

Activity 12: Building Boats

Activity Description:

1. Begin by saying:

We've finally made it over the mountains. The good news is we don't have to walk any more! The bad news there is 500 miles of river between us and Dawson City we need to build our own boat.

2. Read the following excerpt from Gold! The Klondike Adventure:

The Dyea and Skagway trails ended at adjoining mountain lakes whose emerald-green waters fed into the Yukon...It was up to each man to build his own vessel and find his way 500 miles downriver to Dawson...By the spring of 1898, 30,000 people were camped along the frozen lakes at the foot of the passes. In just a few months the Stampeders had transformed this once quiet valley into a bustling boat-building center. Acres of stumps stood where forests had once grown. (p. 47, Ray)

3. Continue by telling your class:

The lake is still frozen but we need to be ready to go as soon as the ice breaks. Before we can build our own boats we'll need to make our own boards.

In class today we are going to build models of the boats we plan to take down the river. First we have to design our boats. Think about the type of boat you could build that would withstand 500 miles of travel through white water rapids, flat open lakes, carry 2,000 pounds of gear, and be easy to build.

Part One: Designing the boats

1. Ask your students what are some features they might want to include in their boat design? Record some of the student ideas.

2. Have the students draw or design their watercraft. Explain they'll need to draw two perspectives of the boat---a top view and a side view. They'll want to make certain to design their boat to be symmetrical and include a line of symmetry in the design.

VARIATIONS Depending on the ability of the students:

1. Have them draw two two-dimensional perspectives
2. Have them draw a three dimensional perspective.
3. Include actual dimensions to approximate the amount of wood that would be needed.
4. Determine freeboard and amount of surface area needed to float 2000 lbs.

Part Two: Building the boats

1. Begin by saying:

You've had a chance to design your boats. Today we try to build them.

2. Show the students where the materials are laid out. You may want to assure your students that their model may not reflect their design. Often times the materials available don't allow for exact replicas of the designs. Students who finish early can create the supplies to load on the boats.

OBJECTIVE: To learn about how the Stampeders built their own boats in order to complete the final 500 miles of the journey to Dawson City.

MATERIALS:

1. Graph paper
2. Model Boat Building Materials (popsicle sticks, cardboard, glue, milk cartons, fabric, dowels, tape, string, etc.)

TIME: 2 hours