

Teacher Guide to Student Worksheet 1-Questions about Joe Magarac Tall Tale

Group 1: A larger-than-life, superhuman main character with a specific job ...

1. Who was the larger-than-life, superhuman character?
Joe Magarac
2. What descriptive words tell you how he was literally larger-than-life (bigger than normal)?
His back was as broad as an ore car, and his wrists were as big around as Mary's waist.
3. How was he superhuman? What could he do that normal human beings could not?
He could stir the melted iron with his hands, and make railroad rails from squeezing the metal through his hands like dough.
4. What was his profession?
Steel man

Group 2: A problem that is solved in a funny way.

1. List the problems that were solved in a funny way in this story.

Finding Mary a husband

Overproduction
2. What was funny about the way they were solved?

Mary's father held a contest to find the strongest man to be Mary's groom. Usually, in Western culture marriage is based on love, not on the strength of the husband.

Instead of slowing down production, Joe jumped in a bucket of molten iron to make a larger and stronger steel mill.
3. How might a "regular man" have solved these problems?

Mary's father would let her daughter marry the person she loved.

A regular man might have slowed down production.

Group 3: Exaggerated details that describe things as greater than they really are.

1. There are a number of hyperboles (exaggerated details) in this book. How many you can identify and list?

"Looking at her face, a man could see fields of Hungarian flowers, her eyes the brightest cornflower blue, her lips more red than the blushing poppies."

"Finally, the man from Johnstown lifted the bar as if it were a feather."

"He looked at the bar as if it were only a broom handle lying there."

"His back was as broad as an ore car, and his wrists were as big around as Mary's waist."

"He makes more steel than all the furnaces in America put together."

2. Create and write down three hyperboles about Joe Magarac.

Answers will vary. Examples below:

1. Joe Magarac is as tall as Mount Everest.
2. When he works, Magarac is as focused as a laser beam and faster than lightening.
3. His booming laughter is loud enough to cause an earthquake.

Group 4: Geographic locations in this story.

1. What geographic locations does the story name?

Pittsburgh, Johnstown, Monongahela Valley, Homestead

2. Find these locations on map of the Pittsburgh region or Pennsylvania.

3. Name the rivers near the locations you've identified.

Allegheny, Monongahela, Ohio, Little Conemaugh, and Stony Creek River

4. Why might it be important for steel mills to be located near rivers?

Raw materials are transported to the mills via the river; finished products are often transported from the mills to other cities, and the river provides cooling for the steel making process.