

NAME: _____



Activity One

The Sign of the Beaver takes place in Eighteenth Century Maine. Attean's people, the PENOBSCOT, as well as the PASSAMAQUODDY, and MALISEET were three of the native groups living in this area at this time.

Choose one of these three peoples and write a research report about this society.

Your research report might include such topics as:

• Diet

• Tools and Weapons

• Clothing

• Religious beliefs

• Recreation

• Heroes

• Any other topic of interest

As you prepare your report, keep in mind that people who lived in North America during the Eighteenth Century (even the ones living in cities) had almost none of the modern conveniences that we enjoy today. No machinery (cars, chainsaws), modern appliances (microwaves, toasters), not even any electricity!

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Activity Two

Did you know that The Sign of the Beaver is quite a controversial novel? Some readers have objected to the author's portrayal of the native people in this book - the way they speak and the portrayal of their way of life. Some readers, for instance, find it objectionable that Attean says things like, "Leg mend soon. Fox have three leg beside." They also object to the native children being compared to "little frogs", and to phrases that appear judgmental: "the hideously painted faces".

What are your thoughts regarding this issue?

You may either:

1. Defend these views and explain your thoughts

Or

2. Defend Elizabeth George Speare's book as an accurate portrayal of life in Maine during the Eighteenth Century

A large rectangular area with a spiral binding at the top, containing ten horizontal lines for writing.

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Activity Three

Attean teaches Matt many useful things about surviving in the wilderness: what wild plants can be used for food or medicine, and which are poisonous; how to spear fish and trap animals (by snare and deadfall); putting moss into your footwear to soak up water; using a strip of birch bark as rain protection. These are just a few of things that Matt learned from his Attean and his family.

Nature certainly has many wonderful, untapped resources that people can take advantage of. Choose one of the topics listed below and research a few suggestions as regards to improving Matt's chances of surviving in the wilderness.

- Useful plants
- Methods of fishing and hunting
 - Clothing
- Keeping your cabin warm
- Medicine from the wilderness
 - Tools and weapons



Activity Four

Saknis assigns Matt the task of teaching Attean how to read. Attean turns out to be a very reluctant, uncooperative student, and Matt quickly becomes quite frustrated with the task.

Matt's basic strategies included:

1. Teaching the letters of the alphabet by associating each letter with an object with which Attean is familiar (for example: **a** is for **arm**).
2. When this failed, he used the novel, Robinson Crusoe to show Attean the relevance of letters to a real story.
3. Finally, he simply resorted to reading the novel to Attean.

All in all, it was a frustrating, unsuccessful experience for Matt, partly because he had very little at hand to work with.

If you were in Matt's situation, what other strategies might have been useful to help teach Attean to read? Explain these strategies and give supporting reasons for using them. Then, describe some resources that would have been useful for Matt to use.

Use the space below to write jot notes and organize your thoughts.

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Activity Five

Matt comes to realize that he is caught between two worlds. He is white and part of a growing number of settlers encroaching on the land of the Penobscot people. By the end of the novel Matt knows that soon there will be so many white settlers living in the area that the native population will no longer be able to find enough game to survive. As well, the white population will be placing many laws and restrictions upon the Penobscots, making their way of life even more difficult.

Imagine that you are the governor of Maine during the time of Matt and Attean, and answer the following questions:

1. How would you deal with this problem?
2. How would you try to ensure that the native people of the area would not only survive, but flourish in their own, chosen way of life?
3. At the same time, how would you satisfy the needs of the white population who are looking land to settle on and farm?

You may wish to complete this activity with a partner, and begin with a brainstorming session. Use your imagination and powers of diplomacy.

Good luck!

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Activity Six

Maine is still one of the most beautiful places in North America. Investigate this geographical region *as it is today* and report on one or more of the following aspects:

- **Natural vegetation** (such as trees, plants)
- **Wildlife** (Include examples found in the novel, and other species that you discover in your research. How have the animals, so plentiful in Matt's time, fared over the years?)
- **Landforms** (Is the countryside generally mountainous, swampy, hilly, etc.?)
- **Settlement** (What are the main towns and cities? Where are they located? How large are they?)
- **Industry** (At what are the people of this region employed?)
- **Native People** (How have the original inhabitants of this area fared in modern times? How many now live in the region and what are their principal occupations?)
- **Other topics** (check with your teacher first)