



Creature Connection

Sasquatch

Some people believe that there's a big creature living in the woods in the Pacific Northwest. Other people say there's no such thing.

Those who claim to have seen this creature say it's big and hairy, walks on two legs, smells bad, and leaves enormous footprints. They've taken pictures of it. But those who don't believe they exist claim that the pictures are of people in gorilla suits. Does this creature exist?

This much we know is true—throughout history, humans have created stories about wild men and women who live in the forest. They tend to be bigger than normal men and women, hairier, and a bit scary. If you were a kid in medieval Europe, your parents might tell you about the woodwose, a hairy wild man of the woods. If you grew up in Russia, you might know about the leshy, a tall man who protects the forest. If you lived in the Himalayas, you might go to bed hearing about the yeti, a wild man who lives in the snowy mountains. And if you lived with the Salish people of the Pacific Northwest, you might go to bed hearing about the wild man called the *sésquac*.

The native people of the Pacific Northwest had so many stories about wild men that someone decided to collect these stories. His name was J.W. Burns. In the 1920s, he worked as a teacher on the Chehalis Indian Reservation, and after he'd collected the stories, he wrote a newspaper article called, "Introducing British Columbia's Hairy Giants." Mr. Burns is the person

who invented the word *sasquatch*. There were many different native names for the wild man creature, and Mr. Burns wanted to simplify things, so he created one name.

Later, in the 1950s, a bunch of footprints were found in northern California. When a photo of these footprints appeared in the newspaper the *Humboldt Times*, the writer decided to call the creature bigfoot, and that is how the sasquatch got its nickname.

Today, there are many websites and even a television show dedicated to finding the sasquatch. In Seattle, there is a publishing company and a music festival named after the hairy beast.

Story Ideas

1. Pretend you are sitting around a fire a very long time ago and you are the storyteller for your village. You don't want the little children to go into the woods, because the woods are filled with wolves and bears. So you must tell the children a story that will keep them out of the woods. You tell them about a strange creature that...

2. Pretend you are a newspaper reporter and you've just heard that someone in your town has found a giant footprint. You grab your notebook, pen, and camera and hurry to the location. But when you get there, you find something else....

Art Idea

Draw different kinds of footprints. A person, a cat, a dog, a bird—whatever you'd like—but be sure to include a sasquatch. Think about how they compare in size and shape.