

Teachers Guide

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“George and the Voyageurs” Multidisciplinary Classroom Activities

Teachers guide for the Young Naturalists article “George and the Voyageurs” by Marc Hequet. Illustrations by Stan Fellows. Published in the November–December 2005 *Minnesota Conservation Volunteer*, or visit www.dnr.state.mn.us/young_naturalists/voyageurs.

Young Naturalists teachers guides are provided free of charge to classroom teachers, parents, and students. This guide contains a brief summary of the article, suggested independent reading levels, word count, materials list, estimates of preparation and instructional time, academic standards applications, preview strategies and study questions overview, adaptations for special needs

students, assessment options, extension activities, Web resources (including related Conservation Volunteer articles), copy-ready study questions with answer key, and a copy-ready vocabulary sheet. There is also a practice quiz in Minnesota Comprehensive Assessments format. Materials may be reproduced and/or modified to suit user needs. Users are encouraged to provide feedback through an online survey at www.dnr.state.mn.us/education/teachers/activities/ynstudyguides/survey.html.



Summary

“George and the Voyageurs” introduces young readers to the fur trade, a sweeping, centuries-long economic initiative that played a central role in the European exploration and settlement of the North American continent—and in relations between traders of European origin and indigenous peoples of North America. Topics include an overview of the fur trade, the important fur post at Grand Portage in northeastern Minnesota, the complex logistics of the trade, and the work of the voyageurs responsible for moving furs and supplies. This article presents many connections to academic standards across several disciplines and grade levels.

Suggested reading levels: third grade through middle grades

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Total words: 1,334

Materials: Print resources from your media center, Minnesota Historical Society print material and Web sites, maps of North America, poster board, colored pencils, and markers.

Preparation time: One hour, not including extensions

Estimated instructional time: Two to three 50-minute class periods, not including extensions

Minnesota Academic Standards applications: “George and the Voyageurs” may be applied to the following Minnesota Department of Education Academic Standards:

Language Arts

I. Reading and Literature

- A. Word Recognition, Analysis and Fluency
- B. Vocabulary Expansion
- C. Comprehension
- D. Literature

II. Writing

- A. Types of Writing
- B. Elements of Composition
- C. Spelling
- D. Research
- E. Handwriting and Word Processing

III. Speaking, Listening and Viewing

- A. Speaking and Listening
- B. Media Literacy

Science

Grade 3: Life Science (IV.

- C) Interdependence of Life. Changes in habitat can be beneficial or harmful to an organism.

Grade 5: Life Science (IV. E)

- Biological populations change

over time.

Grade 7: Life Science (IV. C)

Interdependence of Life.

Social Studies

Grades K–3: U.S. History (I. C)

Many peoples and cultures meet in the making of North America.

Grades 9–12: U.S. History (I. A)

Indigenous peoples of North America. (I. B and C) Three worlds converge: 1450–1763.

Grades 4–8: Minnesota History

(II. A) Pre-contact to 1650. (II. B) Contact and fur trade 1600–1810.

Geography

Grades 4–8: (V. C) Physical

features and processes. (V. D) Interconnections: Students will analyze how the physical environment influences human activities.

Arts

Artistic Expression Visual Arts.

Complete Academic Standards are available at www.education.state.mn.us. Teachers who find other connections to academic standards are encouraged to contact *Minnesota Conservation Volunteer*.

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Preview Before reading the article, ask students to page through it. Call attention to bold headings and illustrations. Since many students are familiar with fur, wild animals, canoes, and waterways, the **KWL** (Ogle, 1986) strategy may be used to find out what students already know (**K**) about these subjects. As a class or in small groups, brainstorm all the ideas students have about fur, fur-bearing animals, canoe travel, and why people like to wear fur. Next discuss what students want (**W**) to learn (or wonder) about the fur trade. As you complete the lesson, build a list of what they learned (**L**). Display your **K** and **W** ideas on poster board while you work with the article. Complete the **L** component as you read the article and engage in extension activities. See www.teach-nology.com/web_tools/graphic_org/kwl for a ready-to-use **KWL**.

Vocabulary preview Use the transparency-ready vocabulary list to preview challenging words. You may wish to provide a copy to every student or to small groups. Students may also write the terms and definitions on flashcards to aid short-term recall. Following your preview of the article, and based on your knowledge of your students’ needs, you may wish to add words to the vocabulary list. Lengthy preview lists, however, can be discouraging for reluctant readers.

Study questions overview Study questions parallel the story (the answer to the first question appears first in the article, followed by the second, and so on). This is an important organizational tool for students and should be emphasized before you begin working on the study questions. Preview the entire study question section with your class before you read the article. You may wish to read the article aloud and complete the study questions in class or in small groups. The questions may be assigned as homework, depending on the reading ability of your students. Inclusion teachers may provide more direct support to special needs students (see Adaptations section below). Note that questions 2, 5, 8, and 9 require inferential thinking.

Adaptations Read aloud to special needs students. You may choose to complete selected study questions first and then, if time allows, complete the remaining questions. For example, first do items 2, 3, 5, 6, 8, and 15. Peer helpers, paraprofessionals, or adult volunteers may lend a hand with the study questions. Flashcard drill may help students recall key vocabulary terms. With close teacher supervision, cooperative groups can offer effective support to special needs students, especially for extension activities.

Assessment You may use all or some of the study questions, combined with vocabulary, as a quiz. Other assessment ideas:

1. Ask students to write a short story in journal form about a fur trader. Require the inclusion of several key concepts, such as where the traders travel, their means of travel, and what kind of animals’ fur they seek.

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2. Students may discuss how they would decide whether to portage or shoot the rapids.
3. Students may design their own assessment in the form of a quiz or presentation. Invite each student to submit one question for an assessment and select the best ones.
4. Ask students to draw a fur-trading scene with similar key details as in assessment option 1.

Extension activities

1. Plan a field trip to a museum or historical site near you (see North West Company Fur Post and White Oak Learning Centre & White Oak Fur Post sites below). Students can learn more about the fur trade by seeing the tools, touching the fur, and hearing the stories of historical re-enactors. Invite a re-enactor or other expert on the fur trade to your classroom.
2. Trace the trade route described in this article on the map at www.canadiana.org/hbc/_poppers/PAMtraderoutes_e.htm. Students may wish to draw and color their own maps.
3. Read *The Illustrated Voyageur: Paintings and Companion Stories* by Howard Sivertson, Lake Superior Port Cities, 1999, ISBN: 0942235436; or *The Voyageur* by Grace Lee Nute, Minnesota Historical Society Press, reprint edition 1987, ISBN: 0873512138.
4. Ask students to report on a fur that someone in their family owns—what kind of animal fur it is, where it came from, how much it cost. Some families may even allow the student to bring the fur to class.
5. Students may investigate trapping in Minnesota at www.dnr.state.mn.us/regulations/hunting.
6. Invite students to make presentations about the ethics of making and using fur clothing, including a discussion of alternatives.
7. Suggest students create posters/presentations on the lives and behavior of fur-bearing animals in the wild—animals such as the beaver, otter, fisher, wolf, or mink.
8. Songs were an important part of the voyageurs’ workday. Students may compose a song or poem describing the voyageurs’ life. See *Songs of the Voyageurs* by Theodore C. Blegen, Minnesota Historical Society Press; CD & Booklet edition (July 2002). This CD and booklet introduce students to authentic voyageurs’ songs, sung in French. Also see www.toyomasu.com/haiku for excellent examples and teaching tips for the haiku form.

Web resources

Wolf Ridge Classroom Connections Voyageur Life teaching unit:

www.wolf-ridge.org/teacher_res/classr_con/voyageur_life_cc.html

Seven-lesson unit on the North American fur trade from the French perspective

www.ckcolorado.org/units/3rd_grade/3_

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CanadaCultureHistory.pdf

Minnesota Historical Society:

www.mnhs.org

MSN Encarta multimedia on fur trade routes:

encarta.msn.com/media_461520451_761563379_-1_1/Fur_Trade_Routes.html

Map of fur trade routes:

www.canadiana.org/hbc/_popups/PAMtraderoutes_e.htm

Grand Portage National Monument

www.nps.gov/grpo

North West Company Fur Post (near Pine City):

www.mnhs.org/places/sites/nwcfp

White Oak Learning Centre & White Oak Fur Post (Deer River):

www.whiteoak.org

Don't miss the rest of the November–December 2005 *Conservation Volunteer*. Many related articles are available on the DNR's Web site, at www.dnr.state.mn.us. Some recent *Conservation Volunteer* articles (see www.dnr.state.mn.us/magazine) include:

September–October 2004

“Gallery of Game” (Young Naturalists article with teachers guide)

www.dnr.state.mn.us/young_naturalists/gallery

May–June 2004

“Let's Go Canoeing!” (Young Naturalists article with teachers guide)

www.dnr.state.mn.us/young_naturalists/canoeing

January–February 2003

“Minnesota Is Hopping With Hares and Rabbits” (Young Naturalists article with teachers guide)

www.dnr.state.mn.us/young_naturalists/hares_rabbits

“Coyote (*Canis latrans*)”

www.dnr.state.mn.us/volunteer/janfeb03/mpcoyote.html

May–June 2003

“The Slinky, Stinky Weasel Family” (Young Naturalists article with teachers guide)

www.dnr.state.mn.us/young_naturalists/weasels

- References** Ogle, D.S. K-W-L Group Instructional Strategy. In A.S. Palincsar, D.S. Ogle, B.F. Jones, and E.G. Carr (Eds.), *Teaching Reading as Thinking* (Teleconference Resource Guide, pp.11–17). Alexandria, Va.: Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development, 1986.

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Study Questions

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www.dnr.state.mn.us/young_naturalists/voyageurs

Name _____ Period _____ Date _____

1. Who liked to wear the furs that fur traders brought back from the wilderness? _____

2. Why didn't Europeans use furs from animals in Europe? _____

3. What animals did hunters and trappers catch for their fur? _____

4. What was one Indian tribe that hunted and trapped furs for traders? _____

5. Why did the Indians bring furs to fur traders? _____

6. What kind of fur did the fur traders want most of all? Why? _____

7. From near what city did George travel when he left for the wilderness? _____

8. Why did the fur traders meet at Grand Portage? _____

9. Why were the voyageurs always in a hurry while traveling? _____

10. Why were ideal voyageurs small people? _____

11. What did voyageurs eat on their journeys? _____

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12. Why did voyageurs portage? _____

13. How long was a typical portage? _____

14. How heavy were the packs voyageurs carried? How many did each voyageur carry? _____

15. When did beaver fur for hats go out of style? _____

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Study Questions Answer Key

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1. Who liked to wear the furs that fur traders brought back from the wilderness? **Rich people in Europe.**
2. Why didn't Europeans use furs from animals in Europe? **They were very hard to find. In Europe, fur animals had been hunted and trapped nearly to extinction.**
3. What animals did hunters and trappers catch for their fur? **Beaver, fox, mink, otter, marten, wolf, deer, buffalo, and muskrat.**
4. What was one Indian tribe that hunted and trapped furs for traders? **Ojibwe.**
5. Why did the Indians bring furs to fur traders? **To trade for beads, wool blankets, axes, hunting rifles, and other goods.**
6. What kind of fur did the fur traders want most of all? Why? **Beaver. Its stiff, waterproof fur was just right to weave into a cloth called felt to be made into expensive hats.**
7. From near what city did George travel when he left for the wilderness? **Montreal (Lachine is a town near Montreal).**
8. Why did the fur traders meet at Grand Portage? **For a summer rendezvous, to exchange the winter's furs for trade goods and supplies to use in the coming winter.**
9. Why were the voyageurs always in a hurry while traveling? **Because summers are short in the north and they had a long way to go.**
10. Why were ideal voyageurs small people? **If their legs were too long, they wouldn't fit in the crowded canoe.**
11. What did voyageurs eat on their journeys? **Corn, beans, rice, and pemmican—dried buffalo meat and fat, sometimes mixed with berries.**
12. Why did voyageurs portage? **To avoid dangerous stretches of water such as rapids and waterfalls, or to go on to the next safe waterway that would take them to their destination.**
13. How long was a typical portage? **A few hundred yards.**
14. How heavy were the packs voyageurs carried? How many did each voyageur carry? **About 90 pounds. Each voyageur carried two at a time.**
15. When did beaver fur for hats go out of style? **In the 1830s.**

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Minnesota Comprehensive Assessments Practice Items

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Minnesota Conversation Volunteer, November–December 2005

www.dnr.state.mn.us/young_naturalists/voyageurs

Name _____ Period _____ Date _____

- Voyageurs paddled 14 hours a day because
 - they were going downstream.
 - they had a long way to go and summers are short in the north.
 - they needed the exercise.
 - it helped them stay warm.
- On long portages, voyageurs carried their bundles _____ before dropping them to go back for more.
 - 100 yards
 - 500 yards
 - a mile
 - half a mile
- Grand Portage, one of the longest portages, was _____ long.
 - 10 miles
 - 8.5 miles
 - A day’s journey
 - 1 mile
- Voyageurs’ canoes were made of _____, which rocks in the water could easily puncture.
 - birch bark
 - aluminum
 - plastic
 - wood
- Beaver fur went out of style because
 - beavers became extinct.
 - the fur was the wrong color.
 - silk came into fashion.
 - protesters were against killing beavers.

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1. Voyageurs paddled 14 hours a day because **B. they had a long way to go and summers are short in the north.**
2. On long portages, voyageurs carried their bundles **D. half a mile** before dropping them to go back for more.
3. Grand Portage, one of the longest portages, was **B. 8.5 miles** long.
4. Canoes were made of **A. birch bark**, which rocks in the water could easily puncture.
5. Beaver fur went out of style because **C. silk came into fashion.**

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Vocabulary

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www.dnr.state.mn.us/young_naturalists/voyageurs

- archaeologist** scientist who studies people and their belongings from long ago
- currency** money; different countries use different kinds of currency
- extinction** no longer existing
- felt** cloth made from the hair of beavers and sometimes other animals
- fragile** easily broken
- Gichi Onigaming** “great carrying place,” the Ojibwe name for Grand Portage
- pelts** skins of fur-bearing animals
- pemmican** food made from pounded meat and fat of buffalo or other animals, sometimes mixed with berries
- portage** carry a canoe and its contents across land
- rapids** dangerous place in streams where water moves very fast among rocks
- rendezvous** meeting

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steersman voyageur who stood at the rear of the canoe and used a long paddle to steer

tumpline strap voyageurs attached to their packs and placed across their forehead to help them carry the heavy loads

voyageurs sturdy workers who paddled canoes far into the wilderness, carrying supplies, furs, and canoes overland between waterways

whim sudden desire with no particular reason behind it