



Name \_\_\_\_\_

Date \_\_\_\_\_

## Log Canoes: A Chesapeake Bay Tradition

*Warm breezes blow across the water. An osprey glides overhead. The smell of Old Bay wafts across the harbor. Suddenly loud cries interrupt the lazy Chesapeake Bay afternoon. Maggie sits up and looks out at the water. Bright sails come into view. She jumps up and runs to the water's edge. This is the finishing line of the famous log canoe races! Maggie is excited to see these boats, as she knows they are traditional Chesapeake Bay watercraft. She has many questions, though, and is filled with curiosity as she asks her friend, Lauren, about these old boats.*

"Lauren, I just love these log canoes. Who developed this kind of boat?" asked Maggie. Lauren pointed at the water. "See the hull of that log canoe? It looks like a canoe, right?" noted Lauren.

Maggie nodded. "It sure does. And I am going to guess that the word canoe in the name is important."

"You got it, Maggie," said Lauren. "The Powhatan Indians used loblolly pine or tulip popular trees to make canoes. They slowly burned the trees and then scraped the ashes away. The canoe was very big. It might have been as long as thirty feet!"

"Wow, that's big. But, who added the sail to the canoe?" asked Maggie.

"When the English came to the Chesapeake Bay, they saw the Powhatan's canoes. They learned that they were very sturdy boats for traveling on the rough waters of the Bay. But they wanted to go faster. So they added sails to the canoe."

Maggie looked over at the log canoes as they crossed the finishing line. Roars of joy came from the boats as boat after boat turned. She laughed as Dude ran to the water's edge to bark and join in the excitement. "Has the log canoe always been just a racing boat?"

Lauren shook her head. "No, log canoes were work boats long before they were racing boats. They were the original oyster workboats of the Chesapeake Bay. They were popular because they were not expensive to build. You only needed trees and simple tools. They weren't even built at a shipyard. You could build one at your house."

"That sounds fun," said Maggie. "I would have loved to watch someone make a log canoe. But, I wonder, why did people start racing them?"

"In the summer months, the workmen wanted something to do. They started to have contests to see whose boat was fastest and who could sail their boat the best. This tradition has continued."

"Why aren't they used as workboats anymore?" asked Maggie.

"When motors became common, other boats were made to use that kind of power. But, these early power workboats used the design of the log canoe. There aren't many log canoes left today. It is expensive to keep them in good condition. On these race weekends, those who own a log canoe proudly show off their log canoes." Maggie picked up her camera to take a picture of these Chesapeake Bay icons.

## Using Dialogue to Get the Facts

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

1. \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_
2. \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_
3. \_\_\_\_\_  
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## Thinking About Log Canoes

1. Why do you think the author called log canoes, Chesapeake Bay icons?

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

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3. Do you think it was helpful that log canoes were replaced by motorized boats for oyster harvesting? Explain your thinking.

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4. What might be difficult about log canoe racing?

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