

Case Study #6

Camping As - Art / Science / Craft

The enjoyment of a vacation really begins with the first preparation in which the participant makes free use of his own skill and ingenuity... Wilderness handicraft defines one's ingenuity displayed in making with his own hands devices which render the vacation less irksome... The fewer the items in your kit, the more must you have knowledge of how to live comfortably outdoors and how to employ the artifices of the camping art and how to utilize Nature's primitive stores.

Claude P. Fordyce - Trail Craft, 1922

Beth was a well-seasoned Outward Bound staff working as a guide taking a small group of university students canoeing. As she and fellow guide Zabe packed for their trips, she initiated a conversation with Zabe about any extra equipment she was bringing along. She shared with Zabe that, hidden in her day pack, was a bucket full of coloring markers, paint kits and books devoted to inspiring journal writing. She justified carrying the extra weight of these fine art supplies by extolling the value of personal reflection, creative endeavors and group dynamic activities such supplies would allow on the trip. Zabe, in turn, showed her a canvas [ditty] bag she carried that held the only extra items she would bring: an assortment of both flat and crooked-bladed knives, which would allow campers to carve hollows to make such things as spoons. Zabe recounted her belief that a knife in the bush is as important as a pencil in the city. Her experience had revealed that few people carry knives with them in the bush any longer, let alone use them for much beyond spreading peanut butter. She wanted the students she guided to reflect upon, and learn the skills associated with providing for themselves in a natural location. Whenever she could, she would role model using a knife wisely and would encourage her students to try carving. The guide's conversation ended with both of them realizing that their trip goals and guiding techniques were quite different, and that neither of them truly understood the logic that gave rise to the other one's choices.

After their separate trips ended, when the small groups reunited as a class, students from Zabe's group told her of a conversation they had shared earlier with the other group.

They had heard that the group had forgotten to pick up their metal spoons after eating breakfast and departed for four days of camping with no eating utensils. The group ate its meals with improvised chopsticks, made with the only knife that happened to be brought by one of the group members. Facial gestures accompanied this story as her students imitated the frustration the others had expressed at having to eat such things as porridge and pudding with two sticks. Then her group members described the remarks and looks of awe on the faces of the other group's members when one of the beautiful spoons carved on our trip was revealed.



Function and Aesthetics : Defining Craftsmanship By Zabe MacEachren

Case Study Resources

- *Function and Aesthetics : Defining Craftsmanship*
By Zabe MacEachren
- *The Application of Craft By David Wescott*
- *Crafting By Staging By Steve Watts and David Wescott*

* Text Questions to Consider:

1. What was the Outward Bound instructor's justification for carrying art supplies?
2. How does Zabe describe the importance of a "knife in the bush?"
3. How is "craft" defined in this case study?
4. What percent of students have actually made a craft?
Collected natural materials?
5. Define "muddling through."
6. What does "making things" do for people?
7. What is the difference between art, craft and technology?
8. How many examples does Zaby use to describe these terms?
9. Consequently, how important are these semantic definitions to the author?
10. Why does Hahn value handmade projects?
11. What should be the outcomes of Hahn's "Experience Therapy?"
12. How does Zaby's thesis resolve the other "social declines" mentioned by Hahn? She does not mention "Memory and Imagination" or Self-Discipline." Can these declines be addressed as well?
13. What is the difference between "intrinsic motivation" and "compulsion?"



* Context Questions:

1. How was craft perceived in historic context?
2. When were "art" and "craft" separated?

3. What are the foundations of great civilization?
4. The author states: The experiences that educators offer students today are increasingly based upon digital or electronic technology that satisfies a very narrow purpose, or are based upon intellectual representations (i.e., fine art) that, in the author's opinion, are incapable of nourishing the body. This trend means that the human relationship with the land has become superficial as technological travel equipment (e.g., GPS) and aesthetic representations of places we travel (e.g., pictures and writing) increase. How many obvious contrasts between this modern approach and a traditional (post-modern) approach can you identify (ie. tents vs tarps, buckles vs knots)?
5. What is the distinction between a "thing" and a "device?"
6. What is lost with the separation of youth and adulthood?
7. How do we know that Hahn was concerned with tradition/heritage?
8. Where do we find active craft traditions today?

OPTIONAL READ: *The Importance of Traditional Woodcraft Skills*
By Paul Van Horn (#4 in the Resources file)

Case Study Questions to Consider:

1. What tensions were created between the two staff members because of their contrasting styles? Can this be broadened to the field at large?
2. What are the two thrusts of MacEachren's thesis?
3. What conflicts result when art and technology are the only means through which we learn?
4. What are the "pillars of Outward Bound" based on Hahn's six "Social Declines?"
5. How do the concepts of "commodification," "consumerism," and "recapitulation" addressed in previous case studies, apply in this case study?
6. What is the role of "apprenticeship?"

Really Test Yourself: Extra Credit

1. By comparing the chop-stick and spoon groups, write what you think might be the result of debriefing these groups. Use the concepts you have learned from prior case studies.
2. What is the value of MacEachren's "blending" theory? Explain and illustrate.

3. The period of classic camping's "Golden Age" was also the period of the Arts and Crafts or "Craftsman" movement. What affect, if any, do you think one might have had on the other. Did they hold any ideals in common?

READ/View -

Craftsmen of Necessity - by Christopher Williams

Anything by Morris, Rushton, or Stickley

One Man's Wilderness - Richard Proenneke

Alone in the Wilderness - The Richard Proenneke Story VHS

Building the Atkinson Traveler - Rolin Thurlow DVD

Craft in America - book and /or PBS DVD

Other Resources:

Wooden Boats - Michael Ruhlman

The Nature and Art of Workmanship - David Pye

Making American Boys: Boyology and the Feral Tale - Kenneth B. Kidd

Apprenticeship in Craft - Gerry Williams

Handmade - Drew Langsner

The Edo Craftsmen: Master Artisans of Old Tokyo - Thomas Judge

The Arts and Crafts Movement in America: 1876-1916 - Robert Clark, Ed.

Traditional Country Craftsmen - Geraint Jenkins

Fire articles file

Garrett Conover

Elders Of The Tribe:

- Kurt Hahn
- Walter Bernard Hunt
- Ellsworth Jaeger
- Willam "Bill" Mason
- Bernard Mason
- Ross McKinney