

# *The Floating House*

*By Scott Russell Sanders*

By: Melissa S. Martin

**Purpose:** The purpose of this lesson is to introduce the students to migration to the new territories.

**Estimated Time:** 2 or more days

**Grade Level:** 4<sup>th</sup> grade

## **National Geography Standards Addressed:**

***Standard 1:*** How to use maps and other geographic representations, tools, and technologies to acquire, process, and report information from a spatial perspective.

***Standard 9:*** The characteristics, distribution, and migration of human populations on the Earth's surface.

***Standard 12:*** The processes, patterns, and functions of human settlement.

## **Indiana Social Studies Addressed:**

4.3.2: Estimate distances between two places on a map, using scale of miles, and use cardinal and intermediate directions when referring to relative location.

4.3.8: Create a map, tracing the routes and methods of travel used by settlers to reach Indiana, and identify ways in which settlers have changed the landscape in Indiana over the past two hundred years.

## **Objectives:**

Upon completion of this lesson/activity, students will be able to...

1. create a map of the route of settlers along the Ohio River to Indiana.
2. answer questions about the journey.
3. develop an understanding of early settlement in Indiana.

## **Materials Required:**

- Book, *The Floating House* by Scott Russell Sanders
- Black line map of the United States, particularly eastern half
- Colored pencils
- Pencils
- Discussion questions
- Indiana Atlas
- Current map of United States

## **Procedures:**

1. Read the story, *The Floating House* by Scott Russell Sanders ISBN: 0-689- 83049-1.
2. Using the guided discussion questions, have the students answer each question as group or individually.
3. Distribute the maps
4. Instruct the students to re-create the route taken by the McClure family down the Ohio.

5. Be sure to include the names of cities/towns along the way. Also, label the present day states. Mark Pittsburgh and Jeffersonville with stars and the other cities and towns with dots.
6. Color the route along the river blue.
7. Color the state of Pennsylvania yellow.
8. Color the state of Indiana green
9. Using the atlas, determine the distance the McClure's traveled by using the scale.

**Assessment:**

Completed maps and class participation.

**Adaptations/Extensions:**

- Using the template, have students create their own flatboats (see GENI website under lesson plans-flatboat outline).
- Write journals in Mary and Jonathan's perspective
- Choose another destination beyond Jeffersonville and create a map for the McClure's.
- Write your own, *The Navigator*

**Relevant Websites and other Resources:**

\*Frontier Living by Edwin Tunis, ISBN: 1-585-74137-X – **Excellent resource!!**

\*Story of the Great American West by Reader's Digest, 0-89577-039-3

\*Connor Prairie Flat Boats

<http://www.connerprairie.org/explore/flatboat.html>

\*Making a Flat Boat

<http://web.buddyproject.org/web013/Flatboat.html>

*The Floating House*  
Guided Discussion Questions

1. Why did the McClure's have to wait to leave Pittsburgh?
2. How much was the new land?
3. How did people describe the land in the "wild country"?
4. What were the jobs of Mary and Jonathan?
5. What were a few items the McClure's took with them?
6. How would Mr. McClure judge the distance to the shore?
7. Describe some of the land they past.
8. What did the mothers do every afternoon before sunset?
9. What were some of the settlements they past along the way?
10. What was the "sign" when they were getting close to their destination?
11. What did they use to begin building their new house?
12. Estimate the distance of their journey.

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Guided Discussion Questions  
Answers

1. They had to wait for the river to thaw in the spring.
2. \$1.00 per acre
3. The dirt was so fertile you could plant a stick and it would grow.
4. to watch out for sandbars and snags and to watch out for danger
5. horse, pig, cow, plow, mule, wagon, tools, ....
6. by throwing a stone and listening for a splash
7. thick with trees, brown and bare, grapevines and nests clotted the branches
8. trade food and lantern oil for stories
9. Stuebenville, Wheeling, Mariette, Point Pleasant, Gallipolis, Maysville,  
Cincinnati, Louisville
10. the roar of the rapids
11. the flatboat
12. approximately 514 miles (1 1/2 – 2 months travel time) Length of Ohio is 981  
miles from Pittsburgh to Cairo, IL