ANNIE OAKLEY
TALL TALE

Annie Oakley was a tough little gal who started hunting game when she was nine years old in the backwoods of the Ohio frontier. It wasn’t long before she had a reputation for being handy with a rifle. The locals dubbed her “little sure shot.”

When Annie was sixteen, Buffalo Bill’s Wild West show came to town. Frank Butler, the show’s star, announced a shooting contest in which contestants could test their skill against him. Frank didn’t expect anybody to beat him. Annie entered the contest, but Frank Butler gave her no mind, seeing as she was just a girl. The townsfolk, however, knew little Annie was the surest shot around, so they came from far and wide to watch.

Annie didn’t let the townsfolk down. She beat Frank Butler… but she also fell hopelessly in love with the big fellow. She wanted so badly to be near him that she asked Buffalo Bill to give her a job. As it turned out, Frank held no hard feelings about Annie beating him. In fact, he admired her skill with a gun. He didn’t have any romantic feelings about her, though! He wanted a woman who wore satin and smelled of cologne, not one who was a tomboy and wore buckskin. Poor Annie was very sad when she figured out that Frank didn’t love her, but she didn’t know what to do.

Around that time, Buffalo Bill realized his Wild West show was going broke and only Annie could save it. He made her the star! Crowds came to watch her sensational act. They cheered as Annie shot dozens of glass balls tossed in the air before a single one hit the ground. They applauded when she shot a hole in the center of a playing card at 90 feet.

Chief Sitting Bull, who was also part of the show, knew that Annie pined for Frank Butler. He realized that Annie’s sharpshooting would never win her Frank’s love, so he pulled Annie aside and said, “You can’t get a man with a gun.” Looking into the eyes of the wise Sioux warrior, Annie suddenly understood how to fix it so Frank would love her.

As a huge crowd watched, Annie Oakley went against Frank Butler in another contest. Annie missed one shot after another until Sitting Bull declared Frank the winner of the match. Annie smiled at Frank. She knew right away that she had won his heart. She also knew that she had, after all, got a man with her gun!

*This Annie Oakley tale is a re-telling of “Annie Got Her Gun”.

Tall Tale Theme Unit

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ANNE OAKLEY
TALL TALE COMPREHENSION QUESTIONS – MULTIPLE CHOICE

Choose the best answer for each question.

1. How did Annie Oakley learn to be sharp shooter?
   a. She used to shoot the buffalo that wandered into her backyard.
   b. Annie lived in Ohio where everyone was a sharpshooter.
   c. Annie started out hunting game for food.
   d. She wasn’t very good at sewing so she learned to shoot.

2. Why did Frank Butler stage a shooting contest?
   a. Butler wanted to give townsfolk a chance to beat him.
   b. He always liked to show off when he went to a new town.
   c. Butler was star of the show, so he thought he would win.
   d. Frank Butler was the only clown in the Wild West Show.

3. Why was it hopeless for Annie to fall in love with Frank?
   a. Annie was too young for Frank, who was a grown man.
   b. Frank wouldn’t fall in love with a tomboy.
   c. Annie was too geeky for Frank.
   d. Frank had hard feelings about Annie beating him in the contest.

4. Why did Chief Sitting Bull say Annie couldn’t get a man with a gun?
   a. Sitting Bull had a lot of experience with matchmaking.
   b. Sitting Bull knew Frank didn’t want a woman who was better than him at shooting.
   c. He thought shooting a bullet through a card was a problem.
   d. Sitting Bull was afraid Annie might accidentally shoot Frank.

5. How did Annie Oakley win Frank Butler’s heart?
   a. Annie missed shooting most of the glass balls tossed in the air.
   b. Annie used her gun to get Frank.
   c. Annie asked Sitting Bull to cast a spell so Frank would love her.
   d. Annie let Frank beat her in a shooting contest.
ANNE OAKLEY
TRUE TALE

The real Annie Oakley was born in Ohio in 1860 as Phoebe Ann Oakley Mozee. Annie, as her sisters called her, had a difficult childhood. Her father died when she was very young, leaving her mother alone to care for seven children. Her mother had a lot of trouble making ends meet, so Annie tried to help out by hunting and trapping small creatures for food.

However, the family was so poor that Annie’s mother sent her to live and work at the county poor farm and later as a servant for a local family. Annie was mistreated by this family, who often locked her outdoors in the snow. Annie found comfort in target practice. Her life took a turn for the better when Frank Butler came to town with a Wild West show.

Butler often drummed up business for the show by accepting challenges from local marksmen. When Annie Mozee, a slim young woman in a dress, walked up to the mark to challenge him, Frank said, “I almost dropped dead.” Frank lost the contest 23 to 21. Their courtship began soon after.

Frank and Annie were married in Windsor, Canada, when Annie was 21. The couple traveled with Buffalo Bill Cody’s Wild West show for 16 seasons. Annie was the first woman hired by to fill the traditionally male role as a sharpshooting entertainer. Frank was part of her act, but Annie was the star. Frank would release clay pigeons for his wife to shoot. Audiences loved the part of the act when Annie shot a cigarette out of Frank’s mouth. Whether using a pistol, rifle, or shotgun, Annie was a masterful markswoman who won many awards and captivated audiences.

Over the years, Annie taught thousands of women how to shoot because she thought women should be able to protect themselves. She also thought women should get equal pay for equal work. She was famous for her generosity to orphans, widows, and young women. Her talent and strength of character broke barriers for women.

In 1891, Annie suffered a spine injury in a train wreck, but she didn’t fully retire until 1913. Annie Oakley died at age 66. Frank Butler, her husband of fifty years, died 18 days later.
ANNIE OAKLEY
TRUE TALE COMPREHENSION QUESTIONS – SHORT ANSWER

Answer the questions below in complete sentences.

1. In what ways does the tall tale about Annie Oakley differ from the true story?
   _________________________________________________________
   _________________________________________________________
   _________________________________________________________
   _________________________________________________________

2. Why did the creator of the tall tale have Annie Oakley lose the second match with Frank Butler?
   _________________________________________________________
   _________________________________________________________
   _________________________________________________________
   _________________________________________________________

3. What made Annie Oakley a star?
   _________________________________________________________
   _________________________________________________________
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4. According to the article, what values were important to Annie Oakley?
   _________________________________________________________
   _________________________________________________________
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ANNE OAKLEY
SORTING FACT AND FICTION

The following sentences are from stories about Annie Oakley. Mark each sentence as the most likely answer: FACT, POSSIBLY BASED IN FACT, or FULLY FICTION. Explain your answer.

1. Annie Oakley let Frank Butler win a second shooting match, so he would fall in love with her.
   This sentence is Fully fictional
   I think so because Frank fell in love with the real Annie shortly after the first match.

2. Annie could hit dozens of glass balls tossed in the air without missing.
   This sentence is _____________________________
   I think so because _____________________________
   _____________________________

3. Chief Sitting Bull told Annie Oakley how to attract Frank Butler.
   This sentence is _____________________________
   I think so because _____________________________
   _____________________________

4. Frank Butler did not want a tomboy for a wife.
   This sentence is _____________________________
   I think so because _____________________________
   _____________________________

5. Annie Oakley won Frank Butler’s heart with her gun.
   This sentence is _____________________________
   I think so because _____________________________

Tall Tale Theme Unit

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Think about Annie Oakley’s story. Why do people often think it is unusual for a woman to be good with a gun? Why did the tall tale show Annie losing the contest to Frank Butler?

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Make up an Annie Oakley story. Draw a picture to go with it.
ANNIE OAKLEY

ANSWERS

TALL TALE MULTIPLE CHOICE
1. c
2. c
3. b
4. b
5. d

TRUE TALE SHORT ANSWER
*answers will vary; accept reasonable answers.
1. In the tall tale Annie let Frank win, in real life she did not. Sitting Bull did not help the real Annie win Frank’s love. Annie was always the star.
2. The creator of the tall tale had Annie lose the contest because some men don’t want women to be better than they are in something like shooting.
3. Annie’s talent as a markswomen and her strength of character made her a star.
4. It was important to Annie that a woman could protect herself. She thought women should get equal pay for equal work. She wanted to help widows, orphans, and young women.

FACT OR FICTION
*answers will vary; accept reasonable answers.
1. Annie Oakley let Frank Butler win the second shooting match so he would fall in love with her.
   FICTION, because the real Annie didn’t let him win.
2. Annie could hit dozens of glass balls tossed in the air without missing.
   FACT because Annie was an excellent markswomen.
3. Chief Sitting Bull told Annie Oakley how to attract Frank Butler.
   FICTION because Annie attracted Frank without anyone’s help.
4. Frank Butler did not want a tomboy for a wife.
   FICTION because he married a woman who could shoot a gun better than most men.
5. Annie Oakley won Frank Butler’s heart with her gun.
   BASED ON FACT because Frank and Annie’s courtship began shortly after Annie beat him in the contest.

LONG ANSWER COMPREHENSION
*answers will vary; accept reasonable answers. A suggested answer would include that many people think that guns and shooting are for boys or men and men won’t like a girl or woman if she wins in competition with a boy or a man.