

Reading Comprehension — Canada's National Animal

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Canada's National Animal

Most countries choose a powerful animal as their national symbol — a lion, an eagle, or a bear. Canada chose something quite different: a small, hard-working rodent with big front teeth and a flat tail. Canada's national animal is the beaver.

Why the beaver? The answer lies deep in Canada's history. Long ago, beavers were found in their millions across the country's rivers and lakes. Their thick, warm fur was highly prized, especially for making fashionable hats in Europe. From the 1600s onwards, the fur trade became one of the most important businesses in early Canada, and the beaver was at the very heart of it. Indigenous peoples and European traders exchanged goods, and explorers pushed deep into the land in search of beaver pelts. In many ways, the fur trade helped shape the country Canada would become.

The beaver is also admired for what it does. Beavers are nature's engineers. Using only their teeth and paws, they cut down trees and build dams across streams, creating ponds where they make their homes, called lodges. These dams change the landscape and create wetlands where many other animals can live.

Sadly, so many beavers were hunted for their fur that they nearly disappeared. Thankfully, they were protected in time, and today beavers are once again common across Canada.

Hard-working, clever and tied closely to the nation's story, the beaver is a fitting symbol for Canada.

Questions

1. What is Canada's national animal? (1 mark)
2. What was beaver fur especially used for in Europe? (1 mark)
3. What are a beaver's homes called? (1 mark)
4. Find and copy a word in paragraph 2 meaning "valued very highly." (1 mark)
5. Why are beavers called "nature's engineers"? (2 marks)
6. Why did beavers nearly disappear? (2 marks)
7. Why do you think Canada chose the beaver rather than a powerful animal like a lion? (2 marks)
8. Summarise the beaver's importance to Canada in order: history, what it does, and today. (3 marks)

Answer Key / Mark Scheme

1. The beaver.
2. Making fashionable hats.

3. Lodges.
4. "prized."
5. They cut down trees and build dams using only their teeth and paws, changing the landscape.
6. So many were hunted for their fur that they nearly ran out.
7. Because the beaver is tied to Canada's history (the fur trade) and admired for being hard-working and clever, not for being powerful.
8. History: central to the fur trade that shaped Canada. What it does: builds dams and lodges, creating wetlands. Today: protected and common again.