

MysteryQuest #42: Support material (Activity Sheet 2)
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[Proceedings of Dr. Rae \[relating to his Arctic Expeditions, 1853–54\] \(1855\)](#)

Excerpt:

Written after the explorers had left their ships and were attempting to survive on land.

“...we had barely resumed our journey when we were met by a very intelligent Esquimaux [Inuk] driving a dog’s sledge laden with musk ox beef. This man at once consented to accompany us two days journey, and in a few minutes had deposited his load on the snow, and was ready to join us. Having explained my object to him, he said that the road by which he had come was the best for us, and, having lightened the men’s sledges [sleds/qamutiit], we travelled with more facility. We were now joined by another of the natives who had been absent, seal hunting yesterday, but being anxious to see us had visited our snow house early this morning, and then followed up our track. This man was very communicative, and on putting to him the usual questions as to his having seen “white men” before, or any ships or boats, he replied in the negative, but said that a party of “Kabloonans” [white men] had died of starvation a long distance to the west of where we then were, and beyond a large river.

The substance of the information then and subsequently obtained from various sources was to the following effect:-

In the spring, four winters past (1850), whilst some Esquimaux [Inuit] families were killing seals near the north shore of a large island, named in Arrowsmith’s charts, King William’s Land, about forty white men were seen travelling in company southward over the ice, and dragging a boat and sledges with them. They were passing along the west shore of the above-named island. None of the party could speak the Esquimaux language [Inuktitut] so well as to be understood, but by signs the natives were led to believe the ship or ships had been crushed by ice, and that they were then going to where they expected to find deer to shoot. From the appearance of the men (all of whom, with the exception of one officer, were hauling on the drag ropes of a sledge, and were looking thin,) they were then supposed to be getting short of provisions, and they purchased a small seal or piece of seal from the natives. The officer was described as being a tall stout middle-aged man. When their day’s journey terminated they pitched tents to rest in.”

[Arviligjuarmiut testimony on Franklin and others \[Reported by Knud Rasmussen\] \(1931\)](#)

Excerpt:

“The Arviligjuarmiut [Inuit of the region] still had many recollections of their first meeting with white men, and the sober manner in which they told of these experiences, now almost a hundred years old, is good evidence of how reliable the Eskimos [Inuit] can be as narrators if only they have to do with people who understand them.”

“They tell that John Ross’s ship was first seen early in the winter by a man named Aviluktuq, who was out sealing; when he caught sight of the great ship lying like a rock out in the middle of a small bay, his curiosity at first made him approach to see what it could be; for he had never noticed it before. But when he saw the ship's high masts he thought it was a great spirit and fled.”

“They saw at once that the strangers must be the famous white men of whom they had heard so much talk and who were said to have come from the offspring of a girl in their own country and a dog. All the Arviligjuarmiut now wished to show that they were not afraid, and came out from their place of concealment. The white men at once laid their weapons on the ice, and the Eskimos [Inuit] followed suit. The meeting was a cordial one, with both embraces and what each party took to be assurances of friendship, for of course they could not understand a word of each other’s tongue. The Eskimos went along with this great, wonderful ship and received precious gifts such as nails, sewing needles and knives, in fact everything that they could not get in the country itself. And the white men seemed to have such an abundance of wood that they could even live in it—indeed, however incredible it may sound, they lived in a hollowed-out floating island of wood that was full of iron and everything else that was precious in their own country.”

[Narrative of a second voyage in search of a Northwest Passage \(1835\)](#)

Excerpt:

“... being informed that we were Europeans (Kablunae), they answered that they were men Inuit [Inuit]. Their numbers amounted to thirty-one ; the eldest, called Illicta, being sixty-five years of age, six others between forty and fifty, and twenty of them between forty and twenty; the number being made up by four boys. Two were lame, and, with the old man, were drawn by the others on sledges [sleds/qamutiit]: one of them having lost a leg, from a bear as we understood, and the other having a broken or diseased thigh. They were all well dressed, in excellent deerskins [caribou skins] chiefly; the upper garments double, and encircling the body, reaching, in front, from the chin to the middle of the thigh, and having a cape behind to draw over the head, while the skirt hung down to the calf of the leg, in a peak not unlike that of a soldier's coat of former days. The sleeves covered their fingers; and, of the two skins which composed all this, the inner one had the hair next the body, and the outer one in the reverse direction. They had two pairs of boots on, with the hairy side of both turned inwards, and above them, trousers of deerskin, reaching very low on the leg; while some of them had shoes outside of their boots, and had sealskins instead of those of deer, in their trousers.

With this immense superstructure of clothes, they seemed a much larger people than they really were. All of them bore spears, looking not much unlike a walking stick, with a ball of wood or ivory at one end, and a point of horn at the other. On examining the shafts, however, they were found to be formed of small pieces of wood, or of the bones of animals, joined together very neatly. The knives that we first saw, consisted of bone or reindeer's horn [caribou antler], without point or edge, forming a very inoffensive weapon; but we soon discovered that each of them had, hanging at his back, a much more effective knife pointed with iron, and some also edged with that metal. One of them proved also to be formed of the blade of an English claspknife, having the maker's mark on it, which had been so fixed as to be converted into a dagger.

We could now easily see that their appearance was very superior to our own; being at least as well clothed, and far better fed ; with plump cheeks, of as rosy a colour as they could be under so dark a skin.”

“Their dresses were made with peculiar neatness; and some were ornamented with fringes made of sinews [animal tissue], or with strings of small bones. The skins of gluttons [wolverine], ermines, and grey seals, hung at the breast, seemed also to be ornamental appurtenances [accessories]. Their sledges were singularly rude; the sides consisting of pieces of bone tied round and enclosed by a skin, and the cross bars on the top being made of the fore legs of a deer. One of them was but two feet long, and fourteen inches wide, the others were between three and four feet in length. On the under part of the runner, there was a coating of ice attached to the skin, rendering their motion very easy. It being now necessary to separate, we proposed to accompany them part of the way to their huts, the direction of which they pointed out; making us understand that their wives, children, dogs, and sledges, were all at home, and that they had abundance of provisions. During our walk we met a seal hole on the ice, and they showed us the use of the spear in enlarging it for the reception of a twig of ash or birch, together with their method of throwing that weapon.”