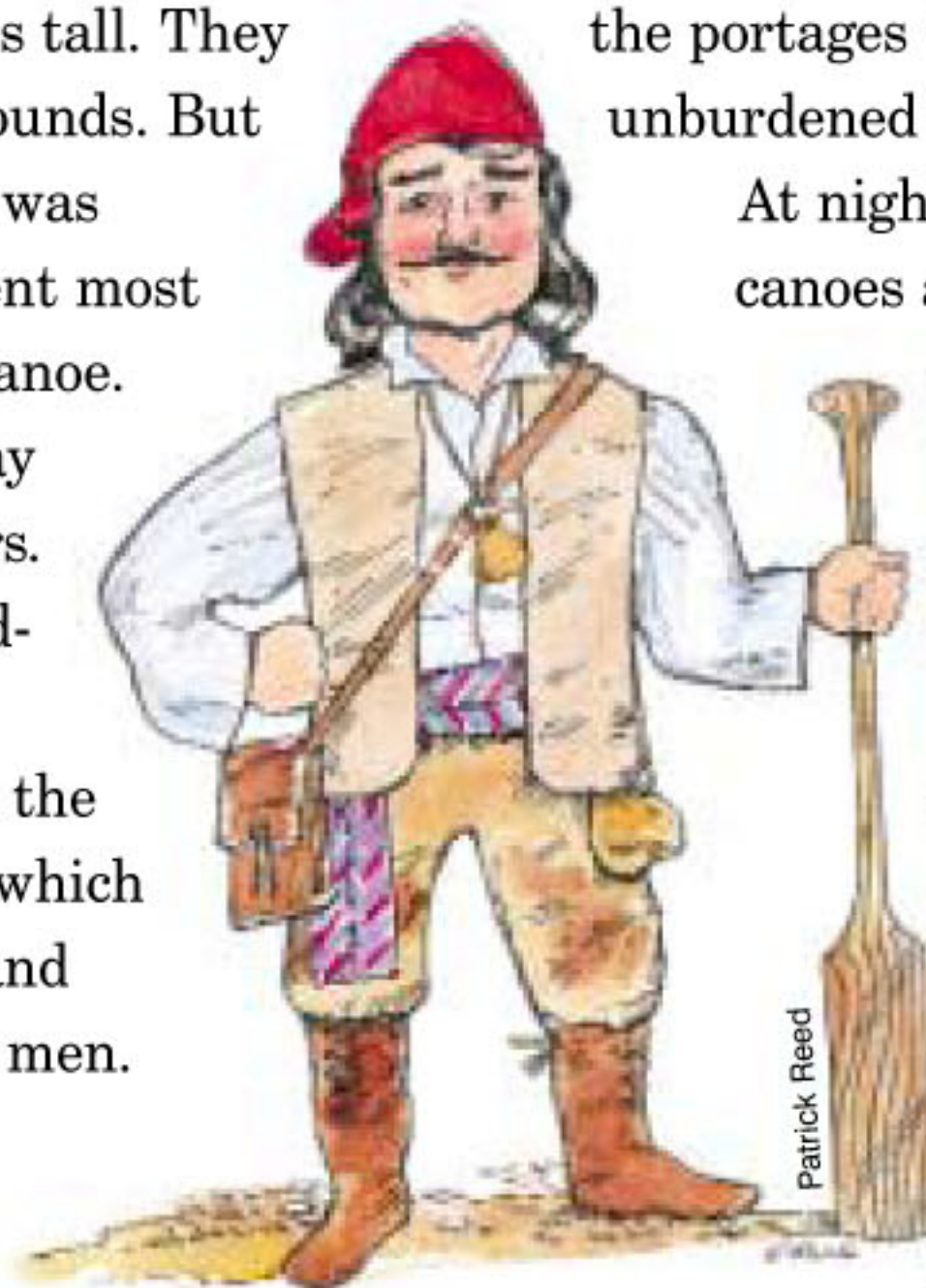


the VOYAGEUR

Voyageurs were the backbone of the Great Lakes fur trade. Voyageurs (a French word meaning *travelers*) were responsible for getting the pelts from the trading posts to Montreal. Voyageurs were usually under five feet, six inches tall. They weighed less than 150 pounds. But they were strong, which was important since they spent most of their day paddling a canoe.

A voyageur's workday lasted up to eighteen hours. When canoeing, they paddled 40 to 60 strokes a minute. They often used the larger Montreal canoes, which were up to 40 feet long and carried a crew of 8 to 10 men.

To help them get through the **monotony** of a long hard day, voyageurs sang songs while they paddled. They also were allowed breaks to smoke their pipes.



When necessary, voyageurs **portaged** the packs of pelts and canoes. Each voyageur carried at least two 90-pound packs of furs. To avoid mosquitoes and black flies they usually moved at a trot. According to one observer, the voyageurs moved along the portages "at a pace which made the unburdened travelers pant for breath."

At night, the voyageurs pulled their canoes ashore and prepared the day's second meal. Voyageurs ate lots of pemmican, which is a mixture of meat, grease and berries that has great nutritional value. Sometimes there was time for rubbaboo, a thick porridge made from pemmican, water and seasoned with maple sugar. After eating they sat around the fire, smoked their pipe, and "pulled the long bow" (bragging or telling exaggerated stories).

The next morning it was back to paddling.

the BEAVER

With his sharp teeth and powerful jaws, a beaver can chew through the base of a small tree in a few minutes. A beaver's webbed feet and a powerful tail also make him an excellent swimmer.

A beaver uses the small trees he has cut to build a dam in a small river or stream. When the dam is complete the water backs up and creates a pond. In the middle of the pond the beaver builds his home, called a *lodge*. A lodge is a pile of brush and mud shaped like a flattened cone. The inside is hollow and the beaver enters his home from underwater.

Beavers do not hibernate. They are herbivores (plant eaters) that store food for the winter. Beavers mate in January or February and baby beavers (called kits) are born in the spring. A kit weighs about one pound. An average adult beaver grows to three feet long and weighs 40 pounds.

