

The following content will be used for items 5 - 7.

Here is a story about mosquitoes. Read the story. Then answer the questions.

## Tall-tale Mosquitoes

by Adrien Stoutenburg



One hot, summer day, some men loaded a big, iron tank on a wagon and hauled it east of Denver, Colorado, to a ranch. The tank was like a huge, heavy bathtub and the ranch owner had ordered it to use as a watering trough for his cattle. It was late when the men arrived at the ranch, so they decided to spend the night there and set the big tank up in the morning. The rancher gave them some blankets to sleep on, and the men stretched out on the ground, yawning, when along came a batch of middle-sized mosquitoes, not much bigger than full-grown police dogs. The mosquitoes seemed to be mad about something and they bit and stung and buzzed so hard the men tried to run for cover. But there was no place to hide.

Suddenly, one of the men—some people say his name was Ed but others think it was Ned—had a bright idea. Take the big tank, he said, and turn it upside down, and then crawl under. That's what the men did. Even though it was awfully hot and dark under the iron covering, it was better than being punched full of holes by the mosquitoes. The men yawned and stretched and started to close their eyes. They hadn't got their eyes half closed when there was a loud banging against the walls of the tank. Then there was a whirring noise like a drill boring through metal. The next thing they knew, there came the stinger of a mosquito whizzing right through the iron roof.

Fortunately, Ed (or Ned) happened to have a hammer with him. While another man struck a match for a light, Ed-Ned aimed at the stinger, brought his hammer down, and bent the stinger the way you'd bend a nail. The mosquito couldn't pull his stinger out again, so there it buzzed and whined and whirled its wings, stuck fast. Ed-Ned did the same to every other mosquito that drilled through the tank until there were ninety-nine of them with their bills kinked over. The other mosquitoes outside got discouraged and left. The men yawned and closed their eyes and went to sleep.

When they woke in the morning, the sun was shining right in their faces, bright as a freshly painted yellow wagon wheel. For a minute they didn't think anything about it until suddenly Ed-Ned yelled, "Where's the tank?"

There wasn't a sign of it anywhere. Those mosquitoes had worked their wings so hard trying to pull their stingers free that they had flown away with the tank.

Some people think there couldn't be mosquitoes that big or strong, but those Colorado mosquitoes were only medium-sized compared to the ones around Paul Bunyan's lumber camp in Minnesota. These were called Moskittos and they were so big that they could straddle a river. When the lumberjacks were riding a raft of logs down the stream, the Moskittos picked the lumberjacks off and carried them away without any strain. It became so bad, Paul imported a drove of fighting bumblebees from Australia to fight off the Moskittos. The bees and the Moskittos fought like jet planes for a while, but finally they made peace and even started marrying into each other's families. Matters were worse than ever after that because the offspring of the Moskitto-bees had stingers at *both* ends. For a time, Paul didn't know what to do.

Then he brought a big boatload of sorghum molasses up from Louisiana. The Moskitto-bees flocked to the opened barrels and while they were busy lapping up the sweet stuff, Paul floated the boat on down to the Gulf of Mexico. By the time the Moskitto-bees reached there, they were so fat they could scarcely waddle and it was no trouble at all for the boat crew to push them off into the Gulf where they disappeared.

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