

## **Mama, Do You Love Me? An Introduction to Inuit Culture for Primary Grade Students**

**Submitted by:** Cynthia Shoemaker, Teacher Consultant, Arizona Geographic Alliance (Tucson, AZ)

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### **Description:**

This lesson provides a simple introduction to the Inuit culture of Canada. By reading this picture book, students will discover the unique lifestyles of these Native Americans including the wildlife which are an important part of their lives.

### **Grade Level(s):**

Grades K-3, ESL

### **Subject(s):**

Art, Language Arts, Social Studies/Geography

### **Duration:**

Two to three 45-minute lessons

### **Goal:**

Familiarize students with a Native American culture whose members reside in an environment which may be radically different from their own.

### **Objectives:**

1. Students will be able to describe Inuit life as depicted in the story.
2. Students will be able to identify animals of the Arctic.
3. Students will be able to create a stick puppet depicting traditional Inuit clothing.

### **Standards:**

National Geography Standards:

- 4 The physical and human characteristics of places
- 15 How physical systems affect human systems

### **Materials:**

- ***Mama, Do You Love Me?*** Barbara M. Joosse, illustrated by Barbara Lavallee. Copyright 1991. Chronical Books. ISBN 0-87701-759-X. \$14.95 Also published in Spanish. Available at most bookstores and public libraries.
- Backgrounder on the Inuit (included below)
- Puppet patterns traced on tag board or cardboard. One for each student. (template included below)
- Chart pad, markers, student writing materials.
- Map or globe depicting Canada.
- Wooden sticks (tongue depressors, skewers w/points removed)
- Assorted arts and crafts materials for clothing decoration, including fur or fake fur, and feathers.

### **Procedures:**

#### **Lesson One:**

1. Introduce the book by showing the cover to the students and ask them to speculate about what the story is about and where it takes place.
2. Explain to the class that the story takes places in Arctic and help students locate it on the map.

3. Read the story twice. The first time allow the students to listen and reflect. Once the story is read, discuss the pictures in detail. Ask participants to name the animals and different parts of Inuit clothing (parka, mukluks, etc).
4. Ask students to share what they have learned about Inuit life and culture. Record their responses on the chart pad.

#### Lesson Two:

1. Pass out writing materials and ask the students to write and/or illustrate what they have learned about Inuit culture. Younger children or ESL students may draw a picture and dictate their story.
2. Ask students to share their stories.

#### Lesson Three:

Note: Make a sample puppet in advance.

1. Explain to students that they are going to make an Inuit puppet in traditional dress.
2. Pass out puppets and distribute art materials. Younger children may need assistance with cutting out the shape.
3. When students have completed their puppet, fasten a wooden stick on the back as a handle.

#### Assessment:

1. Students should be able to name the different clothing parts.
2. Students should be able to retell the story in their own words using their puppets.
3. Student drawings should accurately depict something they learned while listening to the story.

#### Student Rubric:

- |  |            |
|--|------------|
| 1. Identifying clothing using Inuit terminology  | 10 points  |
| 2. Drawing content accurately explains at least one aspect of Inuit life and or culture. | 45 points  |
| 3. Student demonstrates accurate recall of the story.                                    | 45 points  |
| Total points:  | 100 points |

#### Additional Resources:

- ***Countries of the World, Canada.*** Michael Dahl. Capstone Press, 1998. ISBN 1-56065-565-8.
- ***Frozen Land, Vanishing Cultures.*** Jan Reynolds. Harcourt Brace and Company, 1993. ISBN 0-15-238788-9.
- ***The Inuksuk Book.*** Mary Wallace. Owl Books, 1999. ISBN 1-895688-91-4.
- ***The Kids Book of the Far North.*** Ann Love and Jane Drake. Kids Can Press, 2000. ISBN 1-55074-563-8.
- [www.gov.nu.ca](http://www.gov.nu.ca) Government of Nunavut
- [www.nunvut.com](http://www.nunvut.com)
- [http://www.wvu.edu/depts.castudies/k12studycanada/files/Inkitut.pdf\(k-12](http://www.wvu.edu/depts.castudies/k12studycanada/files/Inkitut.pdf(k-12) STUDY CANADA teaching module: *Inuktitut, A History of the Inuit Language.*
- <http://www.wvu.edu/depts.castudies/k12studycanada/files/Nanyvut.pdf> STUDY CANADA teaching module: *The North, the Inuit, and Nunavut.*
- <http://www.arcticinuitart.com> Judith Varney Burch. Arctic Inuit Art Collection-Biography-Culture.
- <http://www.museum.state.ak.us/home.html> Alaska State Museums. Go to Sheldon Jackson Museum web page.
- [http://ca.dir.yahoo.com/Society\\_and\\_Culture/cultures\\_and\\_groups/cultures/inuit](http://ca.dir.yahoo.com/Society_and_Culture/cultures_and_groups/cultures/inuit) A listing of web links on Canadian Inuit.
- <http://collections.ic.gc.ca/arctic/inuit/people.htm> Canadian Arctic Profiles.

## Backgrounder: The Inuit

The Inuit (once referred to as Eskimos) originally migrated to North America from central Asia thousands of years ago. Their light brown skin, straight black hair, dark eyes, and wide faces with high cheek bones are similar to the Mongol peoples' in Asia.

Crossing the Bering Strait, during a time when it was either a land bridge or a solid mass of winter ice, these people first settled along the Alaskan coast; eventually spreading across northern Canada, all the way to Greenland—a distance of 6,000 miles.

No one knows why the Inuit chose to endure the hardships of a cold, barren land, frozen for nine months. But, survive they did, despite being cut off from other civilizations. With ingenuity and resourcefulness, they adopted their own unique way of life.

Plant foods in the Arctic climate were nonexistent. For that reason, sea hunting became their primary source of food. They made weapons from bone and drift wood to hunt seals, walruses, polar bears, whales and small fish. These animals also provided skins for Inuit boats, homes, clothing; and oil for heat, light, and cooking. Hunting was dangerous and uncertain. Sharing food became essential to everyone's survival.

Inuit social life is focused around the family, usually consisting of a mother and father and their children. Sometimes grandparents live with them as well. Children are cherished and hardly ever punished.

In the past, the Inuit were nomadic people. Traveling in small groups, they moved from place to place. Most lived near the sea because it was warmer than inland. The water provided most of their food. During the winter, they lived in snow of sod houses. They traveled in dog sleds called *komatiks*. In the summer, they lived in animal skin tents and hunted caribou, for their preferred clothing fur. On the coast, they sailed in *kayaks* or larger skin boats called *umiaks*, used to hunt whales. All Inuit shelters are called *igloo*.

These people depended on each other for survival and avoided aggression. Instead, a person who behaved in a socially unacceptable manner would be challenged to a song of ridicule. Someone who was repeatedly a problem could be banished from the group.

Because the Inuit people spent their life traveling, they had very few personal possessions. What they had were mainly tools, husky dogs, clothes, good luck charms, and toys for their children. The land belonged to everyone, and a house belonged to the family as long as they lived in it.

In Inuit society, men were hunters, home, boat, and sled builders; snowshoe and weapons makers. The women cooked, made clothing by hand, and raising the children; carrying them on their backs until they were three years old.

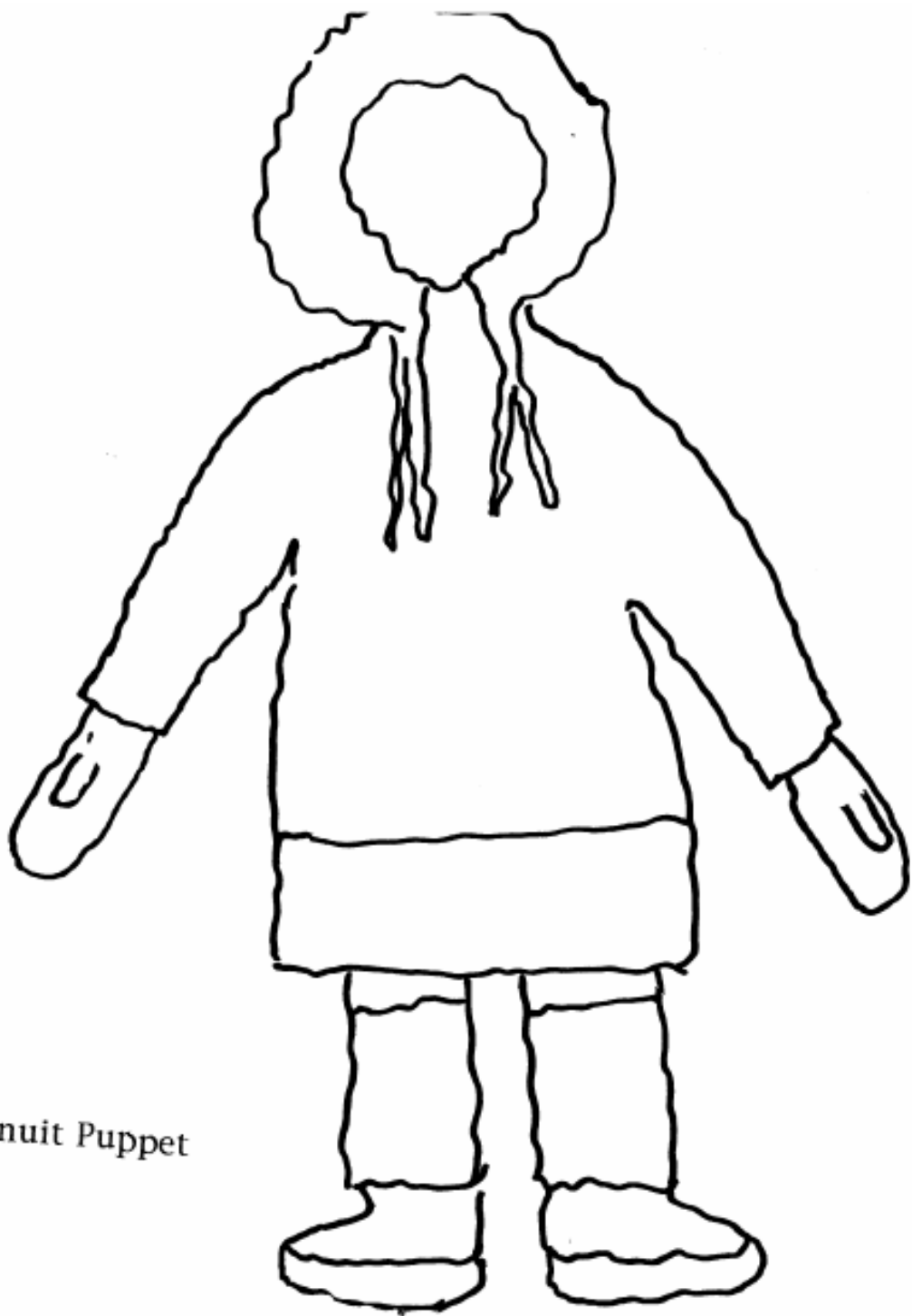
Men, women, and children dressed alike; in a coat, trousers, boots, and stockings. In the winter they wore two of everything. Boots were made of seal skins because of their water repellent properties. Their mittens, made with two thumbs in case one got wet, were also made of fur. Even the huskies had little fur boots to protect their feet from cold and ice splinters.

For protection against the blinding glare of the sun light on snow, the Inuit fashioned goggles out of bone or wood, with tiny slits so they can see.

While sewing was the art practiced by women, many of the men were skilled in carving. They decorated their tools and weapons with beautiful carvings or made sculptures out of soap stone and ivory. Today, their descendants continue the tradition by crafting masks out of wood and bone.

Contemporary Inuit have adopted many of the religious and social customs of the white people. Converted to Christianity, their beliefs in animals with human characteristics have become part of their folklore. They live in low cost, modern housing supplied by the government, watch satellite TV and use telephones. Instead of burning whale oil, they use petroleum oil extracted from the bottom of the ocean for heat and light. Fur clothing has been replaced with current fashions. They have access to public schools and hospitals. Children ski to school or ride sleds in the wintertime. Instead of eating seal meat for breakfast, they may be served cereal, milk, and juice.

Many of the old traditions, however, have not died. On weekends they may hunt of fish with their families. Seal blood is still a treat. In the summer months they still go berry picking or camping beside a river, just as their grandparents did many years ago.



nuit Puppet