

## Activity 10: Postcard from Skagway

### Activity Description:

1. Gather as a whole group to now share what it was like to arrive into Skagway. Read the following excerpt from Gold! The Klondike Adventure.

*All through the summer of 1897 and the following year, one steamship after another puffed into Skagway Bay in southern Alaska. The vessels, which were too large for the shallow waters near land, anchored in the open canal. A fleet of rowboats, Indian canoes, and barges rushed out to meet the steamers and carry the passengers and their freight ashore.*

*As the crew unloaded the cargo, the gold seekers watched in dismay. Their precious mining supplies were heaved over the side of the ship carelessly, landing with a crash on the barges below. Horses, sheep, and oxen were dumped, terrified and kicking, into the icy water and forced to swim ashore.*

*Before long, a mountain of supplies began to rise up on the beaches. The Klondikers wandered frantically through the jungle of brassbound trunks, flour sacks, Yukon stoves, and shipping boxes. Desperately, they tried to find their own outfits before the goods were soaked by the incoming tide.*

*When the Stampeders had gathered their belongings, they noticed the strange scene around them. Beyond the beach stretched acres of white tents and rickety shacks. This was Skagway — a muddy town of makeshift buildings and restless men. The gold seekers flowed down the main street in an endless stream, past the tent saloons, blacksmith's shed, and doctor's shanty. None of the Stampeders paused for long. Every moment wasted meant one less pan full of gold. (p.36, Rey)*

2. At this point ask the students to describe what it was like to arrive into Skagway. Share ideas and chart them. Next, ask students to write a journal entry describing their arrival into Skagway. Students should include details from the passage above.

3. Gather again as a whole group to discuss the elements of a friendly letter/postcard. You may want to create a sample postcard on a chart and ask students to tell what each section represents (opening, body, closing, address, stamp, and picture). Or you could show some postcards you've received to highlight that same information. With this background information students should now be ready to create their own postcard to send home from Skagway. Students will need to create a short message describing their journey and arrival into Skagway. Next, have students address the postcard to the right of the lined paper. On the backside of the postcard students need to draw a black and white picture of Skagway (canal/beach, white tents, muddy road, stacks of supplies, etc.). At this point it is helpful to show your students a variety of photos of Skagway to help them picture what the town looked like. Lastly, the postcard should include a heading (like many postcards show) to tell what the postcard shows.

**OBJECTIVE:** Students will practice their friendly letter writing skills.

**MATERIALS:**

1. Poster board cut in 8.5 x 5.5 inch pieces for each student
2. Lined paper cut in 4 x 5 inch pieces
3. Glue
4. Pencils
5. Photographs of Skagway
6. Examples of postcards

**TIME:** 60 to 90 minutes (in 3 parts)