

Sign of the Beaver – Reading for Fact and Fiction – Teacher Guide

Name _____

Chapter _____

Before reading the novel, locate the setting on the map of Maine.

"fact" or "fiction" reference	Research results (anticipated results) Source
Chapter 1	
"log house"	Introduced by Swedish settlers, but would have been common by the time of the novel http://ohoh.essortment.com/logcabininfo_razi.htm
"cedar" trees for roof	white cedar was plentiful in the boggy woods. It has properties that make it useful in homes. It has many uses for Natives, beyond home construction http://www.ifdn.com/unique/cedar/unique.htm http://www.umaine.edu/umext/mainetreeclub/FactSheets/WhiteCedar.htm http://www.schoolnet.ca/autochtone/umistweb/art5a-e.html
"pine boughs" for roofing	Evergreen boughs are effective insulators http://www.wilderness-survival.net/shelters-2.php
corn planted in mounds	Natives planted corn in mounds, not rows, using fish parts to fertilize the mound; the Wampanoag taught this to the Puritans at Plimoth; traditional European planting was in rows http://www.michaelweishan.com/tradgdnaut97art2.html (search for "corn")
corn growing in early June?	Yes, this would be a probable timetable if the corn was sown in May
pumpkin vines in early June?	Pumpkin seed would be planted with corn seed
Maine territory	It had been named, surveyed and land could be purchased in 1768 – see maps in <i>Maine Dirigo</i> and http://www.maine.gov/msl/services/reference/meorigin.htm
"oiled paper" used for windows Is glass used for windows? Why not by Matt's family?	Window glass was a luxury item; windows were small to keep heat inside and bugs outside http://ohoh.essortment.com/logcabininfo_razi.htm
Clay-lined chimneys	This is typical of log home construction outside of the larger towns; one wonders, however, where the clay came from, as the riverbead was a long way away http://www.ah.dcr.state.nc.us/sections/hp/colonial/bookshelf/Monographs/Allcott/chap3.htm
Compass – what was available in	The pocket magnetic compass was widely available in the colonies and was part of an explorer's gear

1768?	
Watches – what were they like in 1768?	Pocket watches had been used for over a hundred years; Picture: http://www.williamsburgmarketplace.com/exe/asp.other_template/MGID.4188/fromProductLine.true/02/Classic-Brass-Pocket-Watch.htm
"silver coins" – what did they look like? what were they "worth"?	Possibly a silver crown, minted in England; could also be a silver shilling or sixpence; all were somewhat rare in the Massachusetts.colony, which did not mint its own coins. In 1768, wampum was often used for coinage.
"rifle" and "powder" – what type of gun was it? how did it work? what was "powder"? Is the description correct?	This fits the description of the "flintlock" rifle, used for 200 years – however, the colonists did not generally use these – it would be more appropriate to use a musket. http://www.history.org/foundation/journal/Autumn00/gunsmith.cfm http://www.globalsecurity.org/military/systems/ground/rifle-history.htm - discussion of accuracy
Johnnycake – what is it made of?	A flat bread made of corn flour, water, salt – also Johnny-cake or journey cake http://www.yourdictionary.com/ahd/jj0052300.html
Chapter 2	
"shredded cedar bark" – does it make a fire?	Yes, this is good source of tinder for firestarting http://www.bizarrelabs.com/firebow.htm
"flint" – how do you strike it? with what?	Striking sparks from flint is an Ice Age technology http://www.northwestjournal.ca/lX3945.htm
"flour" – what kind?	
"the last treaty with the tribes" – when?	
"most of 'em have left for Canada" – why?	

"Indians take great stock in politeness"	
loons – in June? Is the cry "long, quivering"?	
Like a deacon	
Chapter 3	
"ragged blue army coat" – what army and war would this be?	
"greeted like a deacon"	
"worth a passel of beaver" – how did the trade work?	
Pewter spoons – what is pewter?	
Molasses – where did that come from?	
Tobacco – what was available	
Corncob pipe	
"easy to pick up their lingo" – is this true? Did some English-speaking trappers live with the Penobscots?	
You gotta go West, Ohio	

<p>mebbe, to get any decent trapping" – did Ohio exist? Is it true that the trapping had declined by this date?</p>	
<p>"The Indians has mostly cleared out of these parts..." Is the content of this speech accurate? Did diseases follow war? Did many move to Canada? Was trapping the major way Natives "made a living"?</p>	
<p>"They make small camps for a while..." Is this accurate? Is the statement of view of land sale accurate? Is the migration pattern described later on the page accurate?</p>	
<p>"Do they speak English?" What is the answer to this</p>	

question, historically?	
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