

Mountain Man Education Trunk

Teacher Info: Curriculum Overview

The Wyoming State Museum is extremely excited for you to try out this new and improved curriculum. This overview will tell you what to expect within each section of the curriculum. The following pages will dive deeper into each activity. Some of these sections can even be completed before you receive the trunk or after you send it back.

- **Section 1: Louisiana Purchase and Lewis and Clark Expedition**
This introduction lesson teaches students how the Louisiana Purchase and the Lewis and Clark Expedition were instrumental to creating the mountain men. These activities focus on reading comprehension and vocabulary.
- **Section 2: Exploring History through Artifacts**
This activity allows students to get hands on with one mountain man artifact, analyze it, and determine what it would have been used for. This activity utilizes group work and critical thinking.
- **Section 3: How Mountain Men Trapped Beavers**
This activity is two parts worksheets and one part classroom discussion. Your students will use independent research to learn about the American beaver and figure out the steps that mountain men used to trap beavers. Then, you'll use a couple of the trunk's artifacts to teach your students more about this topic.
- **Section 4: Creating a Mountain Man**
In this fun activity, your students will create their own mountain man. They'll name him, choose his country of origin, give him abilities and skills, and dress him. You will also have a classroom discussion about mountain man clothes, showing the clothes from the trunk. This activity cannot be skipped if you're doing Section 5 or 6.
- **Section 5: A Year in the Life of a Mountain Man**
This is the main activity of the entire trunk. Students will go through 22 "encounters" with their mountain man, led by you. You will utilize cards (created by the museum) to easily walk your students through different good and bad things that happened to mountain men while trapping. Their mountain man abilities and skills will help them survive and thrive.
- **Section 6: Mountain Man Rendezvous**
After their first year in the mountains, your students will use mathematics to determine how many beavers they obtained, and how much money they're worth. Then, they'll go through the rendezvous store, purchasing items they'll need for their next year in the Rocky Mountains.
- **Section 7: Mountain Man Tall Tales**
Finally, your students will use writing skills to create tall tales about their mountain man's experience in the mountains, during their first year.

Mountain Man Education Trunk

Teacher Info: How the Mountain Men Trapped Beavers

Section 3: How Mountain Men Trapped Beavers

This section focuses on the American beaver and how the mountain men trapped them. It has three smaller activities. Your students will see the multiple items from the trunk during this activity, too.

- Activity 1: The American Beaver

- Part 1: “Getting the American Beaver” Worksheet

Students will use computers, tablets, or encyclopedias in the classroom to learn about the adaptations of the American beaver. Then, they will match the descriptions to the pictures on the other side of the worksheet. You can print this document from the “Mountain Man Trunk” page of the Wyoming State Museum website or photocopy it from the “Student Worksheets” section of this book.

- Activity 2: How Mountain Men Trapped Beavers

- Part 1: “How Mountain Men Trapped Beavers” Worksheet

Students will read about how the mountain men came to the Rockies. Then, they will learn how mountain men trapped, prepared, and sold beavers pelts by putting these steps in the correct order. You can print this document from the “Mountain Man Trunk” page of the Wyoming State Museum website or photocopy it from the “Student Worksheets” section of this book.

- Part 2: Classroom Discussion

After your students have learned a bit about how mountain men trapped beavers, you should lead a classroom discussion about the subject. This discussion should basically dive deeper into each step shown on the worksheet.

If you need more background knowledge on this subject, some supplemental information is included at the back of this packet (“Supplemental Teacher Information: Trapping Beaver.”)

A Year in the Life of a Mountain Man

Getting to Know the American Beaver

The North American beaver is the largest rodent in North America, and the second largest rodent in the world! It is a fascinating animal with a ton of amazing adaptations to help it survive in its aquatic habitat!

Use the resources in your classroom to learn about the North American beaver. Afterwards, read the questions on the back of this page and then label the picture below with your answers.

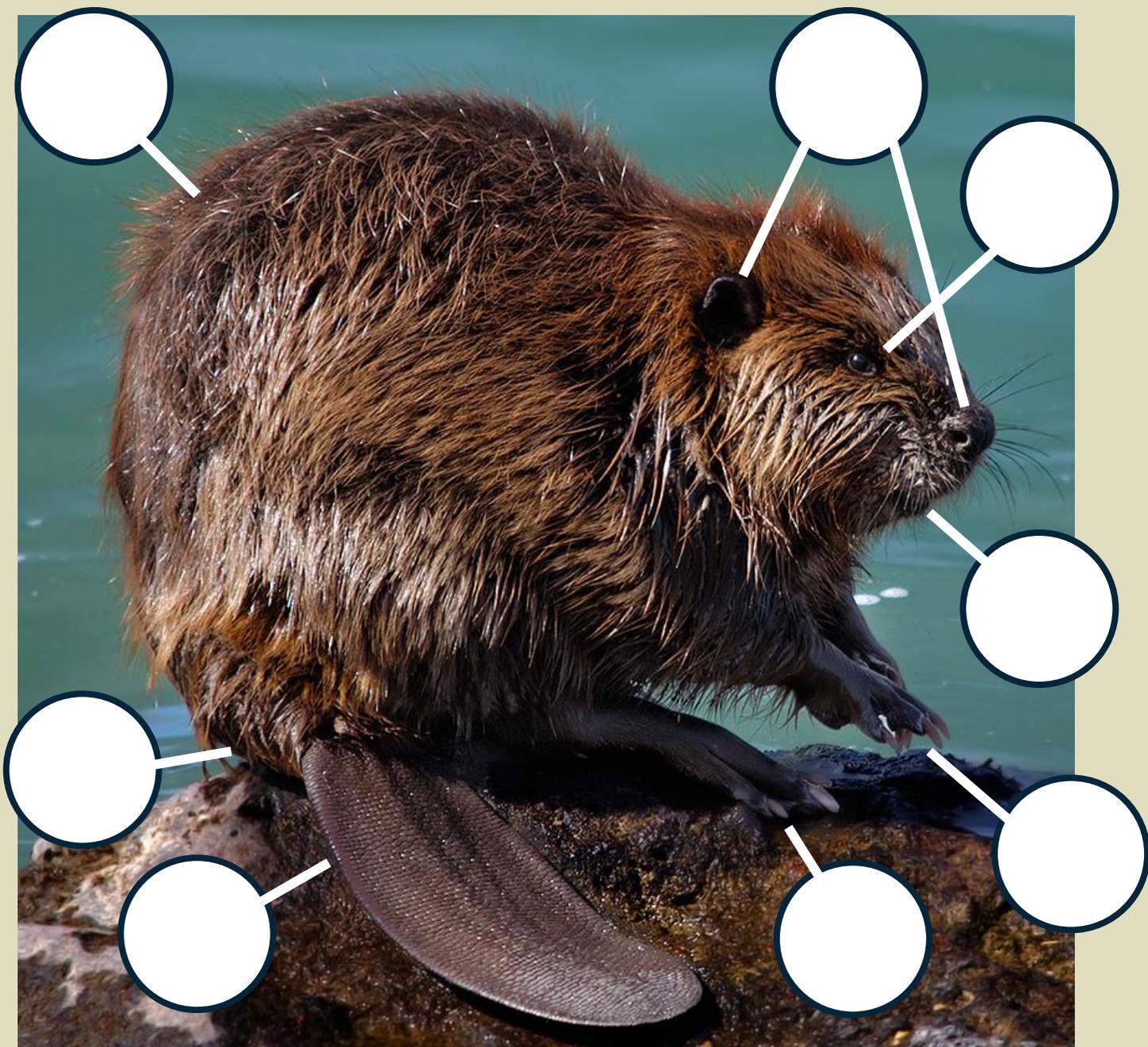


Photo by Keith Williams

A Year in the Life of a Mountain Man

Getting to Know the American Beaver

Read the description of each amazing adaptation of the North American beaver. Then, write the adaptation's number in the circle (on the beaver picture) where you can find that adaptation.

1. This adaptation is thick and oily. It keeps the beaver warm and dry, even when it's swimming in cold water.
2. This adaptation lets the beaver slap the water to warn other beavers of danger. It also acts as a rudder for the beaver when it's swimming, helping to steer them underwater.
3. This adaptation is webbed and it helps the beaver swim.
4. This adaptation is a special flap that closes off external holes when the beaver swims underwater.
5. This adaptation is iron. It grows on a part of their body, making it so strong that the beaver can use it to cut down trees.
6. This adaptation allows the beaver to hold sticks, letting them build dams and lodges.
7. This adaptation is a nictitating membrane, or special layer that lets the beaver see underwater.
8. This adaptation is called castoreum. It allows the beaver to mark their territory using scent.

A Year in the Life of a Mountain Man

How Mountain Men Trapped Beavers

The fur trade was operating in North America for more than 200 years before the era of the mountain men. During this time, most of the animals were trapped by tribes living in the eastern part of the continent. The Native Americans then traded the skins for items they needed from the European and American fur companies.

This all changed with the Louisiana Purchase and the Lewis and Clark Expedition. Lewis and Clark wrote about the millions of beavers that lived in the Louisiana Territory's rivers and lakes. So, in the early 1800s, fur companies began sending young men into the territory to trap beavers themselves. These were the mountain men.

These men lived in the mountains and trapped beavers during the Fall and Spring, when beavers had their thick winter coats. During the winter, when the rivers and lakes were frozen, mountain men would hunker down and wait for the thaw. The summer saw the men gather in large groups for the rendezvous. On the next couple pages, you'll learn about how mountain men trapped beavers.



Fur Traders and Native American in Canada, from "A Map of the Inhabited Part of Canada from the French Surveys; with the Frontiers of New York and New England," 1777

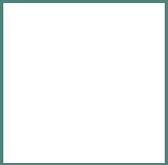


American Beaver Swimming
Photo by Todd Kulesza

A Year in the Life of a Mountain Man

How Mountain Men Trapped Beavers

These steps tell you how mountain men trapped beavers, but they're all mixed up! Write the correct step number (1-7) for each one. Use the pictures on the next page as clues!



Skin the Beaver

Mountain men would have to skin the dead beaver using their green river knife. They would then scrape all the meat, fat, and other tissue off the skin.



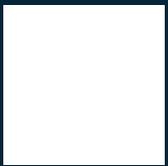
Sell the Skins

Mountain men would meet, once a year, with their company at a rendezvous to sell their beaver skins and buy their supplies for the next year.



Retrieve the Beaver Trap

Mountain men would come back to the ponds and streams to collect the trap and dead beaver.



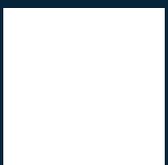
Set the Beaver Trap

Mountain men would set traps in the water and bait them with castoreum to attract beavers. Beavers would get their leg trapped in the trap, and then drown.



Press the Skins into Packs

Mountain men would use a beaver press to press about 66 beaver skins into one pack. These packs weighed about 100 pounds! Mountain men would then bury these packs.



Stretch the Skin

Mountain men would use branches to create a beaver stretcher. Then, they would sew the beaver skin into it so it could dry and later be treated.



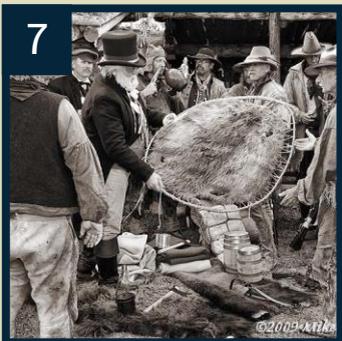
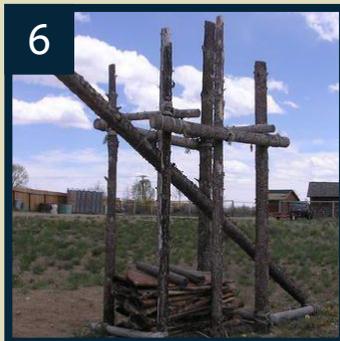
Treat the Skin

Mountain men would take the dried beaver skin, and spread a mixture of beaver brains and water onto the skin. After it dried again, it would be soft and supple.

A Year in the Life of a Mountain Man

How Mountain Men Trapped Beavers

Being a mountain man was a lot of work! These men had to follow many steps to get beavers ready to be sold at the rendezvous, each summer.



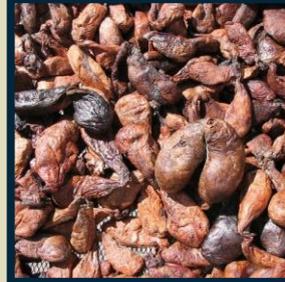
A Year in the Life of a Mountain Man

How Mountain Men Trapped Beavers

The beaver was the most important animal of the fur trade, but not the only animal trapped. During the height of the fur trade, each of the items listed below was worth the same as one beaver pelt.



1 Bear Cub Pelt



1 Pound of
Castoreum
(Beaver Glands)



10 Pounds of
Goose Feathers



1 Fox Pelt



3 American
Marten Pelts



2 River Otter
Pelts



1 Moose Pelt



2 Deer Pelts



8 Pairs of Moose
Hooves



2 Wolverine
Pelts

Fun Fact: 1 Adult Black Bear Pelt was Worth 2 Beaver Pelts