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Lies and Other Tall Tales

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Hurston, Zora Neale. Myers, Christopher. *Lies and Other Tall Tales*. Illustrated by Christopher Myers. HarperCollins, 2005. ISBN 0060006552. \$15.99. 40 p.

Reviewer: Lara M. Ackerman

Reading Level: Preschool, Primary

Rating: Excellent

Genre: Folklore;

Subject: Tall tales--Gulf States--Juvenile fiction; Folklore--Gulf States--Juvenile fiction; Books--Reviews;

Tall tales, like all the best lies, are usually passed from hand to hand before they find their way to our ears. This book is no exception. Myers introduces his rendition of Zora Neale Hurston's folklore studies with the explanation, "Way, way back in the day,/Back when George Washington's hair on the one-dollar bill hadn't yet turned white./Back when computers ran on steam power,/Back when cellular phones had rotary dials,.../There were lies,/Real lies." What follows is a rollicking collection of you-nevers and oh-yes-I-haves, full of the bantering rhythm of storytellers trying to one-up the last teller.

The source of most of these jaw-droppers is described on the very first page. They were collected in the 1930's from authoritative sources such as "Robert Bailey, middle age, worker in an orange grove, barely literate, from Georgia" and "Peter Noble, about 22, garage worker, North Alabama." Meyers' lively illustrations juxtapose the simple text with brightly colored illustrations reminiscent of the original sources. With paper and fabric silhouettes he captures the man who "ran so hard he lost his feet" with the same bold ability as the day it was "so cold the words froze up." The stories in this book provide an excellent opportunity to share some age-old whoppers with a new generation of listeners.