



# Aiviaq · (Walrus Hunt) DVD

(eye-vee-yakh) · Summer 1946 · Historical Re-creation · 28 minutes

## Content Areas

Social Studies, History, Language Arts

## Objective

Prior to watching *Aiviaq (Walrus Hunt)*, students will discuss the importance of hunting in the Inuit culture and their dependence on the animals of the north. Also discussed will be the shift by the Inuit from Shamanism to Christianity in the mid 1900s. After viewing the film and participating in a class discussion, students will reflect on a time when they were faced with something scary and unknown, as the visiting priest was to many of the Inuit. Students will write an account of this personal experience.

## Materials

- *Aiviaq (Walrus Hunt)* DVD
- A Personal Experience – 1 per student

## Activity

- 1 If students have completed the Animals of the Arctic lesson, ask volunteers to name animals that are native to the Arctic. List on the board. Have students share how these animals have adapted to life in northern Canada.
- 2 If students have not completed the Animals of the Arctic lesson, ask students what animals they think live in the Arctic. What special adaptations do animals living in such a harsh environment need to survive?
- 3 Explain that some animals living in the Arctic do not stay year round. Many mammals and birds only use the tundra, or the treeless Arctic, as their summer home and migrate or hibernate in order to survive the long, cold winter months. Other adaptations include thick layers of blubber (polar bear, walrus), which insulate animals from the cold, and the growth of two layers of fur (musk ox), which trap air and protect the animal from wind and water.

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- 4 Ask students how their family gets their food. How do they think their grandparents got their food when their parents were children?
- 5 Remind students that prior to the mid 1900s, the Inuit were untouched by the southern ways of life, with no stores, modern vehicles, electricity, etc. Ask students how they think the Inuit got their food.
- 6 Explain that for thousands of years, the Inuit lived entirely off the land and sea. They hunted whales, walruses, caribou, seals, polar bears, musk oxen, birds and any other edible animal native to the Arctic. Every part of the animal was used. Boats and dog sleds were made of animal bones and fur; tools were carved from animal bones, using walrus ivory for making knives. Clothes and footwear were made of animal skins and furs, sewn together using needles made from animal bones and threads made from other animal products. Boots were made of caribou or sealskin. Meat was eaten fresh, frozen or aged, and every edible part of the animal provided nourishment.
- 7 Ask students which Arctic animals were hunted in ***Qimuksik (Dog Team)***. (seal and caribou) Explain that a third staple of the traditional Inuit diet, walrus, is the object of the hunt in ***Aiviaq (Walrus Hunt)***. As in ***Qimuksik (Dog Team)***, students are able to see the hunt and witness this integral part of Inuit culture first-hand.
- 8 Explain to students that before the early 1900s, very few Inuit had ever seen a non-Inuit person. The first white people to come to the Arctic were European whalers, explorers and missionaries. The missionaries were priests interested in converting the Inuit to Christianity. The spiritual life of the Inuit prior to the arrival of priests centred on the earth, the animals and the spirit of their ancestors. Priests and their religious beliefs were very frightening to many Inuit, because both were much different from anything to which the Inuit had ever been exposed.

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- 9 Write ***Aiviaq (Walrus Hunt)*** on the board. Explain that the film students are going to watch takes place in the summer of 1946. Students will see the first gas engine to arrive in Igloolik as a group of Inuit men goes on a walrus hunt. Also, a priest visits the camp and is met with a very mixed reaction.
- 10 Remind students that the film is in Inuktitut, with English subtitles. Decide if volunteers are to be chosen to read subtitles aloud (5-10 minutes per volunteer), if the teacher is to read, or if students will read subtitles independently while watching.
- 11 Watch ***Aiviaq (Walrus Hunt)***.

### Evaluation

- 1 Lead a discussion with students about the film. Possible guiding questions are:
  - a. What was the reaction to the priest's arrival? Who seemed more threatened, the men or the women? Why do you think they seemed to have different reactions?
  - b. The priest wants to join the Inuit men on their walrus hunt, but they are resistant. Why do you think they want the priest to remain in the camp?
  - c. Prior to the film, discussion was held about using every bit of the animal. In the camp and on the bodies of the Inuit men, women and children, what parts of the animal did you notice? Describe the clothing, boots ("skin boots"), tools, that you saw.



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- 2 After a discussion about the film, remind students that the arrival of white people to the Arctic scared the Inuit, because they had never seen people different from themselves. It was completely unknown to them, and they didn't know what to expect.
- 3 As a class, brainstorm situations that students have been in which were new to them and may have been frightening (coming to school for the first time, new class, dentist or doctor visit, airplane ride, first sleepover, being in a storm, going to a foreign country, etc.)
- 4 Students are to think of a time when they were faced with something scary or unknown to them. They are to write a personal account of this experience, describing how they felt at the beginning, middle and the end. Were they less frightened after the experience occurred? (Optional homework assignment)





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# A Personal Experience

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Below, draw an illustration to accompany the experience you described above.

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Notes:

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