, it is time for you to scoot.”

I stole a canoe and started upon my weary way,

And now I have got home again, and nary a cent to pay.

Now all men take this advice if ‘ere you wish to roam,

Be sure and kiss your mothers before you leave your home,

You had better work upon the farm for half a dollar a day

Then to drive saw logs on the Plover and you’ll never get your pay.

**3. Little Brown Bulls -** Sung by Warde Ford. Recorded by Sidney Robertson, Crandon, Wisconsin, July 30, 1937.

<http://digicoll.library.wisc.edu/LocalCenters/data/audio/MmBib/FSOAA/reference/fsoaa0006r.mp4>

Not a man on the river had McCluskey to fear,

As he swung his gored stick o’er the big spotted steers,

Young, strong, quick, and handsome, girded eight foot and three,

Said McCluskey, the Scotsman, “They’re the laddies for me.”

Then up came Bull Gordon when the rollway was full,

And shouted, “Wha, hush!” to the little brown bulls.

Short-legged and shaggy, girded six foot and nine.

“Too light,” said McCluskey, “to handle our pine.”

Now it’s three to the thousand our contract did call.

The skidding was good and the timber was tall.

Said Sandy to Gordon, “To make the day full,

I’ll skid two-to-one of your little brown bulls.”

“Ah no,” said Bull Gordon, “that you cannot do,

Although your big steers are the pets of the crew.

I’ll tell you, my boy, you’ll have your hands full

If you skid one more log than my little brown bulls.”

Now a day was appointed and soon it drew nigh,

For twenty-five dollars their fortune to try.

All eager and anxious when the morning came round

And the boss and the scaler [5] appeared on the ground.

With a whoop and a holler McCluskey came in view

With the big spotted steers, the pets of the crew,

Saying “Chew your cud well, boys, and keep your mouths full,

And today we will conquer those little brown bulls.”

Then up came Bull Gordon with his pipe in his jaw,

And the little brown bulls with a cud in each jaw.

And little did we think when they swung them around,

Twas a hundred and forty he’d skid at sundown.

Now at sundown that evening our foreman did say,

“Turn in, boys, turn in–you’ve enough for the day.”

All numbered and scaled, each man and his team,

And we thought that we knew which had knocked down the beam.

When supper was over, McCluskey did appear,

With a belt he had made for the big spotted steers.

And to make it he’d torn up his best mackinaw,

As he was conducted according to the law.

Then up jumped the scaler, said, “Hold on your while,

Your big spotted steers are behind by a mile.

You’ve skidded a hundred and ten and no more,

While Gordon has beat you by ten and a score.”

How all the boys shouted, and McCluskey did swear

As he pulled out in handfuls his long curly hair.

Now fill up your glasses and fill them up full,

And we’ll drink to the health of the little brown bulls.

**4. Shantyman’s Life**

Sung by Emery DeNoyer, Rhinelander, Wisconsin, July 26, 1941. Recorded by Helene Stratman-Thomas and Robert F. Draves.

Audio file: <http://digicoll.library.wisc.edu/LocalCenters/data/audio/MmBib/FSOAA/reference/fsoaa0122r.mp4>

Come all you jolly fellows, come listen to my song;

It’s all about the pinery boys, and how they get along.

They’re the jolliest lot of fellows, so merrily and fine,

They will spend their pleasant winter months in cutting down the pine.

Some will leave their friends and homes, and others they do love dear.

And into the lonesome pine woods their pathway they do steer,

Into the lonesome pine woods all winter to remain,

Awaiting for the spring-time to return again.

Spring-time comes, oh glad will be its day;

Some return to home and friends, while others go astray.

The sawyers and the choppers, they lay their timber low,

The swampers and the teamsters, they haul it to and fro.

Next comes the loaders, before the break of day;

“Load up your sleighs five thousand feet, to the river haste away!”

Noon-time rolls around, our foreman loudly screams,

“Lay down your tools, me boys, and we’ll haste to pork and beans.”

We arrive at the shanty; the splashing then begins,

The banging of the water pails, the rattling of the tins.

In the middling of the splashing, our cook for dinner does cry;

We all arise and go, for we hate to lose our pie.

Dinner being over, we into our shanty go;

We all fill up our pipes and smoke till everything looks blue.

“It’s time for the woods, me boys,” our foreman he does say;

We all gather up our hats and caps, to the woods we haste away.

We all go out with a welcome heart and well-contented mind,

For the winter winds blow cold among the waving pine.

The ringing of saws and axes, until the sun goes down.

“Lay down your tools, me boys, for the shanties we are bound.”

We arrive at the shanty with cold and wet feet;

Take off our over boots and packs, at supper we must eat.

Supper being ready, we all arise and go,

For it ain’t the style of a lumberjack to lose his hash, you know.

At three o’clock in the morning our bull cook loudly shouts,

“Roll out, roll out, you teamsters, it’s time that you were out.”

The teamsters, they get up in a fright and manful wail,

“Oh where’s my boots, oh where's my packs, my rubbers have gone astray.”

The other men, they then get up, their packs they cannot find;

And they lay it to the teamsters, and they curse them till they’re blind.

Spring-time comes, oh glad will be its day.

“Lay down your tools, me boys, and we’ll haste to break away.

The floating ice is over, and business now destroyed.

Three-hundred able-bodied men are wanted on the Pelican drive.

With jam pikes and peavies those able men do go,

All up that wild, dreary stream to risk their lives, you know.

Cold and frosty mornings they shiver with the cold;

So much ice upon their jam pikes they scarcely can them hold.

Now wherever you hear those verses, believe them to be true,

For if you doubt one word of them, just ask Bob Unson’s crew.

It was in Bob Unson’s shanties where they were sung with glee,

And the ending of my song is signed C, D, F, and G.

Logging Camp: February 1947: Interior of cook shack, photo by Staber W. Reese (UW Digital Collections)

<https://search.library.wisc.edu/search/digital?page=8&q=lumberjacks>

Arts Integration: Vocabulary, Puzzles, Suggested Prompts for Discussion and/or Writing, Venn Diagrams, Examples of 4th Grade Poetry, and Additional Resources

*The integrated lumberjack unit we completed this spring was one of the most engaging social studies units we've done all year. Because the unit included lessons on lumberjack songs that the kids learned in music class, the students were able to engage in the lessons with more enthusiasm. The lessons were especially exciting for the students because of the outdoor overnight field trip we took to the MacKenzie Center in Poynette, Wisconsin. The students learned first-hand about the Wisconsin timber industry by hiking through forests, experiencing a logging camp museum and having the opportunity to use cross-cut saws and cut their own wood "cookies." When the students learned the lumberjack songs in music class, it brought back all of the memories of their time in the forest. The accompanying lessons we used in conjunction with our Social Studies text “Wisconsin: Our State, Our Story,” came alive because of the arts element. Their final project, acrostic poems highlighting any aspect of the lumberjack unit they were interested in, were beautifully written and included drawings of the things they had learned about. These would not have been as detailed and thoughtful had it not been for the integrated unit of study we had just completed. We know that this unit is one we will definitely want to do again in the future.*

*-Kathy Statz*

*4th Grade Teacher*

**Vocabulary – Lost Jimmie Whalen**

* lumberjack – someone who works for a logging company, cutting down trees
* log jam - many logs piled up and stuck in a river, getting caught on a rock or other obstacle
* nigh – near, close
* damsel – young unmarried woman
* weeping and wailing – extreme fits of crying
* mortal - human
* arrums (arms, with a Gaelic, or Irish accent)
* maiden – young, unmarried woman
* crimson – dark and deep red color
* rellums of glory – realms of glory, or heaven (with a Gaelic, or Irish accent)
* clasp – to hold, or grasp
* fond – friendly, warm feeling towards someone or something
* rave – very strong emotion
* grant – to give, allow
* asunder - divided, destroyed (as in “put asunder”)
* gulf – wide gap or space between things or people
* embraced – held with arms
* encircled – to form a circle around something, to surround
* straightway – right away, immediately
* vanished – disappeared
* anguish – an emotion of great pain or sadness
* woe – deep sadness

**Vocabulary - Little Brown Bulls** (Vocabulary from Leary, 2015, p. 31), and Malone and Oberle (2008, pp. 154 -160)

* skidding – The process of hauling logs with a chain and a team
* gored stick: A goad stick or prod used by a teamster
* steer – a male bovine, raised for meat
* bull - a male bovine raised for breeding
* cud – food for cows, steer, bulls, horses
* Scotsman – someone who is from Scotland, or whose family emigrated from Scotland
* Yankee – someone from the United States, usually from the northeastern, New England states
* rollway - An area alongside a river bank or a next to a train track where logs could be “decked” until it was time for them to be “rolled” into a river or flatbed railcar
* three to the thousand – Big logs, three of which could yield one thousand board feet
* scaler – A worker who used a special ruler and a mathematical table to calculate how many board feet a given log could make.
* mackinaw – A heavy woolen coat in a plaid pattern
* timber – trees that are cut to be made into wood for building
* pine – the type of tree that was cut down in the early days of logging

**Vocabulary - “Shantyman’s Life”**

* lumberjack – someone who works for a logging company, cutting down trees
* teamster – worker, member of the logging team
* pinery boys – name given to lumberjacks who logged pine trees
* timber – trees that are cut to be made into wood for building
* pine – the type of tree that was cut down in the earliest days of logging in Wisconsin
* swamper – (logger who hauls logs out of a swamp?)
* haul - to carry a load
* haste – hurry
* foreman – person in charge of a logging crew
* shanty – a temporary housing built for loggers to live in during logging season
* middling – in the middle of something
* hash – typical food served to lumberjacks
* loader – a lumberjack who loads cut lumber onto sleds for transport
* peaveys – tools with long wooden handles and hooks on one end, used for moving logs down rivers, breaking up log jams
* jam pikes – another type of tool used to break up log jams, possibly a predecessor of the peavey

**Additional Lumberjack Vocabulary** (from Malone & Oberle, pp. 154 - 159)

* log driver – teamsters in charge of moving the logs down rivers (M&O, p. 157)
* buckers – teamsters who sawed logs into lengths (M&O, p. 154)
* skybird – the teamster who rode on the top of logs piled on a sled M&O, p. 156)
* slash – branches too small to saw during logging. Slash was often burned (M&O, p. 159, Leary, p. )
* Antigo – a town in northern Wisconsin, home of the D. Sullivan Logging Camp (M&O, p. 154)
* Peshtigo - Town in northern Wisconsin that was burned down in 1871 when a slash burn got out of control. (M&O, p. 159)
* logging – harvesting (cutting down) trees to be made into wood for building (M&O, p. 154)
* log-mark hammer – a hammer with a stamp on it for marking logs for camp identification (M&O, p. 157)

Crossword Puzzle 1: Lumberjacks, Their Work and History, Lower Grades

Crossword Puzzle 2: Wisconsin Lumberjack Puzzler, Upper Grades

Lumberjack Puzzle Keys

Suggested Questions for Discussion and/or Writing Prompts: From: “Lost Jimmy Whalen,” “Little Brown Bulls,” “Shantyman’s Life,” & *Wisconsin: Our State, Our Story* (Malone & Oberle)

* How did loggers haul logs out of the woods or swamps? (skidding with chains, teams of men and oxen, or “bulls”) :
* What made logging easier in the winter? (M&O, p. 154: frozen and snow-covered ground made it easy to move logs by sled).
* Name three ways that lumberjacks moved and transported logs in the early days of the timber industry (M&O, pp 156 – 157: rivers, peaveys, sleds pulled by oxen and horses and later, trains)
* Who was the contest between (McCluskey (Canadian “Scotsman”) and his “big spotted steers,” and Bull Gordon (Maine “Yankee”), and his “little brown bulls.” Who won?
* Where did many of the Wisconsin lumberjacks come from? (M&O, p. 155: Wisconsin, eastern United States and Canada)

General Questions

* If you were a lumberjack 100 years ago, what job would you want to do?
* What part of being a lumberjack do you think teamsters enjoyed the most? The least?
* Does anyone in your family do outside work that might be similar to lumberjack work? Do you?
* Do you think you might like to work in the timber industry when you are old enough? Why or why not?
* Is there any other kind of outdoor work that might interest you? (forest ranger, gardener, biologist, ecologist, tree specialist, etc.)?

**Questions – “Jimmy Whalen”** (potential questions for discussion and/or writing prompts)

* What work did Jimmy Whalen do? (lumberjack, logger)
* What do you think happened to Jimmy Whalen? (drowned in a log jam)
* What does this song tell you about the nature of lumberjack work?
* What is a “log jam?” (Malone and Oberly, p. 157)
* How did loggers try to solve the problem of log jams? (M&O, p. 157: building dams to increase water flow)
* Why do you think so many young men wanted to do lumberjack work? (M&O, p. 155: many were farmers looking for winter work).

**Vocabulary and Questions about Logging Impact on the Wisconsin Environment**

* **management** – the process of dealing with or controlling things, people (M&O, p. 160)
* **restore** – bring back to original condition (M&O, p. 226)
* **stewardship** - personal responsibility for taking care of something that is not one’s own. (M&O, p. 227)

Environmental Questions

* What does being a good steward of the land mean? (M&O, p. 227)
* How did the Peshtigo fire start? (M&O, p. 159)
* Why is a large portion of northern Wisconsin called the “Cutover?” (M&O, p. 159)
* What did people do to restore forests in northern Wisconsin? (planted trees, brought back forests in the Cheqaumegon and Pattison state parks, M&O, p. 227)

Venn Diagrams, for Comparing Songs

Two Venn Diagrams for Song Analysis (Compare and Contrast two, or three songs). When comparing songs, you may think about the stories the lyrics tell, as well as the music itself. Is the song in a major or minor key? What is the tempo of the song, the meter? What mood do both the lyrics and the melodies convey? How do they make you feel? What about the singers and their voices? What instruments are playing in each of the songs?

Two Song Venn Diagram

Three Song Venn Diagram

Acrostic Poems

Write an acrostic poem using a vocabulary word from “Little Brown Bulls,” or “Shantyman’s Life,” or from Malone & Oberle. Each line of your poem begins with a letter of the word. Each line should describe, or tell a little story about the word. Illustrate the poem. Create a book with illustrated poems. In art class (upper grades), have students create wood block prints from poem illustrations.

Examples of 4th Grade Acrostic Poems:

**Let’s Dance!**:

(see Additional Teacher Resources, below, for learning and teaching a basic jig step. For basic Schottische steps, see Unit 5: Let’s Dance!)

Paul Bunyan Schottische, composed and performed by, Joe Plumer, “Old-time dance orchestra, featuring clarinet,” Joe Plumer, director; North Star records, Saint Paul, Minnesota. From: Local Centers, Global Sounds digital archives, 78-rpm Recordings Collections

Audio link: <https://search.library.wisc.edu/embed/audio/LocalCenters06/uwm_northstar_ns2001_01_kb7a_00_audio>

“Swamper’s Revenge On The Windfall”

Lumberjack fiddle dance tune, played at lumberjack “stag dances.” Recorded, August 15th, 1941. Fiddler: Otto Rindlisbacher; Local Centers, Global Sounds, 78-rpm Recordings Collection.

Audio link: <https://search.library.wisc.edu/digital/AOMIDCKWMPUI2Z8L>

“Couderay Jig” \* (see Additional Teacher Resources for online videos for learning Irish jig steps)

Lumberjack fiddle dance tune, a lumberjack dance tune, created up at the Couderay lumber camp. August 15, 1941. Fiddler Otto Rindlisbacher; Local Centers, Global Sounds, 78-rpm Recordings Collection.

Audio file: <https://search.library.wisc.edu/digital/AGQCXFPGTGB2XF82>

“Lumberjack Dance Tune”

A lumberjack dance melody, played on the “lumberjack fiddle.” A cigar box forms the body, part of a broom handle forms the neck. Recorded, August 15th 1941. Fiddler: Otto Rindlisbacher. Local Centers, Global Sounds, 78-rpm Recordings Collection. Audio file: Audio link: <https://search.library.wisc.edu/digital/AGPZL6SMSGJBLJ8J>

“Hounds in the Woods,” Otto Rindlisbacher playing the cigar-box fiddle; Local Centers, Global Sounds, 78-rpm Recordings Collection. There is a short interview at the end of the tune, with folklorist and “song catcher,” Alan Lomax. Audio file: <http://digicoll.library.wisc.edu/LocalCenters/data/audio/MmBib/FSOAA/reference/fsoaa0031r.mp4>

Otto Rindlisbacher, with cigar-box fiddle (from Leary, 2015, p. 82, author’s collection)

**Additional Teacher Resources**

**Online sources:**

1. <http://www.paulbunyancamp.org/history_of_logging.phtml>

Paul Bunyan, Logging Stories, Myths (Was Paul Bunyan Real?)

2. <https://recollectionwisconsin.org/lumber-camp-life>

Excellent source of photos of logging camps with accompanying descriptions information about life and work in the logging camps. Link to lumberjack song “Little Brown Bulls,” and online Wisconsin Folksong Collection at Mills Music Library, UW-Madison

**3.** Wisconsin Dells Events – News (online). Explains the dangers of the work, number of deaths among logging industry workers (lumberjacks)

<https://www.wiscnews.com/wisconsindellsevents/news/local/wisconsin-forests-build-country-as-lumber-floats-down-rivers/article_a6e9682f-9646-50e6-bb55-2d824b5306e3.html>

4. Online source for teaching beginning Irish jig steps:

- Easy, beginning steps: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=uXA_VSVgkJ4>

- Medley of easy (beginner) steps and some more advanced: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=JDvE17hJBWg>

**Books:**

Pinery Boys, by James P. Leary; Mills Music Library, Reference Materials, M1628 .P64 2017

*Songs of the Michigan Lumberjacks*, by Earl Clifton Beck. 1942. University of Michigan Press, provides information about lumberjack songs.

*Songs of the Michigan Lumberjacks from the Archive of Folk Song,* by E. C, Beck, editor. Recorded by, Alan Lomax and Harry B. Welliver (Washington: Library of Congress). 1960. *Paul Bunyan, A Tall Tale*, by Steven Kellogg. (children’s picture book)

*American Tall Tales,* by Mary Pope Osborne, woodcut illustrations by Michael McCurdy (children’s picture book)

Additional listening:

The River in the Pines (played on the Viking cello), audio file: <http://digicoll.library.wisc.edu/LocalCenters/data/audio/MmBib/FSOAA/reference/fsoaa0036r.mp4>