
Staging the Question: What does a beaver felt hat have to do with Manhattan?

Featured Sources

- **Video:** *What does a beaver felt hat have to do with Manhattan?*— Watch this short video and identify information that explains why beaver fur brought Native people and the Dutch together in Native New York.

Student Task

- **Opening Video: Identifying Information**

Student Outcomes

KNOW

In 1609, representatives of the Lenape and Mahican peoples encountered Henry Hudson, an English explorer who was searching for a passage to Asia. Interactions between Native people and Hudson's crew included the exchange of items, among them beaver furs. The pelts caught the attention of Europeans. The Dutch, especially, valued beaver fur for the making of beaver felt hats. Soon after, the Dutch set up trading posts and settled in what are now parts of New York in order to capitalize on the abundance of furs in the region.

UNDERSTAND

Following Native practices of social reciprocity, items were given and received during the encounter on the Hudson River in 1609. The exchange of one gift in particular, beaver fur, brought together two very distinct cultures: one Native, the other European.

DO

Watch the short video *What does a beaver felt hat have to do with Manhattan?* Identify information from the video that explains why beaver fur brought Native people and the Dutch together in Native New York.

Staging the Question Lesson Procedures

Anticipatory Set

Part A: Meeting of Strangers

- The opening video addresses how the fur trade brought together Native people and Europeans, two dissimilar cultures that looked and spoke very differently from one another. Introduce the video by having the class participate in an activity called *Meet A Stranger*. The goal of this activity is to provide students with an opportunity to experience some of the challenges that arose when Native people and Hudson’s crew encountered each other. For this activity, ask students to turn to someone seated close to them. They will have one minute to learn as much as they can about their classmate *without speaking*. After the minute is up, allow time for discussion. Consider one of the following topics for students to learn about their classmate:

What did you eat for breakfast today?

How did you get to school today?

What are your plans for this weekend?

- Ask students: What made the interaction difficult? Since you couldn’t speak, how did you communicate with your partner? What helped you understand your partner?

Guided Practice, Instruction, and Formative Assessment

Part B—Video: *What does a beaver felt hat have to do with Manhattan?*

- Show the video *What does a beaver felt hat have to do with Manhattan?*— This video features youth explaining in simple and accurate terms key facts about how the exchange of beaver pelts brought Europeans to the northeastern Atlantic coast. As students watch the video, they should identify information that explains why beaver fur brought Native people and the Dutch together in Native New York. Students should use the worksheet *Opening Video* when identifying information from the video.

Teacher Tip: Henry Hudson was an English explorer hired by the Dutch East India Company, a private corporation empowered by the Dutch government to represent Dutch colonial interests, to find a sea route through North America to Asia and the spice trade.

Check for Understanding

Teacher TIP: Before moving to supporting question one, consider conducting an informal assessment on what led to the arrival of the Dutch to Native New York. Students should understand the connection of the exchanging of goods, particularly beaver pelts, during the encounter on the Hudson River to the arrival of the Dutch and other Europeans to the New York region.

Preview

Teacher TIP: Emphasize to students the point made in the video that Native accounts and perspectives are often left out of history. Native histories were maintained through oral traditions and mnemonic devices, such as wampum belts, and are reflected in the material culture. The fact that Native people did not have a written language has had tremendous implications for how history has been recorded, passed down, and understood. Much of what historians know regarding life in and around the Hudson River Valley during the fur trade has come from Dutch documents, archaeological material culture, and Native oral traditions. When reviewing the featured sources in this inquiry, students should be encouraged to ask themselves:

Who wrote the source?

Which voices are present and which are not?

When was the source written?

What else was happening at that time?

Who was this written for, and why was it written?

- Introduce the inquiry and compelling question: *Did Native people really sell Manhattan?* Prompt students to brainstorm what the topic of the inquiry might be.