

North to Alaska: From Igloos to the Iditarod

Special Area: Preschool-First Grade

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I. ABSTRACT

This Preschool/Junior Kindergarten/Kindergarten unit, which is easily adapted for First Grade, uses numerous fiction and non-fiction books, as well as a variety of hands-on materials to teach students about life in Alaska, while using the Iditarod as a backdrop. Utilizing teaching concepts from the *Core Knowledge Preschool Sequence*, students will explore a variety of literature, learn simple geography, create original artwork and have an opportunity to reenact some native Alaskan activities. Activities include discussions of Alaskan literature, art, music and history, exploration of Alaskan wildlife, introduction of simple geographic terms, study of weather and its effects on life in Alaska and a reenactment of the Iditarod. The unit is designed to encourage both critical thinking as well as oral language skills, while introducing students to facts about the real Alaska.

II. Overview

A. Work Habits

1. Carry out oral directions: single-step directions. (Level I, p.22)
2. Carry out oral directions: multi-step directions. (Level II, p.22)
3. Once initiated, complete a task with a definite end. (Levels I, II, p.23)

B. Oral Language

1. Assume a different role or perspective and express different possibilities, either imaginary or realistic. (Level II, p.33)
2. Express a personal opinion. (Level II, p.33)
3. Adapt the volume of his or her voice to different settings, for different purposes. (Level I, p.31)
4. Understand and use intonation and emphasis to express surprise, agreement, displeasure, urgency. (Level II, p. 31)
5. Answer “what will happen if” questions. (Level I, p.34)
6. Identify outcomes and possible causes. (Level II, p.34)

C. Nursery Rhymes, Poems, Finger plays, and Songs

1. Memorize and recite with others a simple nursery rhyme, poem or song. (Level I, p.42)
2. While listening to a rhyme, poem or finger play, perform the associated gestures that have been previously taught. (Level I, p.42)

D. Storybook Reading and Storytelling

1. Listen to Stories Read Aloud
 - a. Attend to and listen to picture books with storylines (30 minutes), as well as books of other genres, such as nonfiction Books. (15 minutes) (Level II, p.48)
 - b. Attend to and listen to books with minimal or no illustrations during a fifteen minute reading. (Level II, p.48)
 - c. Attend to and listen to illustrated picture books with simple story lines during a fifteen-minute reading. (Level I, p.48)
 - c. Answer questions about the elements of a story; character, plot, setting and events. (Level I, p.48)
 - d. Find the object within the illustration that is being described. (Level I, p.48)

2. Participate in Stories Read Aloud
 - a. Describe an illustration (Level I, p.49)
 - b. In books with repetitive phrases or a refrain, provide or join in repeating the refrain aloud. (Level I, p.49)
 3. Develop a Notion of “Story Schema”
 - a. Retell a story that has been read aloud; include characters, a beginning, the plot of the story and an ending. (Level 1, p. 49)
 - b. Predict events in a story. (Level II, p.49)
- E. Emerging Literacy Skills in Reading and Writing
1. Develop an Awareness of Written Matter/Print in Everyday Surroundings and Its Many Uses.
 - a. Dictate a caption for a drawing or photograph. (Level I, p.54)
 - b. Develop an understanding of the relationship between spoken and written language by associating written word units on word labels and signs with spoken words. (Level II, p.56)
 2. Develop the Fine Motor Skills and Strokes Used in Writing
 - a. Perform activities requiring small muscle control. (Level I, p.58)
 - b. Trace and then draw independently the outlines of geometric shapes and irregular figures. (Level II, p.58)
- F. Mathematical Reasoning and Number Sense
1. Sort and Classify Objects or Pictures of Objects
 - a. Identify pairs of objects or images as the “same” or “different” with “different” pairs varying in gross details. (Level I, p.62)
 - b. Identify pairs of objects or images as the “same” or “different” with different pairs increasingly similar. (Level II, p.62)
 - c. Identify and label verbally, the single, common attribute or characteristic of a group of objects/pictures. (Level II, p.63)
 2. Use Simple Measurement Skills and Seriate Objects
 - a. Use a straight edge or modified ruler to compare the length and height of concrete objects, using the following comparative vocabulary: length: shorter-longer, height: taller-shorter. (Level II, p.65)
- G. Orientation in Time
1. Sequence images depicting the evolution and completion of a project or undertaking, over an extended period of time-days, weeks etc. (Level II, p.74)
 2. Use a monthly calendar to name the current month. (Level II, p.73)
- H. Orientation in Space
1. Follow or give oral, spatially referenced directions to move from one location to another, within a familiar environment. (Level II, p.78)
 2. On a simple map of a familiar space, mark with arrows a path that has been taken from one place to another. (Level II, p.80)
- I. Scientific Reasoning and the Physical World
1. Classify images of animals according to the habitat or environment in which they generally live. (Level II, p.86)
 2. Select and use the appropriate tool to complete a particular task as part of a project or activity. (Level I, p.87)
 3. Identify and describe basic needs: food and drink, shelter and protection from weather. (Level II, p.85)

- J. Music
 - 1. Accompany a story or musical piece by introducing sound effects at the appropriate moment, inventing one’s own sound effects, after having listened to the story. (Level II, p.91)
 - 2. Listen to, sing, and perform children’s songs and finger plays with others. (Level I, p.92)
 - 3. Listen to, sing and perform children’s songs and finger plays I individually, or with others. (Level II, p.92)
- K. Visual Arts
 - 1. Identify pairs of objects or images as the “same” or “different”. (Level I, p.96)
 - 2. Use various tools and techniques in completing art projects. (Levels I and II, p.96)
 - 3. Create nonrepresentational and representational works, such as printing, painting, drawing, collage, and sculpture. (Levels I and II, p.97)
 - 4. Look at and talk about works of art, describing the details and “story” depicted. (Level II, p.98)

III. Background Knowledge

- A. Teacher Resources
 - 1. *Core Knowledge Preschool Sequence*; Charlottesville, VA: Core Knowledge Foundation, 2000.
 - 2. *Teaching Comprehension in PreK-K*, Fredericks, Anthony D., Harcourt Achieve Inc., 2006
 - 3. *The Alaska Almanac*, Alaska Northwest Books, 1993

IV. PREREQUISITE PRIOR KNOWLEDGE FOR STUDENTS

- A. Carry out oral directions, multi-step directions, accompanied by a preliminary demonstration.
- B. Attend to and listen to picture books as well as books of other genres
- C. Use tools and/or techniques to complete a simple art project
- D. Move through space following arrows or an indicated path
- E. Follow the rules for simple childhood games
- F. Respect the personal belongings and property of others
- G. Take turns using toys and sharing materials
- H. Demonstrate observable listening behaviors
- I. Listen to and perform children’s songs and finger plays with others
- J. Simple mapping skills
- K. Emerging literacy skills for younger students

V. RESOURCES

- A. Teacher Reference Books
 - 1. Fredericks, Anthony D. *Teaching Comprehension in PreK-K*, Austin, Texas: Harcourt Achieve Inc., 2006. ISBN: 0-7398-9949-X
 - 2. *Core Knowledge Preschool Sequence*, Charlottesville, VA, Core Knowledge Foundation, 2000. ISBN: 1-8905/7-21-6
 - 3. *The Alaska Almanac*, Seattle Washington, Alaska Northwest Books. 1993. ISBN: 0-88240-446-6
 - 4. Morgan, Marilyn, *Alaska Alphabet: Stories and Activities*, Anchorage, Alaska: Circumpolar Press, 1994. ISBN: 1-878051-18-0
 - 5. Melham, Tom, *Alaska’s Wildlife Treasures*, Washington, D.C.:

- National Geographic Society, 1994. ISBN: 0-87044-977-X
6. *Alaska: A Golden Past, A Rich Future*, Kirkland, Washington: Wyndham Publications Inc., 1995. ISBN: 0-9634100-3-2
 7. Kaemmer, John, *Music in Human Life*, Austin, Texas, University of Texas Press, 1993.
 8. Any other books containing photographs that the teacher may be able to acquire
- B. Fiction Books
1. Dabovich, Linda, *Polar Bear Son: An Inuit Tale*, New York, New York: Clarion Books, 1997. ISBN: 0-39597-567-0
 2. Standiford, Natalie, Cook, Donald, *The Bravest Dog Ever: The True Story of Balto*, New York, New York: Random House Books for Young Readers, 2006. ISBN: 0375835776
 3. Gill, Shelley, *Alaska's Three Bears, Homer*, Alaska: Paws IV Publishing Co., 1990. ISBN: 0-934007-11-X
 4. Gill, Shelley, *Count Alaska's Colors, Homer*, Alaska: Paws IV Publishing Co., 1997. ISBN: 0934007357
 5. Gill, Shelley, *Alaska Mother Goose: (Last Wilderness Adventure)*, Homer, Alaska: Paws IV Publishing Co., 1992. ISBN: 0934007020
- C. Web Sites and Online References
1. <http://www.iditarod.com/> (The official site of the Iditarod)
 2. "Zuma's Paw Prints", <http://www.iditarod.com/4-3.html>
 3. "Teacher on the Trail," <http://www.iditarod.com/4-1.html>
 4. "Iditarod Books", <http://www.iditarod.com/4-4.html>
 5. "Iditarod: Official Merchandise", <http://www.iditarodstore.com/>
 6. "Eight Stars of Gold: The Story of Alaska's Flag," http://museums.state.ak.us/EightStars/activities_primary.html
- D. Miscellaneous
1. Photographs of Alaska from either books or personal photographs from friends, families, co-workers etc.
 2. Alaskan artifacts-Ask for any souvenirs from people who have gone to Alaska. Ask local museums if they loan out any Alaskan artifacts. Make some facsimiles of the artifacts to show the children. (Appendix C)

VI. LESSONS OUTLINE

Lesson One: The Real Alaska

- A. Daily Objectives:
1. Attend to and listen to picture books with storylines (30 minutes), as well as books of other genres, such as nonfiction books, Internet articles etc. (15 minutes) (Level II, p.48)
 2. Introduce students to Alaska, its people, wildlife and geography. (Level II, p.86)
 3. Follow accepted rules for group behavior: attend and listen during a group activity while others speak. (Level I, p.19)
 4. Wait turn to speak in a group, using agreed signals. (Level I, p.19)
 5. Take turns sharing hands-on items (Level II, p.19)
- B. Grouping
1. Whole Group instruction
- C. Materials and Preparation

1. Map of Alaska (can be hand drawn)
 2. Alaska state flag either real or picture
 3. Alaskan artifacts (ask to borrow from museums, friends, colleagues, any Alaskan artifacts or photographs they may have to show to the children) If you do not have any Alaskan items, you may substitute illustrations or photographs from books. You could also draw examples or make replicas of those items you would like to use in your lesson. (Appendix A)
Examples of Alaskan artifacts I use are; moose antler, caribou antler, soap stone, Eskimo yoyo (simple to make), Playmobil Eskimo family, dolls, whale baleen, porcupine quills, dream catcher, scrimshaw a variety of photographs.
 4. Easel to hold map of Alaska
 5. "The Polar Bear Son: An Inuit Tale" by Linda Dabovich
 6. *Alaska's Three Bears*, by Shelley Gill and Shannon Cartwright
 7. Pictures or replicas of Inuit clothing
 8. *Count Alaska's Colors*, by Shelley Gill and Shannon Cartwright
 9. Flip chart
 10. Markers
 11. Printouts on the story of the Alaska flag from the Alaska Museum web site or from other Internet sources.
 12. *Alaska Mother Goose (Last Wilderness Adventure)*, by Shelley Gill Shannon Cartwright
- D. Language of Instruction
1. Teacher: Alaska, tundra, arctic, constellation, North Star, Big Dipper, Northern Lights, kayak, igloo, Mt. Susitna, Mt. McKinley, Inuit, whale baleen, whale, moose, caribou, reindeer, wolf, black bear, grizzly bear, polar bear, musk ox, glacier, ice worm, scrimshaw, dream-catcher, bald eagle, salmon, fireweed, legend, title, illustrator, author, fiction, nonfiction.
 2. Students: cold, frozen, day, night, daylight, migration, hibernation, big, small, fast, dark, light, water, mountains
- E. Procedures/Activities
1. Introduce Unit by showing the word Alaska written on the flip chart. Ask the children what they know about Alaska. Write down some of the answers, even those that are not factually accurate.
 2. Review the answers on the chart and discuss which are correct and which are not.
 3. Show the students the items you have on display. Pass around the less fragile items. Ask them to guess what each is. Ask which set of antlers is bigger; moose or caribou. Discuss how most male members of the deer family lose their antlers each winter and grow new ones in the spring. Discuss other animals as time allows, both land and marine, using *Alaska's Three Bears* to help differentiate among the different bears in Alaska, and showing pictures or replicas of other animals.
 4. Show other non-animal items and introduce them as items special to Alaska. Show the yoyo and explain how children living in the arctic cannot go to the toy store to buy toys and how they make many of their own toys, such as the yoyo.
 5. Show whale baleen (or artistic rendering of baleen). Explain how many whales have baleen instead of teeth and describe how they eat.

6. Show replica or photograph of igloo and explain that most people only use igloos temporarily while they are hunting on the ice. Discuss Alaskan dwellings, from “normal houses” in Anchorage and big cities, to subterranean dwellings on the Aleutian Islands.
 7. Discuss Alaska’s weather, dispelling the myth that it is only made up of ice.
 8. Briefly introduce the Northern Lights, showing pictures.
 9. Explain how the Alaska Flag was created. Discuss how the person who designed the flag was a Native American student who entered a contest and how he looked to the stars for his inspiration.
 10. End the lesson by reading “*The Polar Bear Son: An Inuit Tale*”
- F. Go a Little Further
1. For younger children or those having difficulty
 - a. Show fewer items, spending more time on the “show and tell” aspect of the lesson.
 - b. Keep animal descriptions simple and encourage children to participate in discussions by asking pointed questions, especially those pointing out similarities and differences.
 - c. Read excerpts from *Count Alaska’s Colors* or *Alaska Mother Goose*, instead of *The Polar Bear Son*.
 2. For students who excel or older students
 - a. Show more complicated items and go into more detail in item description.
 - b. Show how large Alaska is on the map. Show the scale in relation to the lower 48. Explain this is one reason why the temperatures are so different in different areas. Also explain how there are many different time zones in Alaska.
 - c. Read “Eight Stars of Gold: The Story of Alaska’s Flag” and discuss.
- G. Assessment
1. Record student participation in discussions, observing how well they follow library rules.
 2. Record student’s ability to attend to and listen to books
 3. Observe listening skills
 4. Observe students’ comprehension of big, bigger, cold, frozen and other language of instruction.
 5. For older students ask them to compare what they previously “thought” they knew about Alaska with what they now know to be true. Assess their proficiency in this area.

Lesson Two: Lesson Two: Creating Scrimshaw

- A. Daily Objectives
1. Carry out oral directions (Levels I, II, p.22)
 2. Draw on paper and use various strokes in designs (Level II, p.59)
 3. Use various tools and techniques in completing art projects. (Levels I, II, p.96)
 4. Create nonrepresentational and representational works, such as printing, painting, drawing, collage and sculpture. (Levels I, II, p.97)
 5. Look at and talk about works of art, describing the details and “story” depicted (Level II, p.98)
- B. Grouping
1. Whole Group, small group and individual instruction

- C. Materials and Preparation
1. Ivory soap (medium sized bar with logo scraped off)
 2. Tooth pick (one per child)
 3. Paper (cut to size of soap)
 4. Pencil (one per child)
 5. Black paint (tempera works well)
 6. Paper towels
 7. Baby wipes
 8. Samples of scrimshaw (either authentic or photograph)
- D. Language of Instruction
1. Teacher Only: whale baleen, tusks, pigment, ink
 2. Students: wipe, paint, copy, sharp, smooth, carve, design
- E. Procedures/Activities
1. Discuss the folk art of scrimshaw, explaining how this craft helped pass the time for sailors, whalers and Inuit people during the long hunting/fishing season when they followed whales and walrus as they migrated.
 2. Show pictures, or if you have, samples of scrimshaw to the students, highlighting the simplicity of design
 3. Describe how scrimshaw was made and then tell the students that they will make their own scrimshaw, but instead of using ivory tusks they will use ivory soap, instead of knives, they will use toothpicks and instead of ink, they will use black paint.
 4. Start the project by first drawing ideas on paper. Explain that most scrimshaw depicted simple animal shapes.
 5. Once the students are happy with their design, they will copy it as they carve it into their soap, using their toothpick as their tool. Stress that the carving needs to be deep, not shallow.
 6. After they finish carving, they will “paint” the design. With help, the child will dip the brush into black tempera paint and force the paint into the carving on the soap.
 7. Wipe the excess paint off the soap, using a paper towel. The excess paint is any paint not in the actual carving.
 8. Once the paint is completely dry, the children will do a final wipe down with a wet cloth (baby wipes are great) to make the soap white again. The only black section will be the actual carving, which is highlighted nicely by the white soap.
 9. Send the scrimshaw home with the child along with a letter explaining the project. (Appendix A)
- F. Go a Little Further
1. For students having difficulty, show them some examples of simple designs they can draw, or draw a simple design for them to copy. Help them carve out their drawing; to be sure it is deep enough. Give more assistance with wiping the paint away.
 2. For students who are more advanced or older students, allow them to draw a more sophisticated drawing, or have them come up with several examples from which to choose. Provide opportunities for them to assist others, either by helping them with their initial design, helping with the carving, or assisting with the wiping down of the soap.

- G. Assessment
1. Anecdotal records of students' responses to questions about scrimshaw.
 2. Observations of students performing the tasks necessary for completion of the project. Include fine motor skills, comprehension skills and how well a child follows directions, in assessment.

Lesson Three: The Iditarod

- A. Daily Objectives
1. Attend to and listen to picture books with storylines (30 minutes), (Level II, p.48)
 2. Use a monthly calendar to name the current month, (Level II, p.73)
 3. Use a monthly calendar to identify a series of seven squares as representing one week on a calendar. (Level II, p.73)
 4. Attend to and listen to picture books with minimal or no illustrations (15 minutes), (Level II, p.48)
 5. Predict events in a story. (Level II, p.49)
 6. Isolate and point to individual words as distinct units on a page of print. (Level II, p.56)
- B. Grouping
1. Whole group instruction
- C. Materials and Preparation
1. *The Bravest Dog Ever: The True Story of Balto*
 2. Replica or picture of a sled and sled dog
 3. Map of Alaska with the Iditarod Trail highlighted. (I usually draw my own)
 4. Small booklets (copied pages stapled together is fine) from information found on the Iditarod website (Appendix C).
 5. Newspaper or online articles from the current Iditarod (assuming you do the unit during the actual Iditarod)
 6. Monthly calendar
- D. Language of Instruction
1. Teacher and students: Iditarod, musher, Nome, serum, Anchorage, sled dog, Balto, Wasilla, diphtheria, blizzard, frozen, distance.
- E. Procedures/Activities
1. Introduce students to "Last Great Race", the "Iditarod"
 2. Show them a map of Alaska with the trail from Anchorage to Nome highlighted, and Wasilla starred.
 3. Give a brief history of the original race to Nome to deliver medication to sick inhabitants. Mention how there was a blizzard and in many parts of Alaska, the only way to travel, especially back then, (1920's) was by dog sled.
 4. Show a replica or photograph of a dog sled, explaining how the musher puts supplies on the sled but he stands on the back, while the team pulls.
 5. Introduce the story of Balto and explain how he was a real dog who was very strong and heroic. It was his final two legs of the journey that helped get the medicine to Nome on time. Point out that Balto was only one of many canine and human heroes, but he is the most famous.
 6. Read *The Bravest Dog Ever: The True Story of Balto* by Natalie Standeford and Donald Cook.
 7. Discuss the book with the children explaining that Balto was a real dog, although the book may have added or deleted some scenes.

8. Tell the children that to honor that day when the serum arrived in Nome, Alaska runs a race that covers the same trail, at the same time each year. Point out the differences. (They start in Anchorage rather than Wasilla today; they are just racing, not delivering medication etc.)
 9. Hand out the Alaska booklets previously made for each child. (The booklets consist of Pages from “Zuma’s Pawprints”; a view of the Iditarod trail from the sled dog Zuma’s perspective, which had been downloaded from the official Iditarod website and copied). Also included in the booklet are maps of the Iditarod Trail, information on how to access the web site, and any newspaper updates you may have.
 10. Give an update on the leaders of the current race, and explain that the race will take about ten days.
 11. Read one of Zuma’s journal entries together.
 12. Show the children a calendar and have them count out the number of days, it takes to run the Iditarod.
 13. Ask questions to determine students’ comprehension
 14. Have a map on display and put daily updates on the leaders visible so the children can make predictions, even after the lessons are finished.
 15. Even if the lessons have been completed, be sure to have clippings and an announcement of the winner, including time etc. Put the winner’s name in Nome and put each subsequent name there as the other mushers arrive.
- F. Go a Little Further
1. For students who excel, or older students, ask them to point to the words Zuma and Iditarod in their booklets. (Ask what letter each word starts with to help children identify the word)
 2. For students who excel, have them measure the distance from Anchorage to Nome, using a ruler, string, or other object of measurement. Have them measure the distance from their town to the closest city and then compare the two to show how far the dogs ran.
 3. If the Iditarod is well underway when these lessons are being taught, have the children “predict” the winner.
 4. For students having difficulty, just tell the story of Balto, rather than read the entire book.
- G. Assessment
1. Observe children’s responses to the questions asked after reading the book, to determine comprehension and listening skills.
 2. Observe students responses to measuring and counting activities.
 3. Record students’ predictions and note if they used any facts to support their predictions.

Lesson Four: Alaska in Music

A. Daily Objective

1. Accompany a story or musical piece with previously taught sound effects. (Level II, p.91)
2. Listen to, sing and perform children’s songs with others, (Levels I, II, p. 92)
3. Use musical instruments to imitate a sequence of no more than 3 sounds made by instruments (Levels I, II, p.91)

- B. Grouping
 - 1. Whole group
- C. Materials and Preparation
 - 1. Tape of Inuit/Eskimo music (*Music in Human Life*, book and tape by John Kaemmer-But any tape of Inuit music is fine)
 - 2. Frame Drums
 - 3. Variety of colored streamers
 - 4. *Alaskan Alphabet: Stories and Activities*, by Marilyn Morgan
 - 5. Small parachute and stuffed animal
- D. Language of Instruction
 - 1. Teacher only: Inuit, Iditarod, sealskin drum, Fur Rendezvous
 - 2. Students: Eskimo, Inuit, Alaska, sled dog, northern lights, frame drum, celebration
- E. Procedures/Activities
 - 1. Ask children if they have learned about Alaska. Ask them to tell you what they know about the Iditarod Race.
 - 2. Teach children the “Iditarod Song” to sing and act out together. (Appendix B)
 - 3. Next sing a song about the dog that led the famous first race to Nome: Balto. (This is sung to the tune of Bingo-Appendix D)
 - 4. Now tell the children that they are going to be Northern Lights. Teach them new words to an old song, “Twinkle, Twinkle Little Star” (Appendix D)
 - 5. Give each child a streamer and have them sing the song as they wave their streamers over their heads
 - 6. Tell them a little bit about the music of the Inuit people who live in Alaska and their music. Tell students that Inuit people play frame drums. Show them what a frame drum looks like.
 - 7. Give each child a frame drum and have them play the drums with their hands along with the music tape.
 - 8. Have children perform the Eskimo blanket toss. This is done at many celebrations around Alaska, such as Fur Rendezvous. Children hold a blanket (parachute) taut and bounce a child up on the blanket until they are up in the air. The blanket serves as a kind of trampoline. In this case, we will bounce a stuffed animal on the blanket, while Inuit music plays.
- F. Go a Little Further
 - 1. For students having difficulty, guide them on the drums, showing them how to make the sounds with their hands. Focus more on the movement portion and less on the informational part.
 - 2. For students who excel, or older students, add an additional activity: Tell them that Inuit people also play a game where they sing into each other’s faces and whoever laughs first loses. Let them play the game. The first person to laugh is out. You may use the Northern Lights song in this game.
- G. Assessment
 - 1. Observe students ability to follow directions, imitate rhythm patterns and ability to perform activities.

VII. CULMINATING ACTIVITY

- A. The students will reenact the running of the first Iditarod at the end of the unit. I divide the class into two “teams”, with a teacher as musher of each team. We plot out our course to Nome, with the administration office being Nome. I also have a map of our journey on hand, showing the way we go to Nome. I draw the map for the preschoolers, but I have the Kindergarteners and First graders draw their own maps. I provide an outline and have them fill in the locations.
- I put up signs with arrows around the school to help the students find their way. I also make up individual bags with a red cross on it. I put candy and an Alaska shaped cookie in the bag. This is the “serum” or medicine that we are delivering to the sick people in Nome. After we view our map, we harness our teams. I use ribbon for a harness and have each child hold part of the ribbon, which goes around the lead dog in each team. We then take off through the school rushing to Nome, where we finally deliver the medicine. We have one team run half the race and the other team take over at a designated area (marked on the map) to demonstrate how more than one team was needed to complete the first race to Nome. Then we come back to the library, where the teams get to rest. We celebrate the success with some Alaska-shaped cookies (I have a cookie cutter, but you can use a template of Alaska to make sugar cookies. Or you can use any Alaskan animal-shaped cookies.) I usually purchase a small memento from the Iditarod store either online or from their catalog, which you can request online, to give to each child. We then talk about all we have learned in our Alaska unit!!!

VIII. HANDOUTS/WORKSHEETS

- Appendix A: Ideas for creating simple Alaskan artifacts
Appendix B: Note to send home describing scrimshaw art activity
Appendix C: “Zuma’s Paw Prints”, <http://www.iditarod.com/4-3.html>
Appendix D: Song lyrics to accompany Music lesson

VIII. BIBLIOGRAPHY

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<http://www.iditarod.com/> (The official site of the Iditarod)

“Zuma’s Paw Prints”, <http://www.iditarod.com/4-3.html>

“Teacher on the Trail,” <http://www.iditarod.com/4-1.html>

“Iditarod Books”, <http://www.iditarod.com/4-4.html>

“Iditarod: Official Merchandise”, <http://www.iditarodstore.com/>

“Eight Stars of Gold: The Story of Alaska’s Flag,” http://museums.state.ak.us/EightStars/activities_primary.html

Appendix A **(Ideas for creating Alaskan artifacts)**

Whale Baleen

Some whales do not have teeth. Instead they have plates of baleen that hang from the roof of the mouth like a fringed curtain. They use the baleen as a sifter. They open their mouths and take in krill and other small sea creatures. The baleen sifts the water out, leaving only the sea creatures. I usually bring in a small sieve to demonstrate how baleen works to the children.

To make a replica of baleen:

Draw a baleen shape (a thick saber-like shape) on black poster board, or on white poster board and paint it shiny black. Hang yarn or streamers or other thread –like substances from the end, as the “fringe” on the baleen.

Mukluks

Mukluks are like boots, made from sealskin or other animal hide. They are very warm

and keep the feet warm and dry. To make mukluks:

Get large brown paper lunch bags. Let the children decorate the outside, by drawing simple designs, usually nature-themed (animals, trees). Older children can also glue cotton balls around the top, to act as fur. Have the children put the bags over their feet. Cut thick yarn long enough to tie around ankles, then wrap around the legs and tie at the knees. This is a fun activity for children, but you can also just make a pair to show the children a replica of mukluks. The children could wear these when they play some of the games throughout the lessons.

Eskimo Yo-Yos

It's very simple to make an Eskimo yo-yo. While real yo-yos are made with fur, you can make one with everyday supplies. Roll up an old sock into a ball by alternately turning it inside out, then right side out. Do the same with another sock until they are the same size. Put a few rubber bands around them so they don't unravel. Sew a heavy piece of yarn or string about 3 feet long to the sock balls. That's it! (I've also just put a Styrofoam ball in the toe of a sock and wrapped it that way and that worked too). To show children how to play demonstrate by holding the yarn off center from the middle and twirl the balls around. The idea is to get the balls going in opposite directions. This is too difficult for this age group, but they usually have fun just twirling them around.

Dance Fans

Cut two finger holes in the rim of a plain white paper plate. (The kind that is fringed works the best. Color the plate. It can either be a solid color or you can make designs in it. Glue feathers around the edge. You can also glue fringed cardboard around the edge to resemble caribou guard hair. When dancing, the men move around, but the women dance in place. They wave their fans rhythmically while they dance. You can use these with the drum activity. Have some children play the frame drums while others dance, and then reverse.

APPENDIX B

(NOTE TO ACCOMPANY SCRIMSHAW ART PROJECT)

Dear Parents,

We are working on a joint study of Alaskan culture to coincide with the timing of the Iditarod, the annual dog sled race in Alaska. We will be reading books, viewing several Native Alaskan items, and reenacting the first Iditarod, singing songs and learning about Inuit music, and making a “scrimshaw” project.

The art component of the unit is coming home today. We would like to include a little background on the art of scrimshaw. Scrimshaw, dating back to at least the 17th century, is the art of etching decorative designs into ivory. While many sailors used this art to pass the time on lengthy excursions, various Native Americans, including Athabascans, Tlingit, and Inuits, also produced scrimshaw. These groups used whale teeth, whale bones and walrus tusks which they engraved or carved with a picture or design, usually having to do with nature. They then rubbed black ink into the etching to outline the etching. They wiped off any excess ink and the end product was a simple, yet beautiful design outlined in black against the stark white of the ivory.

Obviously, we did not have walrus tusks, or whale bone available for our project, so we resorted to something a bit more practical. We decided that our ivory would be “ivory” soap. In place of (permanently staining) black ink, we chose black tempera paint. We used a toothpick to carve our designs. The result, as you can see, is a reasonable facsimile to authentic scrimshaw.

This unit is a fun and educational one for your children. More information on our Alaskan unit will be coming home in the next weeks. In the meantime, if you would like to check out some activities on Alaska with your children at home, please see <http://www.iditarod.com/4-3.html>, which offers a variety of information and activities for your children.

As always, if you have any questions about our Alaskan unit, please feel free to contact me at school. Thanks so much for all your support.

North to Alaska!
Susan Holland