

Overview

In this outdoor learning activity, learners will build mini-beaver lodges! Using natural materials, as well as techniques from these famous animal construction workers, learners will also re-enact a beloved children's book, *Five Busy Beavers*, with their finished projects.

NB Curricular Connections

K-2 Learning Areas

English Language Arts:

- *Strand: Interactions - Big Idea: Expression – Skill Descriptor: Present simple facts, ideas, and opinions to peers and educators.*
- *Strand: Reading - Big Idea: Reading Comprehension – Skill Descriptor: Construct meaning from oral stories, read-alouds, and text.*

Mathematics:

- *Strand: Number - Big Idea: Number Sense – Skill Descriptor: Say the number sequence from 1 to 10 by ones, forward and backward, using visual aids. (Kindergarten)*

Explore Your World:

- *Strand: Playfulness - Big Idea: Exploration and Problem Solving – Skill Descriptors: Invent approaches to practical problems.*

What You'll Need

- Book – *Five Busy Beavers* (by: Stella Partheniou Grasso)
 - Water Bottle (1 per student)
 - Clipboard (1 per small group)
 - Pencils
 - Colouring Materials (crayons, pencil crayons, markers)
 - Sheet Protector (1 per small group)
 - 1 small cardboard box (to put any leftover materials or waste into)
 - Scissors (1 per small group)
 - Busy Beavers Challenge Sheet (1 per small group, provided below)
 - Five Busy Beavers Puppets (1 set per small group, printed on cardstock, provided below)
 - Natural materials (sticks, leaves, stones, grass, etc.)
 - Digging materials (shovels, etc.)
- Optional*

Instructions

Please note: This activity is intended to be provided in an outdoor learning environment, however, feel free to adapt and change to meet the needs of your learners and outdoor spaces.

1. **Beaver Knowledge:** Before the outdoor building activity begins, ask learners: “What do you know about beavers?” To add to their responses, feel free to watch the following short videos with key facts about beavers and their incredible building skills:

- **I’m A Beaver** by Brown Bag Films: [I'm a Beaver - YouTube](#) [A Cartoon style video – 2:08]



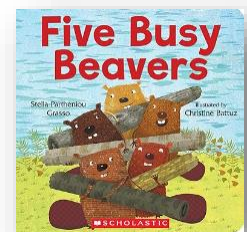
- **All About Beavers for Children** by Free School: [All About Beavers for Children: Animal Videos for Kids - FreeSchool - YouTube](#) [A documentary style short film – 3:18]



2. **Outdoor Expectations:** If students have not had much outdoor learning experience, before heading outdoors, discuss with learners the difference between learning inside of the classroom vs. outdoors. Using a piece of chart paper, co-construct 3-5 learning expectations for outdoor learning. (*Examples:* We will respect all living things. We will not leave behind any materials that might harm our outdoor friends and spaces, etc.) Have learners print their name on the expectations chart, as a symbol of their commitment to following them, to the best of their ability.

3. **PREP and STEP:** Divide learners into small groups of your desired size. Each group needs: a clipboard, colouring materials, pencil, 1 sheet protector, 1 copy of Busy Beavers Puppets pages, scissors, 1 copy of Busy Beavers Building Challenge page, water bottles and outdoor attire. Learners can place all the printed sheets into the page protector and attach to the clipboard. Once groups have all their materials, have them STEP in line and follow you to the desired outdoor location.

4. **Beaver Dams vs. Beaver Lodges:** Ask learners: “*What do you know about beavers?*” Have multiple learners share their thoughts. Find a puddle or create one with your own water bottle (use some larger rocks and sticks to push more water to one side of the puddle) to show learners the difference between a beaver dam and a beaver lodge.





Beaver Dam – Beavers build dams to create a deep pond of water in which they will build a home. They need deeper waters for protection and safety. Not only can they outswim their predators, but deeper waters also provide another layer of protection for their young, who will be born during winter, in their lodge. Dams are naturally good and often bring new life and balance to the environment around them. Beavers will gnaw and drag big logs to create a dam.

Beaver Lodge – Beavers build their homes with logs, sticks, mud, and other various natural materials that they find in the surrounding forests. Beavers are expert weather-proofers – their lodges are waterproof and wind resistant to endure cold winters. They also have an entrance and an exit – in case of a chasing predator, they have two ways out! Beavers constantly patch up leaks, fix cracks and ensure their lodge is warm and cozy. They are expert builders!



5. Read Aloud – Five Busy Beavers: During reading, have learners start with five fingers and have them show and count their fingers, as the story countdowns from five to one! After reading, have learners share all the kinds of skills that the beavers were doing to build a dam and to build their lodge. Building is hard work!
6. Busy Beavers Mini-Lodge Building Challenge: Announce the building challenge: to build a mini beaver lodge! Mini lodges will not be built in a deep pond, but in designated outdoor spaces. There are **three requirements**:
 - Only natural materials
 - Must have an entrance and an exit
 - Must be waterproof (one beaver puppet will be placed inside and learners will test their lodge using a water bottle)

Using the *Busy Beavers Building Challenge* printable, in small groups, read over all the skills needed to create a mini beaver lodge that are listed on the sheet. Give small groups time to plan and sketch out their ideas on the printable. (*Note: allowing students to use mud is optional. Dead grasses and plants can also help keep the lodge together and water out.*)

Once small groups have a plan, give them time to build. Once groups have completed their mini lodges, they must test their design. One team member can cut and colour out one beaver puppet (from printables) to place inside of the mini lodge during testing. If leaks or cracks are present, have learners' problem-solve to fix them.

Like in the story, with one beaver left, celebrate the mini lodge creations! Allow each small group time to present and describe their mini beaver lodge to the larger group.

7. **Busy Beavers Puppet Play:** Using the printables provided, have small groups colour and cut out their puppets. Re-read the story and have learners re-enact the actions with their mini lodge. Try again, with students acting out the parts. Again, invite learners to countdown along with the story!
8. **Real Life Busy Beavers:** Using the Busy Beavers Building Challenge printable, ask learners if they can name some real-life “beavers” in their community who help to build homes. (Examples: Ferry logs = truck driver, pile sticks = framer, patch up holes = insulation installers, fill in crack = crack filler, etc.)

Extension Ideas

- Go on a community walk. What types of construction and what types of construction workers do you see evidence of?
- Visit a local pond. Can you spot evidence of some of the same animals that were found in the story? What types of natural construction do you see?
- Do an Animal Builder Search. By researching with books and/or online, have learners discover other amazing animal builders. See if they can mimic their building skills in their outdoor spaces, as well.
- Bake beaver tails with your class:
<https://lestresorsderable.com/en/blog/post/beavertail-recipe.html>
- Use the puppets for part- part whole practice in Math (How many are hiding in the lodge? How many are not?)

Reflection Activity

Please see the attached PDF for several choices on how you and your learners can reflect upon today’s activity.

Acknowledgements

1. BBC Science Focus: Why Do Beavers Build Dams?
<https://www.sciencefocus.com/nature/why-do-beavers-build-dams>, Thomas Ling, 2023.
2. Canva: Puppet Images: www.canva.com, 2023.
3. The Nature Nook: Beavers, Nature’s Architects
<https://naturenook.co.uk/2021/04/07/beavers-natures->

[architects/#:~:text=Beavers%20are%20some%20of%20the,planners%20all%20rolled%20into%20one.>, Jason Woodcock, 2021.](#)

4. Brown Bag Films: I'm A Beaver! https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=aMW79_wJLko, 2014.
5. Free School: All About Beavers for Children <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=oL5SD6z7AG8>, 2016.

A **SPECIAL THANKS** to educator, *Karen Howland*, of ASD-W's Keswick Ridge School and her incredible Grade 1 class for piloting this activity in the Fall of 2023. Karen added her wisdom, her expertise, and additional activities to make this learning opportunity even better for future learners!



Global Competencies



Collaboration



Communication



**Critical
Thinking &
Problem-
Solving**



**Innovation,
Creativity &
Entrepreneurship**



**Sustainability
and Global
Citizenship**

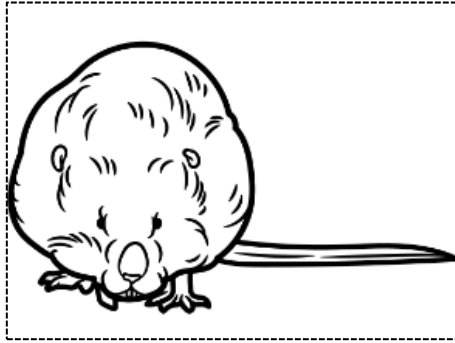


Colour and cut out the puppets below. Make sure at least **one** beaver can fit inside of your mini beaver lodge!

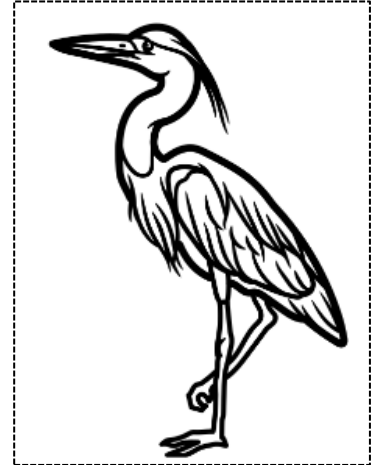




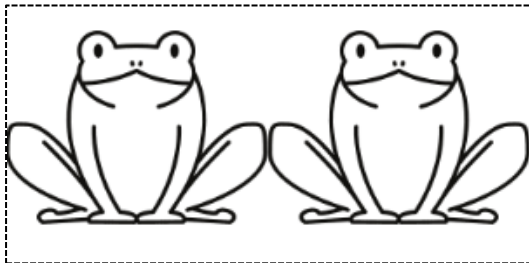
Firefly



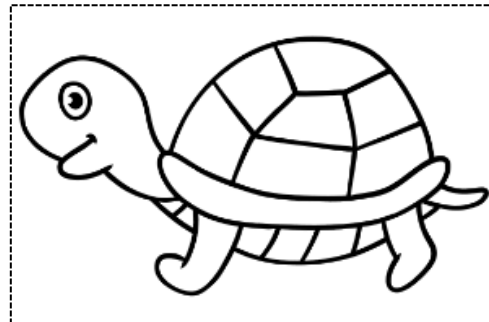
Muskrat



Heron



Frogs



Turtle



Centre of Excellence
SKILLED TRADES & MANUFACTURING

Busy Beavers Building Challenge

Names: _____

Just like in the story, begin to build your mini beaver lodge:

Gnaw down trees	Ferry the logs	Slap on the mud	Search through the forest	Drag back the logs	Patch up the holes	Fill in the cracks	Check for leaks
							

Our Mini Beaver Lodge Plan: *(Draw your ideas here)*

TEST



**Does it have an entrance
and an exit?**

Yes No

Is it weatherproof?

(Use your water bottle & puppet)

Yes No

