

Title: Building 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:

Part One: Graph paper

Part Two: Model Boat Building Materials (popsicle sticks, cardboard, glue, milk cartons, fabric, dowels, tape, string, etc.)

Time: 2 hours

Lesson 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 a lake and 500 miles of river between us and Dawson City, the "City of Gold," and either we build our own boat or hire someone to build us a 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. No boats waited along the shores of Lake Lindeman or nearby Lake Bennett to carry passengers to the Klondike. 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)

Continue by telling your class:

The lake is still frozen but we need to be ready to go as soon as the ice breaks. If we build our own boats we'll need to make our own boards. That requires a long and tiring process call whipsawing. First one places a fresh cut log on a raised platform called a sawpit. Then begins the destruction of many a good friendship. One partner stands on the top of the sawpit while the other partner stands below. Each hold the end of a long, jagged-tooth saw and the fun begins. The partners have to work in perfect synchronicity pushing and pulling the saw. With each stroke of the saw the partner below gets a face full of sawdust while the person on top quickly developed an aching back from leaning over. Partners often yelled and cursed one-another convinced the other wasn't doing his share of the work.

In class today we are gong 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. Then pass out graph paper to the students.
2. 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.

After students have had a chance to finish their designs move onto Part Two. (Part One is usually done on one day and Part Two is started the next.)

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.

