



Pecos Bill: The Greatest Cowboy of All Time

James Cloyd Bowman , Laura Bannon (Illustrator)

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“Pecos Bill had the strangest and most exciting experience any boy ever had. He became a member of a pack of wild Coyotes, and until he was a grown man, believed that his name was Cropear, and that he was a full-blooded Coyote. Later he discovered that he was a human being and very shortly thereafter became the greatest cowboy of all time. This is how it all came about.”

A Newbery Honor book in 1938, James Bowman’s PECOS BILL is the perfect introduction to a great American comic hero and to the delights of the American tall tale. Jolted off the back of his westward-bound pioneer family’s covered wagon, four-year-old Bill is left in the dust by his eighteen wawling and brawling siblings and never-suspecting mom and dad. Raised by coyotes as one of their own, Bill retains a natural innocence while developing a host of supernatural powers. When he finds out that he is a man, not a coyote, and returns to confront the often inhuman human world, those powers will come in handy. Bill never uses them maliciously, always for good, or simply to amaze and amuse.

James Bowman was a fine folklorist and an outstanding storyteller and he relates Pecos Bill’s wild deeds in a plainspoken voice that highlights their wonderful swagger and charm. With lively color and black-and-white illustrations by Laura Bannon, Bowman’s PECOS BILL remakes bedrock American myth into a novel full of high adventure, outrageous fantasy, laughter, and sheer fun.

Pecos Bill: The Greatest Cowboy of All Time Details

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Author : James Cloyd Bowman , Laura Bannon (Illustrator)

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Jennifer says

This 1938 Newberry Honor Book is a compilation Pecos Bill stories. From an American Folklore standpoint the book is interesting, albeit, a little offensive in parts. Depiction of reservations and Native Americans is particularly troubling. However, this book may be useful for critical discussions about the west as well as for some of the tall tales contained within. Grades 3-8.

CIP: Relates some of the legends of Pecos Bill, from the moment he bounced out of his family's covered wagon to the day his long-lost brother appears and explains that Bill is not like the coyotes that have raised him.

"Pecos Bill is a prime favorite among our American folkheroes. Children enjoy the fantastic invention, the riproaring extravagance of the yarns about the greatest of all cowboys, for such tale-spinning is a basic part of American humor." *The New York Times*

"Children are vastly amused by our American tall tales. 'Paul Buyan'... 'Pecos Bill'... 'The Jack Tales'... are as indigenous to the United States as popcorn, and too funny for children to miss." *Christian Science Monitor*

Steve Ward says

This was a delightful book filled with the tall tales of Pecos Bill. Many of the natural landmarks of the western United States and methods of the cowboy are explained by these farcical fables. This is a book filled with humor that any age will enjoy.

Stuart says

Pecos Bill: The Greatest Cowboy of All Time is a book that was published in 1937. It also received the title of Newberry Honor Book. 70 years later, New York Review Books brought this classic back into print, much to my delight. The book begins with an introduction by the author that explains that these book is folklore. That means that while there may be bits of truth in these stories, they are tall tales for the most part, which were a big part of American literature.

The book begins with young Bill being four years old. His family was migrating westward and travelling by a covered wagon. To his family's knowledge, he was asleep in the back of the wagon. He actually fell out of the wagon; was found by a coyote, who raised him; and taught him everything about the outdoors. Bill, therefore, grew up believing that he was a full-blooded coyote. In Chapter Two, Bill met a human nicknamed Chuck. The two conversed as best they could, and it was here that Bill re-learned the English language. He also finally learned that he was indeed a human and not a coyote. He wasn't happy to learn this, and it took a great deal of convincing, but the bit of evidence that finally won him over was when Chuck realized that Bill

was his long-lost brother. Other chapters include Pecos Bill becoming a cowpuncher (a cowboy); Pecos Bill busting a cyclone; and Pecos Bill meeting his love, Slue-Foot Sue.

Reading tall tales about characters such as Paul Bunyan and Pecos Bill should be required reading for all children in the United States. This book is recommended for children ages 9 to 12, and it does have some illustrations in it. That being said, it still is a 250 page book, so if your children are on the younger end of that range, you might want to make it a read-aloud book, which isn't a big deal, because this is a book that the whole family will enjoy. I know mine did. I highly recommend this book for all the cowboys and cowgirls out there.

Amber Scaife says

A gathering and retelling of the Pecos Bill legends for a young audience. S'okay, but not really my favorite genre.

Monica Fastenau says

Read the full review here: <http://newberyandbeyond.com/newbery-r...>

I really didn't care for this book. I'm not a fan of mythology and tall tales, as a general rule, and this book wasn't an exception to that rule. Add to that the casual racism and sexism that comes with many of the older Newbery books, and you come up with a book that I had to force myself to finish. Unless you or your kid is obsessed with American tall tales, maybe don't bother.

Heather says

I generally love folktales, tall tales, legends, fairytales, and anything else that might be at home in the 398.2 section of the library. So being **bored** by this book was a real surprise for me. Pecos Bill should not be boring - he is larger than life and full of surprises! Maybe it was the writing style or the pacing or the so very much that went unsaid and unexplained. If you want Pecos Bill stories, I would recommend looking elsewhere. I would only recommend this one to Newbery completists or those looking for more variations of Pecos Bill's tales. Maybe storytellers would get some ideas from the book - definitely on how **not** to tell Pecos Bill if you want to keep your audience awake. I'll concede that maybe some people will really love this book, but I hope they aren't missing out on better tellings.

Karol says

I remember, many a year ago, reading about Pecos Bill riding a cyclone like it was a bronco. The story was featured in a section about Tall Tales in our school reading text book. I loved the story back then, and I enjoyed it again now along with all the other "tall tales" in this book. Perhaps I love these stories given the knack my grandfather had for telling his own stories about his father in the old days (late 1800's) on the plains of Nebraska. Whatever the reason, I've always loved the old Paul Bunyan and Pecos Bill stories, and

really enjoyed taking a look at Bill all over again.

Abigail Lohmann says

Good book. You know the saying, "don't judge a book by its cover"? Don't judge this book by its cover. The inside of the book was WAY more interesting than the outside I must say;) The outside looked so boring to me that I almost didn't read it! I'm glad I changed my mind.

Burl Brooks says

What an incredible tale! I loved these stories as a child and revisiting them as an adult brought me back to those days.

Jill says

Not a huge fan of Tall Tale stories and this is no exception. I read it because it won a Newbery Honor. The book is not very considerate in the wording it chooses to describe the treatment of Native Americans by the US government...almost as if people native to this land were responsible for others crowding in on them. For example, "The American Indians of the Southwest, of course, entirely misunderstood was happening. They had, for centuries, been accustomed to prey on the buffalo, and now they insisted on killing the cattle. The result was that the Government at Washington established Military Posts and placed the Indians on Reservations. With the rapid increase in the number of cattle, the price of beef broke sharply. The Military Posts offered the best market, for after corralling the Indians, the Government was obliged to furnish them with meat."

Example of the language used: "...the best there is in man is the very best there is anywhere. Not even his beloved Coyotes could equal this. Where muscle and nerve and honor and courage are caught in the saddle, there also rides manly joy."

Joy says

1938 Newbery Honor Book

I was really hoping to enjoy this book since I love the Disney short about Pecos Bill and I generally enjoy folklore but....this book was so uninteresting! The stories rambled on and on.

Andrew Hill says

Just finished reading this to my daughter. A wonderful piece of Americana. Thank you NYRB for putting it back in print.

Catherine Lowe says

A Newberry Honor book in 1938, I read this aloud to my 11 year old who loved it. I thought it was okay, but enjoyed other tellings of Pecos Bill stories better. I'm partial to tall tales that can be read in one sitting, rather than the longer novel format.

Amy says

Bowman does a good job with the tall tale of Pecos Bill, making a mythical American demigod to rival Hercules and Theseus, with talents and personality as large as the American west.

Thomas Bell says

Oh my goodness I thought this book was stupid. Almost every page was filled with tall-tales and Pecos Bill worship. And then they did sort of creation-type myths with him like the reason we have the Grand Canyon, Butte Falls in Montana, etc.

AND the book it also fairly racist. You don't see it often, but when the Indians are mentioned it is about the same as animals. You can even find the 'Indian herds' on their reservations.

And lastly, the author seems to be putting quite a bit of disrespect for the law into this book. And even at the end he justifies and explains why it's good to not like the police.

But mostly this book was just filled with stupidity from front to back. I am so glad to be done with it.
