**NAME\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_**

**PERIOD\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_**

**Mountain Men Wild Tales**

**Directions**: You will work in a group to read a story from a mountain man’s life. Together summarize the story in your own words. Be prepared you will re-tell this story to others. Then write an explanation for why you think this story is real or fake.

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| Story Title:  |
| Summary of the story (in a way that you can re-tell others just like you were a mountain man) |
| Do you think this story true? Why or why not? |

Colters Run

They now seized Colter, stripped him entirely naked, and began to consult on the manner in which he should be put to death. They were first inclined to set him up as a mark to shoot at. But the chief interfered, and seizing him by the shoulder, asked him if he could run fast.

Colter, who had been some time amongst the Crow Indians, had in a considerable degree acquired the Blackfoot language. He was also well acquainted with Indian customs. He knew that he had now to run for his life, with the dreadful odds of five or six hundred against him. Therefore he cunningly replied that he was a very bad runner—although he was considered by the hunters as remarkably swift.

The chief now commanded the party to remain stationary, and led Colter out on the prairie three or four hundred yards—and released him, bidding him to save himself if he could.

At that instant the horrid war whoop sounded in the ears of poor Colter. Urged with the hope of preserving life, he ran with a speed at which he was himself surprised.

He proceeded towards the Jefferson Fork, having to traverse a plain six miles in breadth, abounding with prickly pear, on which he was every instant treading with his naked feet. He ran nearly halfway across the plain before he ventured to look over his shoulder.

He perceived that the Indians were very much scattered—and that he had gained ground to a considerable distance from the main body. But one Indian, who carried a spear, was much before all the rest, and not more than a hundred yards from him.

A faint gleam of hope now cheered the heart of Colter. He derived confidence from the belief that escape was within the bounds of possibility. But that confidence was nearly fatal to him. He had exerted himself to such a degree that the blood gushed from his nostrils—and almost covered the forepart of his body.

He had now arrived within a mile of the river, when he distinctly heard the appalling sound of footsteps behind him, and every instant expected to feel the spear of his pursuer. Again he turned his head, and saw the savage not twenty yards from him.

Determined if possible to avoid the expected blow, he suddenly stopped, turned round, and spread out his arms. The Indian, surprised by the suddenness of the action, and perhaps of the bloody appearance of Colter, also attempted to stop. But exhausted with running, he fell whilst endeavoring to throw his spear, which stuck in the ground and broke in his hand.

Colter instantly snatched up the pointed part, with which he pinned him to the earth, and then continued his flight. The foremost of the Indians, on arriving at the place, stopped till others came up to join them, when they set up a hideous yell. Every moment of this time was improved by Colter, who, although fainting and exhausted, succeeded in gaining the skirting of the cottonwood trees, on the borders of the fork, through which he ran and plunged into the river.

Fortunately for him, a little below this place there was an island, against the upper point of which a raft of drift timber, had lodged. He dived under the raft, and after several efforts, got his head above the water amongst the trunks of trees, covered over with smaller wood to the depth of several feet. Scarcely had he secured himself when the Indians arrived on the river, screeching and yelling, as Colter expressed it, “like so many devils.” They were frequently on the raft during the day, and were seen through the chinks by Colter, who was congratulating himself on his escape, until the idea arose that they might set the raft on fire.

In horrible suspense he remained until night, when hearing no more of the Indians, he dived under the raft, and swam silently down the river to a considerable distance. He landed and traveled all night. Although happy in having escaped from the Indians, his situation was still dreadful. He was completely naked, under a burning sun—the soles of his feet were entirely filled with the thorns of the prickly pear—he was hungry. He had no means of killing game—although he saw abundance around him. He was at least seven days’ journey from the nearest Fort.

These were circumstances under which almost any man but an American hunter would have despaired. He arrived at the fort in seven days, having subsisted on a root much esteemed by the Indians.

Marie's Grizz Encounter

This story is told by Thomas James about one of his companions in the spring of 1810 while working for the St. Louis Missouri Fur Company while in the headwaters region of the Missouri River.

"Soon after this time, Marie and St. John, my two Canadian companions on the route from my winter quarters on the Missouri to the Big Horn, came to the Fort at the Forks. Marie's right eye was out and he carried the yet fresh marks of a horrible wound on his head and under his jaw. After I had left them at the Big Horn to come to the Forks, they came on to the Twenty-five Yard river, the most western branch of the Yellow Stone, for the purpose of trapping. One morning after setting his traps, Marie strolled out into the prairie for game, and soon perceived a large White Bear rolling on the ground in the shade of a tree. Marie fired at and missed him. The bear snuffed around him without rising, and did not see the hunter until he had re-loaded, fired again and wounded him. His majesty instantly, with ears set back, flew towards his enemy like an arrow, who ran for life, reached a beaver dam across the river, and seeing no escape by land, plunged into the water above the dam. The Bear followed and soon proved himself as much superior to his adversary in swimming as in running. Marie dove and swam under the water as long as he could, when he rose to the surface near the Bear. He saved himself by diving and swimming in this manner several times, but his enemy followed close upon him and watched his motions with the sagacity which distinguishes these animals. At last he came up from under the water, directly beneath the jaws of the monster, which seized him by the head, the tusks piercing the scalp and neck under the right jaw and crushing the ball of his right eye. In this situation with his head in the Bear's mouth and he swimming with him ashore, St. John  having heard his two shots in quick succession, came running to his rescue.  St. John levelled his rifle and shot the Bear in the head, and then dragged out Marie from the water more dead than alive. I saw him six days afterwards, with a swelling on his head an inch thick, and his food and drink gushed through the opening under his jaw, made by the teeth of his terrible enemy.

Hunting Buffalo and Chased by Pawnee

The following story is told by Matt Field as he and about sixty others  were traveling from Westport to the 1843 Rendezvous.  Actually the last rendezvous was held in 1840, and this was an expedition privately outfitted By [Sir William Drummond Stewart](http://www.mman.us/stewartwilliamdrummond.htm).  During the 1830's Stewart had attended the rendezvous as a half pay retired Captain in the British Army. He fully intended to attend one more rendezvous after inheriting his estate, but events and the end of the rendezvous system prevented him from doing so.  In 1843 he financed a final expedition to the mountains one last time to hunt, tell stories with his friends from the rendezvous days and frolic and gamble with the Indians before taking up his life as royalty in Britain.  This may be the first ever Mountain Man Reenactment.

Stewart's expedition in 1843 traveled through a country which the buffalo had abandoned, the same as pack trains to the rendezvous of the previous decade had to travel through.  Typically the pack trains would take along barrels of salt pork and/or drive a flock of sheep or cattle to get them through this country in which wild game was largely absent.  Depending on how fast the party was traveling and the season and year, it might take four to six weeks of travel from Westport to the first sighting of buffalo. Field's story takes place as Stewart's expedition had nearly exhausted their food supplies and had still not sighted the elusive buffalo.  Although this story pertains to Stewart's 1843 expedition, similar scenes were likely played out in earlier years.  Here is what Matt Field records:

"The next incident of this day was a great preparation for a grand hunt, about 4 o'clock in the afternoon, when two dark spots were discovered far away on our left, which were at once pronounced by everybody to be a pair of bulls.  Twenty riders were off in an instant after the long-looked for and anxiously prayed for game.  Everybody believed the distant spots to be buffalo, except Crockett [Field's nickname for W.C. Kennett], who had been looking for the strange animals so long, still suffering disappointment from day to day, that he now declared the whole thing was a humbug, and no such creatures could be in existence at all!  He, however, went off among the rest, and singular enough was the scene that ensued. The two black spots were no other things than two of our own companions, who were out, hungry and desperate, like many others of the party scattered around the vicinity looking for game.  The two, seeing us coming, for some moments mistook us for buffalo, also, and came hurrying to meet us with immediate expedition, but they soon turned and ran from us in the hottest haste. They found we were not buffalo, and then concluded we were Pawnees (the greatest rascals and the meanest cowards among the prairie tribes), but, as they found themselves only two to twenty, they determined to take an opposite direction with the best speed they could force from their jaded animals.

They had the advantage of us, however, one of them being in possession of a spy-glass, by the aid of which he found we were not buffalo-while we were the more convinced they were a pair of old bulls the moment we saw them turn to run from us!  So the chase continued.  Twenty of us were running to get a supper, and two of the same party were scouring away over the prairie to save their lives! We ran our two friends until the first shades of evening began to fall, and then concluded very prudently to let the game go, and turn back, ourselves, toward camp. That morning was one of the dullest we knew during the trip, and that evening was, perhaps, the merriest.  Over a supper of antelope, with a fair prospect of finding buffalo the next day, we laughed and sung and fell back again into our old fancies about the delights of wild life, but what enlivened us all into even a merrier mood was the coming back into camp of our two hunted companions, declaring they they had been chased for ten hours by the whole Pawnee nation! We at once saw through the whole mistake, and roars of laughter, repeated again and again, were heard around the camp fires until we all sank into our buffalo robes to rest."

Tricked into Eating Dogmeat

Lewis Garrard was a young man of 17 years, who traveled the Santa Fe Trail to [Bent's Fort](http://www.mman.us/bentsfort.htm) in 1846.  After arriving at the fort he was paired with ["Blackfoot" John Smith](http://www.mman.us/blackfootjohnsmithnickname.htm) with whom he accompanied to the Cheyenne Indian village to trade for horses and robes.  While traveling to the village, Smith enlighted Garrard about Indian life, including eating foods such as dogmeat. Garrard was appalled by the thought and proclaimed he would never eat such foods.  Smith responded by saying that before too long he would have Garrard not only eating dog but proclaiming it to be one of the finest foods.

Here is Garrard's account:

We had much to speak of: Smith, of the States; and, to my many inquiries of the Indians, he expatiated at length on their customs, food, and easy life.  Of their viands, he lauded dog’s flesh to the very skies; on my expressions of abhorrence at the bare thought, he said, “I bet I make you eat dogmeat in the village, and you’ll say it’s good, and the best yu ever hid in your meatbag (stomach).”

“No you will not,” I rejoined.  “The mere idea is enough to sicken one-slimy pupmeat-ugh!  Not enough of the carnivorous in me for that.  Besides, buffalo meat, in my opinion, cannot be surpassed for delicacy of flavor, in this or any other country.”

“Well, hoss, I dock off buffler, and then if thar’s any meat that runs can take the shine outen dog, you can slide.”

I still persisted that there was no convincing me.  And though still believing that “dog” could not pass in this country, circumstances bring many things which before seem impossible; and no one can tell but that a piece of old mule would be quite acceptable, ere passing through the fiery ordeal of a year in the Far West. Indeed, we had already eaten the next thing to mule and nothing-broken-down steer-meat.  Oh Grief! My jaws ache to think of the soggy dejeuners, in the soaking rain of old steer; or as the Canadians termed it “sacré boeuf.”

Some weeks passed, and Lewis Garrard had many adventures both in the Cheyenne Indian village and back at the fort.  Enjoying traders life, Garrard accompanied Smith on a second trip back to the Indian village where we will rejoin Garrard’s narrative:

One evening we were in our places-I was lying on a pile of outspread robes, watching the blaze, as it illumined the lodge, which gave the yellow hue of the skins of which it was made, a still brighter tinge; and, following with my eye, the thin blue smoke, coursing, in fantastic shapes, through the opening at the top of the cone; my thought carrying me momentarily everywhere; now home; now enjoying some choice edible, or, seated by a pleasant friend, conversing; in short, my mind was like the harp in Dryden’s “Alexander’s Feast,” the chords of which, touched by the magic hand of memory, or flight of fancy, alternately depressed, or elevated me in feeling.

Greenwood  and Smith, sitting up held in “durance vile” the ever-present pipe. Their unusual laughter attracted my attention, but, not divining the cause, I joined in the conversation.  It was now quite late, and feeling hungry, I asked what was on the fire.

“Terrapins!” promptly replied Smith.

“Terrapins?” echoed I, in surprise, at the name. “Terrapins! How do they cook them?”

“You know them hard-shell land terrapin?”

“Yes”

“Well!  The squaws go out to the sand buttes, and bring the critters in, and cook ‘em in the shell alive-those stewin’ thar are cleaned first.  Howsomever, they’re darned good!”

“Yes, hos, an’ that’s a fact, wagh!” chimed in Greenwood.

I listened, of course with much interest to their account of the savage dish, and waited, with impatience, for a taste of that, the recital of whose merits sharpened my already keen appetite.  When the squaw transferred the contents of the kettle to a wooden bowl, and passed it to us, our butcher knives were in immediate requisition.  Taking a piece, without thought as to what part of the terrapin it was, I ate it with much gusto, calling for more. It was extremely good, and I spoke of the delicacy of the meat, and answered all their questions as to its excellency in the affirmative, even to the extent of a panegyric on the whole turtle species.  After fully committing myself, Smith looked at me awhile in silence, the corners of his mouth gradually making preparations for a laugh, and asked;

“Well! Hos! How do you like dogmeat?” and then such hearty guffaws were never heard.  The stupefaction into which I was thrown by the revolting announcement, only increased their merriment, which soon was resolved into yells of delight at my discomfiture. A revulsion of opinion, and dogmeat too, ensued, for I could feel the “pup” crawling up my throat; but saying to myself-“that it was good under the name of terrapin,” and that “a rose under any other name would smell as sweet,” and that it would be prejudice to stop, I broke the shackles of deep-rooted antipathy to the canine breed, and, putting a choice morceau on top of that already swallowed, ever after remained a stanch defender and admirer of dogmeat.  The conversation with Smith, the second day of our acquaintance, was brought to mind, and I acknowledged that dog was next in order to buffalo.

Fitzpatrick’s Blackfoot Adventure

Thomas Fitzpatrick accompanied the Sublette and Campbell supply train to the [Rendezvous of 1832](http://www.mman.us/rendezvous1832.htm).  Competition for the available furs was fierce again this year, and the American Fur Company was sending a pack train to the rendezvous as well.  Before the Sublette and Campbell supply train had reached South Pass, Fitzpatrick rode on ahead to confirm the location of the Rocky Mountain Fur Company's trapper brigades.  This was to ensure that no time would be lost and limit the ability of the American Fur Company to trade skins and furs from the free trappers and Indians.  From the time Fitzpatrick left, until the supply train arrived at the rendezvous site, Fitzpatrick would vanish.

After it was determined that Fitzpatrick was with neither group search parties were sent out.  As hope was beginning to fade, [Antoine Godin](http://www.mman.us/godinantoine.htm) came in with Fitzpatrick.  Fitzpatrick had lost his horses, blanket, coat, and gun. He had endured such privation and hunger that many didn’t recognize his emaciated form.  The Blackfoot Indians who had caused him the loss of his horses and equipment and nearly cost him his life were the same group who were later engaged in battle with the trappers after rendezvous at the [Battle of Pierre’s Hole](http://www.mman.us/PierresHoleBattle.htm).  There is no indication that the trappers knew this prior to or during the battle, however, the day following the battle Fitzpatrick’s prize horse was recovered.  Three versions of the story are recorded by Zenas Leonard ([Reference](http://www.mman.us/references.htm#Leonardzenas)), Warren Ferris ([Reference](http://www.mman.us/references.htm#Ferris)), and Joe Meek ([Reference](http://www.mman.us/references.htm#VictorFrancis)).  Being affiliated with the Rocky Mountain Fur Company, Zenas Leonard may have heard the story directly from Fitzpatrick.  Warren Ferris was employed by the opposition American Fur Company, and it is more probably that he heard the story second hand.

The Death of Drouillard

George Drouillard was one of the most dependable of hunters accompanying the Lewis and Clark expedition to the Pacific Ocean and back.  By the spring of 1807 Drouillard was associated with [Manuel Lisa's](http://www.mman.us/lisa.htm) St. Louis Pacific Fur Company, and was heading back up to the headwaters of the Missouri River. Here he and the other members of the company struggled to wrest a fortune in furs from the beaver-rich streams, as the equally determined Blackfoot Indians strove to drive the Americans from their territory.  During this struggle, the company sustained very heavy losses in life and equipment.  This story was recorded by Thomas James in the spring of 1810

"The Indians, we thought, kept the game away from the vicinity of the Fort  [The Three Forks Post]. Thus we passed the time till the month of May, when a party of twenty-one, of whom I was one, determined to go up the  Jefferson river to trap. By keeping together we hoped to repel any attack of the savages. We soon found the trapping in such numbers not very profitable, and changed our plan by separating in companies of four, of whom, two men would trap while two watched the camp. In this manner we were engaged, until the fear of Indians began to wear off, and we all became more venturous.  One of our company, a Shawnee  half-breed named Druyer, the principal hunter of Lewis & Clark's party, went up the river one day and set his traps about a mile from the camp. In the morning he returned alone and brought back six beavers.  I warned him of his danger. "I am too much of an Indian to be caught by Indians," said he.  On the next day he repeated the adventure and returned with the product of his traps, saying, "this is the way to catch beavers."  On the third morning he started again up the river to examine his traps, when we advised him to wait for the whole party, which was about moving further up the stream, and at the same time two other Shawnees left us against our advice, to kill deer.  We started forward in company, and soon found the dead bodies of the last mentioned hunters, pierced with lances, arrows and bullets and lying near each other.  Further on, about one hundred and fifty yards, Druyer and his horse lay dead.  We saw from the marks on the ground that he must have fought in a circle on horseback, and probably killed some of his enemies, being a brave man, and well armed with a rifle, pistol, knife and tomahawk.  We pursued the trail of the Indians till night, without overtaking them, and then returned, having buried our dead, with saddened hearts to Fort. "

Joe Meek Rescues His Woman

“During this year of which we are writing, a considerable party had been out on the Powder River hunting buffalo, taking their wives along with them. When on the return, just before reaching camp, Umentucken [Meek's Indian wife] was missed from the cavalcade. She had fallen behind, and been taken prisoner by a party of twelve Crow Indians. As soon as she was missed, a volunteer party mounted their buffalo horses in such haste that they waited not for saddle or bridle, but snatched only a halter, and started back in pursuit. They had not run a very long distance when they discovered poor Umentucken in the midst of her jubilant captors.

Their delight was premature. Swift on their heels came an avenging, as well as a saving spirit. Meek, at the head of his six comrades, no sooner espied the drooping, form of the Lamb [Umentucken meant Mountain Lamb], than he urged his horse to the top of its speed. The horse was a spirited creature, that seeing something wrong in all these hasty maneuvers, took fright and adding terror to good will, ran with the speed of madness right in amongst the startled Crows, who doubtless regarded as a great "medicine " so fearless a warrior. It was now too late to be prudent, and Meek began the battle by yelling and firing, taking care to hit his Indian. The other trappers, emulating the bold example of their leader, dashed into the melee and a chance medley fight was carried on, in which Umentucken escaped, and another Crow bit the dust. Finding that they were getting the worst of the fight, the Indians at length took to flight, and the trappers returned to camp rejoicing, and complimenting Meek on his gallantry in attacking the Crows single-handed.