

# Logging Camp, Patricia Innis

## KEY IDEAS

- Myths like Paul Bunyan, often take root in reality.

## STORY

The myth of Paul Bunyan, an American giant and talented lumberjack, originated in the lumber camps of the 19th century. Bunyan is rumored to have dug the Grand Canyon when he accidentally dragged his ax behind him, and created Mount Hood in Oregon by piling rocks to put out a campfire. Bunyan's companion is a giant blue ox named Babe. Oxen were the preferred animals for logging due to their strength.

## BACKGROUND

*Logging Camp* commemorates the lumberjacks who worked in camps throughout Michigan in the late 1800's and early 20th centuries. Working from period photos, Patricia Innis created three shadow-like images of lumberjacks on trees using black walnut dye she made herself. Seeing these figures reminds us of tales about Paul Bunyan the mythological lumberjack who appears in American folklore.

The shadow lumberjacks silently, like their photos seen in restaurants, stores and museums, urge us to learn their history. Who were these men? Where did they come from? Why did they become lumberjacks? What was life like in a logging camp? Every person involved in the logging industry has his or her own story to tell.

## DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

- Why do you think the artist chose to portray the lumberjacks as silhouettes? What does this tell us (or not tell us) about these figures?
- What impact did such extensive logging during the lumber era have on the environment and the economy?

