



Name _____

Date _____

Log Canoes: A Chesapeake Bay Tradition

Warm breezes blow. An osprey flies overhead. Suddenly loud cries are heard. Maggie sits up and looks out at the Chesapeake Bay. Bright sails come into view. This is the finishing line of the famous log canoe races! Maggie is excited to see these boats. She has many questions, though. She runs to her friend, Lauren to get answers.

“Lauren, I just love these log canoes. Who made them?” asked Maggie. Lauren pointed. “See the hull of the log canoe?” she said.

Maggie nodded. “Yes and I’m going to guess that the word canoe is important.”

“You got it, Maggie,” said Lauren. “The Powhatan Indians used pine or poplar trees to make canoes. They slowly burned the trees. Then they scraped the ashes away. The canoe was very big. It could be as long as thirty feet!”

“Wow! Who added the sail?” asked Maggie.

“The English saw the canoes. They learned that they were very sturdy boats. But they wanted to go faster. So they added the sails to the canoe.”

Maggie looked over at the log canoes as they crossed the finishing line. “Has the log canoe always been just a racing boat?”

Lauren shook her head. “No, log canoes were the first oyster workboats of the Chesapeake Bay. They were easy to build. You only needed trees and simple tools. You could even build one at your house.”

“That sounds fun,” said Maggie. “But, I wonder, why did people start racing them?”

“In the summer months, the workmen wanted something to do. They wanted to see whose boat was fastest.”

“Why aren’t they used as workboats anymore?” asked Maggie.

“When motors became common, other boats were made to use that kind of power. Today there aren’t many log canoes left. It is expensive to keep them in good condition. On these race weekends, those who own a log canoe show off their log canoes.” Maggie picked up her camera to take a picture of these amazing boats.

Using Dialogue to Get the Facts

Write three facts you learned about log canoes by reading Lauren and Maggie's conversation:

1. _____

2. _____

3. _____

Thinking About Log Canoes

1. Today it is expensive to keep and maintain a log canoe. Why do you think this is true?

2. Do you think it was helpful that log canoes were replaced by boats with motors? Explain your thinking.
