

Semantic Maps

A Teaching Strategy



Teacher Instructions

This handout packet includes a series of activities that connect reading comprehension, science, and social studies. The focus text highlights the journey of Marquette and Joliet, while the extension activities allow students to make cross-curricular connections.

1. The Journey Semantic Maps

Two versions are provided:

Simple version (4 bubbles): Students record four key steps in the journey. This is best used with younger students or as an introduction to summarizing.

Detailed version (6 bubbles): Students capture additional details such as encounters with friendly Native Americans, animals seen along the way, and exchanges of gifts.

Instruction: Read the article aloud or in small groups. Students complete the map as they follow along.

Extension Idea: Have students write a **first-person journal entry** from the perspective of either Marquette, Joliet, or a Native American they met along the way. Encourage them to include sensory details (what they saw, heard, ate, or felt).

2. Extension Activities (Language Arts Semantic Maps)

To reinforce comprehension and integrate language arts, additional blank semantic maps may be used:

- **Cause & Effect Map:** Students identify causes (such as “Friendly Native Americans tried to warn them”) and effects (“They decided to go anyway”). This reinforces text structure.
- **Problem & Solution Map:** Students list challenges faced (navigating rivers, deciding whether to continue, making peace with new tribes) and the solutions they used.
- **Character Traits Map:** Students identify traits of Marquette and Joliet (brave, determined, curious) with text evidence for each.

3. Differentiation Tips

- Use the blank maps for advanced students to design their own organizer.
- Pair students for group discussion before recording answers.
- Allow artistic students to sketch instead of write examples.

4. Vertebrates Semantic Map

Purpose: reinforce classification skills in science

Setup: The main bubble is titled *Vertebrates (Animals with Backbones)*.

Five branches: Mammals, Birds, Fish, Reptiles, Amphibians.

Student task: For each group, list characteristics in the description bubble and then give **two examples** (each with a picture and label).

Example:

Birds → “born from hard-shelled eggs, feathers, warm-blooded” → Bald Eagle, Flamingo.

Extension Idea: Have students compare the animals seen by Marquette and Joliet (such as bison, fish, birds) to the classification chart.

Semantic Mapping

Nonfiction Text with 4 Maps

Marquette in Iowa – A Journey to the Great River

More than 300 years ago, before there were trains or highways in the Midwest, explorers were eager to discover the secrets of the land. The French, who had already built settlements in Canada, often sent missionaries to share their faith with Native Americans and traders to exchange goods for furs.

Stories kept spreading about a mighty river farther west, where a wide and powerful trail ran one in New France (Canada) had been built with their own axes. That river was the Mississippi.

Two years later, **Father Jacques Marquette**, a Catholic priest, and **Saint Louis**, a fur trader, set out to find it. They paddled in two small birch canoes, sailing along the river to help. Their supplies were simple: smoked meat, corn, and a few tools to trade with Native Americans: trapezoidal beads, shells, and hatchets.

Before they left, Native Americans in Wisconsin warned them not to go. They spoke of dangerous tribes along the river. They even had frightening stories about a roving war demon that could drag travelers under the water and chop them long enough to swallow them and their canoes whole!

But Marquette and Saint Louis refused to turn back. They pushed on, determined to solve the mystery of the great river. At last, their canoes reached the Mississippi. For Marquette, that was never the goal of it. Rather, they changed their route downstream, guided by what they saw: herds of shaggy bison crowding the riverbanks, watching the strongest herd feed far from water. They paddled without seeing a single person. Then, in what is now the state of Iowa, they spotted Indians in the woods. Marquette and Saint Louis followed the trail until they discovered a Native American village.

Not knowing if the people would be friendly, they sold a dark Beaver and called out loudly. The villagers peered out of their homes, curious about the strangers. Soon, four men stepped forward carrying a **great pipe**, a sign of welcome and friendship. The tribe introduced themselves as the **Illinois**. They trusted the Frenchman into a large wigwag, where the chief greeted them with these words:

“Frenchmen, how bright the sun shines when you come to see us! We are all waiting for you. You shall now come into our houses in peace.”

The Illinois people offered a feast. The Frenchman wore his corn moccasins with respect. But when the bones of a porcupine were handed to him, he spat out the bones. The Illinois people were shocked. They offered him a pipe, but he refused. He said, “I will not smoke this pipe. I will not smoke this pipe.”

The next morning, hundreds of Illinois people walked with Marquette and Saint Louis to the mouth of the great river. They gave Marquette two gifts: a young dove and a decorated peace pipe to carry on his journey.

Marquette and Saint Louis continued south, their adventure on the mighty Mississippi just beginning.

Gay Miller @ Book Units Teacher

Semantic Mapping

2 Activities for the Classroom

Vertebrates (animals with backbones)

Mammals	Birds	Fish	Reptiles	Amphibians
young drink milk, fur, warm-blooded	born from hard-shelled eggs, feathers, warm-blooded	gills, scales, and fins, live in water	breathe through their skin, born in water, cold-blooded	scaly skin, born on land, cold-blooded
rabbit	bald eagle	clown fish	turtle	frog
bison	flamingo	manta ray	snake	salamander

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Vertebrates (animals with backbones)

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Marquette in Iowa – A Journey to the Great River

More than 300 years ago, before there were towns or highways in the Midwest, explorers were eager to discover the secrets of the land. The French, who had already built settlements in Canada, often sent missionaries to share their faith with Native Americans and traders to exchange goods like furs.

Stories kept spreading about a *mighty river* farther west, a river so wide and powerful that no one in New France (Canada) had seen it with their own eyes. That river was the Mississippi.

Two brave men, **Father Jacques Marquette**, a Catholic priest, and **Louis Joliet**, a fur trader, set out to find it. They paddled in two small birch canoes, bringing along five men to help. Their supplies were simple: smoked meat, corn, and a few goods to trade with Native tribes - things like beads, cloth, and hatchets.

Before they left, friendly Native Americans in Wisconsin warned them not to go. They spoke of dangerous tribes along the river. They even told frightening stories about a roaring river demon that could drag travelers under the water and monsters large enough to swallow men and their canoes whole!

But Marquette and Joliet refused to turn back. They pushed on, determined to solve the mystery of the great river.

At last, their canoes reached the Mississippi. No Frenchman had ever seen this part of it before. They steered their boats downstream, amazed by what they saw: herds of shaggy buffalo crowding the riverbanks, watching the strangers float past.

For two weeks, they paddled without seeing a single person. Then, in what is now the state of **Iowa**, they spotted footprints in the mud. Marquette and Joliet bravely followed the trail until they discovered a Native American village.

Not knowing if the people would be friendly, they said a quick prayer and called out loudly. The villagers poured out of their homes, curious about the strangers. Soon, four men stepped forward carrying a **peace pipe**, a sign of welcome and friendship.

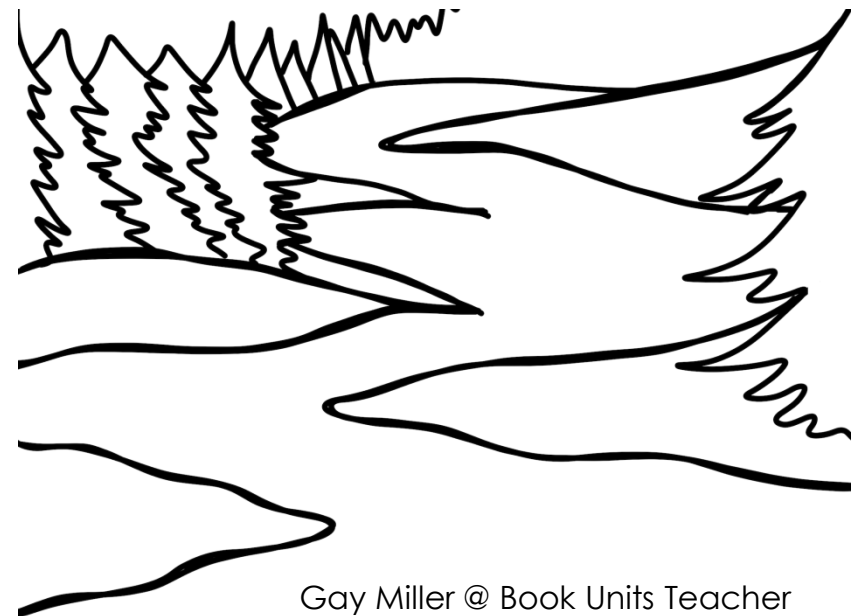
The tribe introduced themselves as the **Illinois**. They invited the Frenchmen into a large wigwam, where the chief greeted them with these words:

“Frenchmen, how bright the sun shines when you come to see us! We are all waiting for you. You shall now come into our houses in peace.”

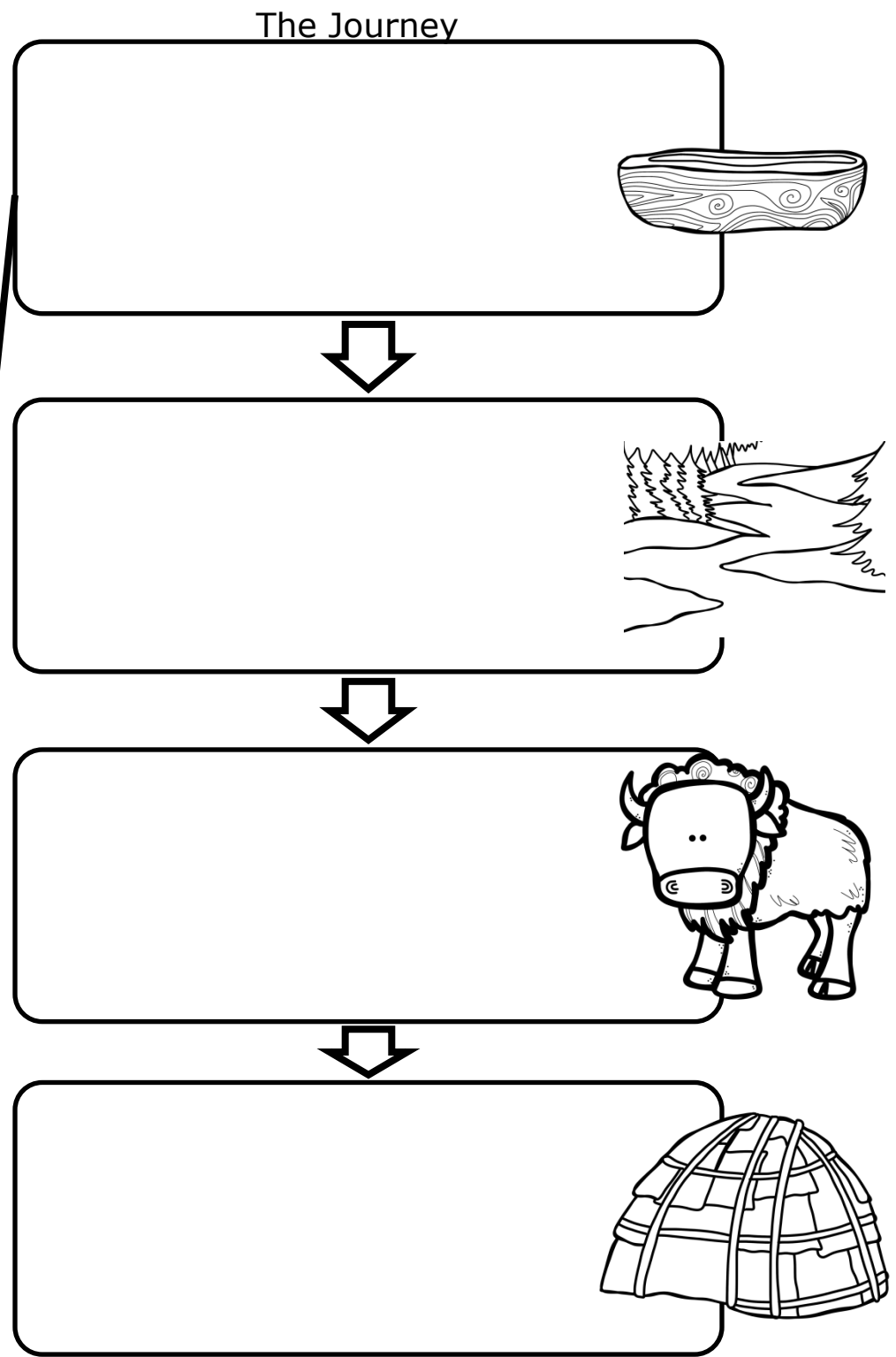
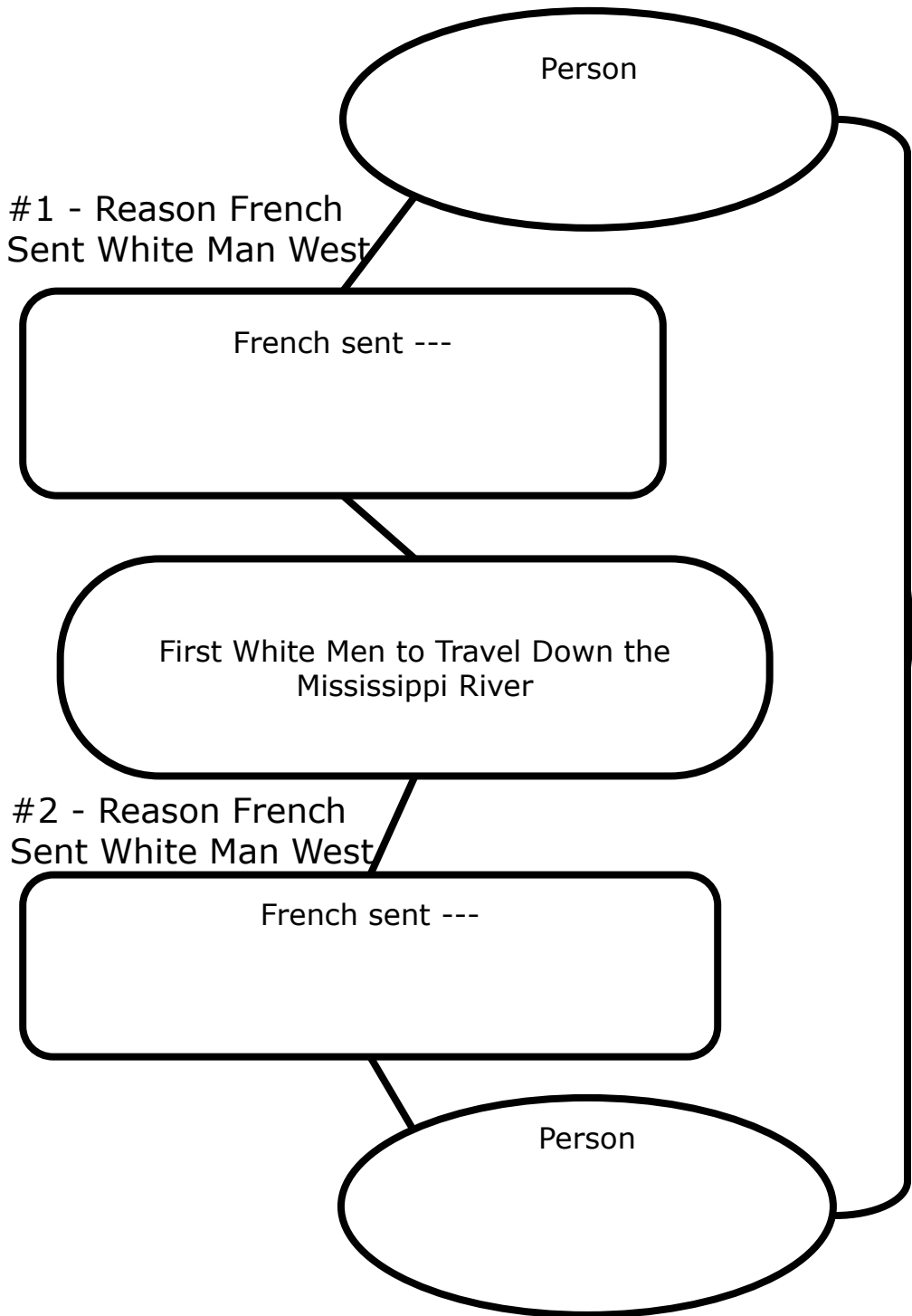
The Illinois people offered a feast. The Frenchmen were fed corn mush with meat, fish (with the bones carefully removed by hand), roasted dog which the visitors politely tried but didn't enjoy, and finally buffalo meat.

The next morning, hundreds of Illinois people walked with Marquette and Joliet to the riverbank to say goodbye. They gave Marquette two gifts: a young slave and a decorated peace pipe to carry on his journey.

Marquette and Joliet continued south, their adventure on the mighty Mississippi just beginning.

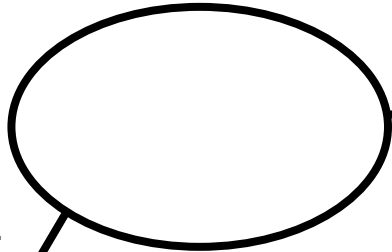


Marquette In Iowa Semantic Map

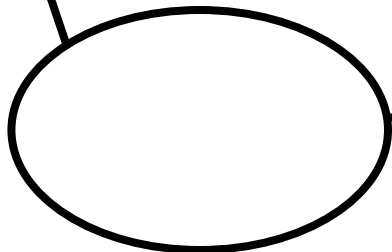


Marquette In Iowa Semantic Map

#1 - Reason
French Sent
White Man West



#2 - Reason
French Sent
White Man West



The Journey

1 - Departure

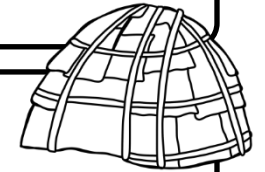
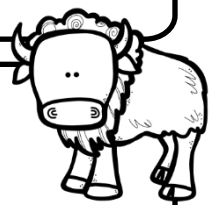
2 - Warnings

3 - Observations

4 - Encounters

5 - Hospitality

6 - Gifts



Marquette in Iowa – A Journey to the Great River Cause & Effect Map

Write the effect for each cause.

Causes

Effects

Friendly Native Americans warned them not to go down the Mississippi .

They traveled down the Wisconsin River.

They followed tracks to a village.

They visited the Illinois tribe.

They met new tribes.

Marquette in Iowa – A Journey to the Great River Problems and Solutions Map

Write the effect for each cause.

Problems

Solutions

Unsure if it was safe to travel the Mississippi

Needed to navigate rivers

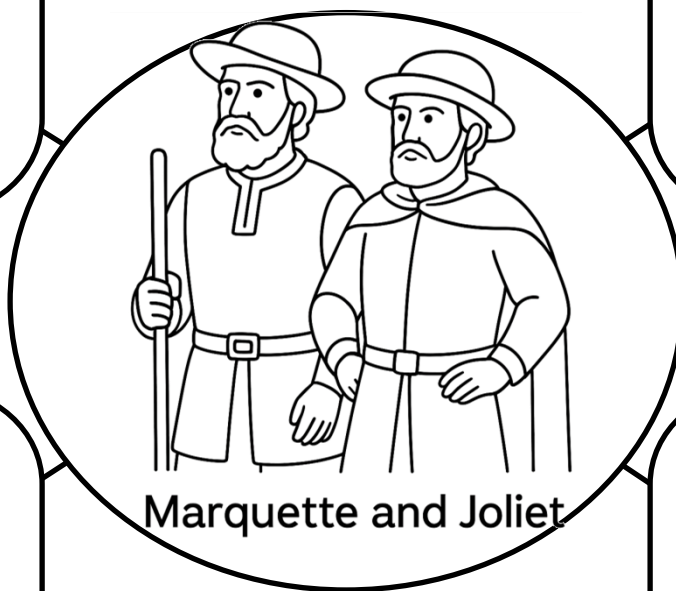
Encountered unfamiliar animals (bison)

Meeting new tribes

Establishing trust with Native tribes

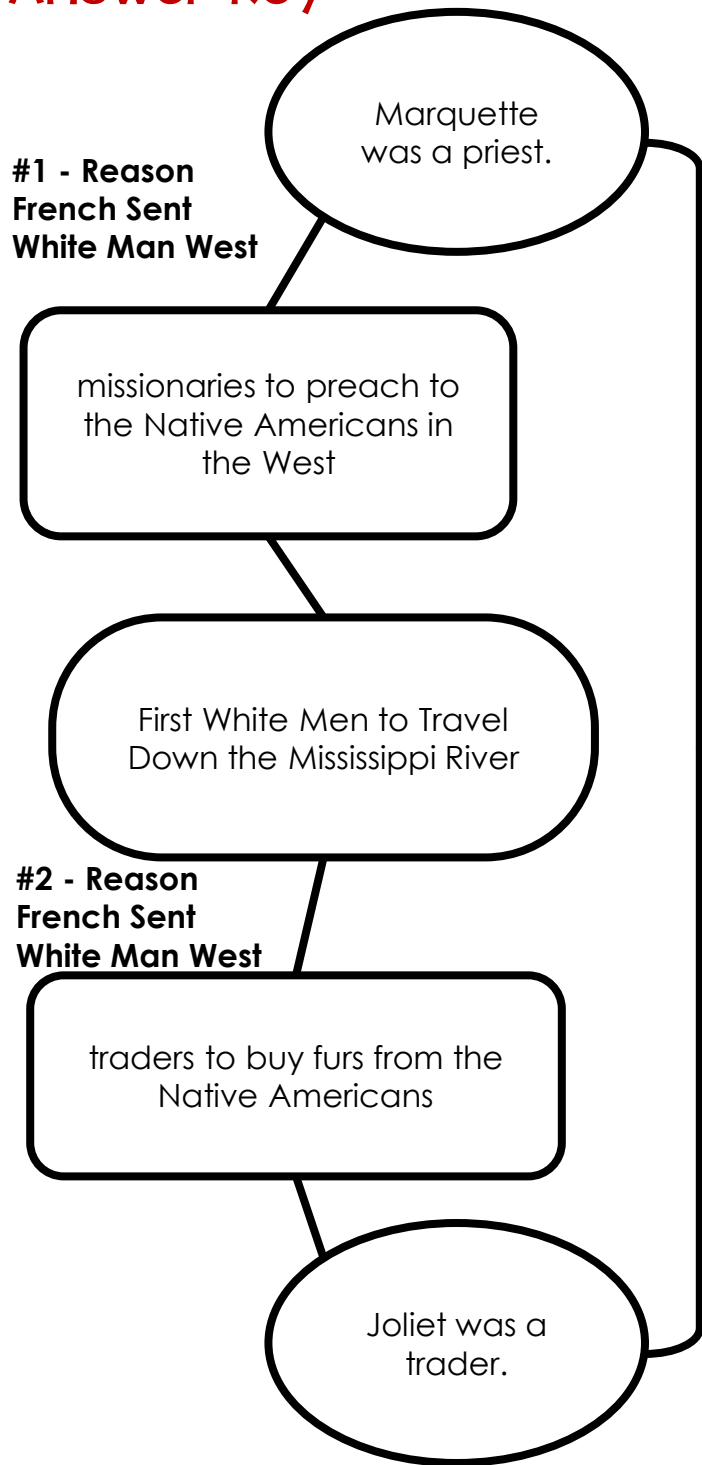
Marquette in Iowa – A Journey to the Great River Character Traits

List four character traits and give an example of each using proof from the text of Marquette and Joliet.



Marquette In Iowa Semantic Map

Answer Key



The Journey

1 - Departure

Marquette and Joliet set out in two canoes with five voyageurs (assistants). They carried supplies and trade goods such as cloth, beads, and other items to exchange with Native tribes along the way.

2 - Warnings

In Wisconsin, friendly Native Americans warned them about the dangers of traveling down the Mississippi River, including hostile tribes and unknown lands. Despite the cautions, they chose to continue. They paddled down the Wisconsin River until it joined the Mississippi.

3 - Observations

As they journeyed south, the explorers observed the land and animals. They recorded sightings of large herds of bison (buffalo) grazing along the riverbanks, something new to them.

4 - Encounters

After about two weeks on the river, they noticed well-worn paths leading inland. Following the tracks, they discovered a Native American village. The people welcomed them peacefully and showed no hostility.

5 - Hospitality

The Illinois tribe invited Marquette, Joliet, and their men to a **feast**. They shared food and traditions, strengthening friendly relations between the two groups.

6 - Gifts

As a sign of peace and goodwill, the Illinois tribe presented the explorers with gifts, including a peace pipe (calumet). This symbolized trust and alliance for future encounters.

Marquette in Iowa – A Journey to the Great River Cause & Effect Map

Write the effect for each cause.

Causes

Effects

Friendly Native Americans warned them not to go down the Mississippi .

They decided to go anyway.

They traveled down the Wisconsin River.

They reached the Mississippi River.

They followed tracks to a village.

They met friendly Native Americans.

They visited the Illinois tribe.

They shared a feast.

They met new tribes.

They received gifts, including a peace pipe.

Marquette in Iowa – A Journey to the Great River Problems and Solutions Map

Write the effect for each cause.

Problems

Solutions

Unsure if it was safe to travel the Mississippi

Ignored warnings and continued anyway, showing determination

Needed to navigate rivers

Used two canoes and teamwork to travel

Encountered unfamiliar animals (bison)

Observed and learned from the experience

Meeting new tribes

Approached peacefully and shared gifts/feasts

Establishing trust with Native tribes

Accepted the peace pipe as a symbol of friendship

Marquette in Iowa – A Journey to the Great River Character Traits

List four character traits and give an example of each using proof from the text of Marquette and Joliet.

Brave – They went down the Mississippi River even after being warned it could be dangerous.

Determined – They kept traveling despite challenges like navigating rivers and facing the unknown.

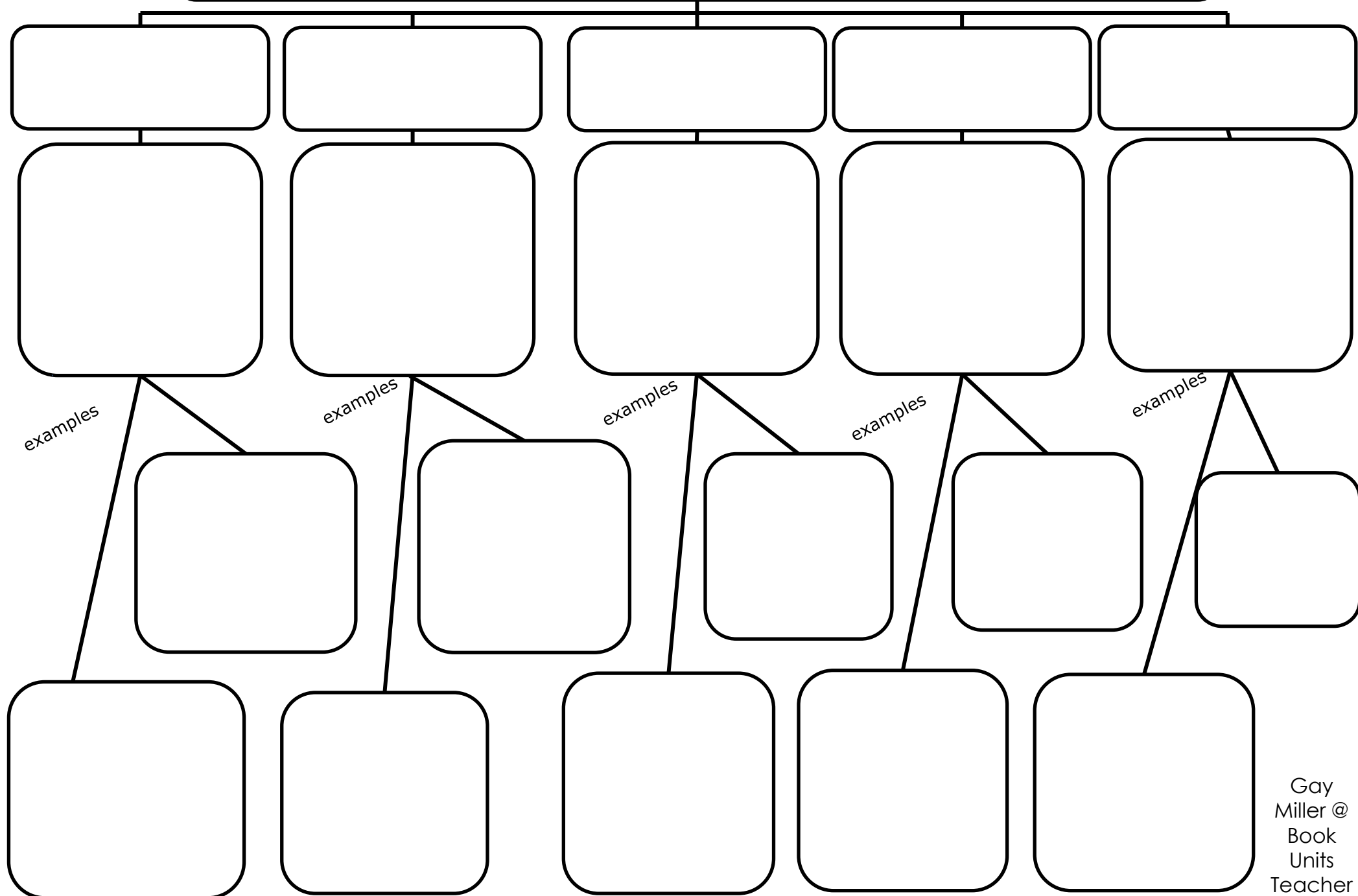


Marquette and Joliet

Curious – They wanted to explore new lands and learn about the people and animals they encountered.

Respectful – They accepted hospitality from tribes, shared feasts, and honored the peace pipe.

Vertebrates (animals with backbones)



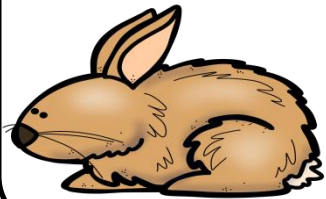
Vertebrates (animals with backbones)

Mammals

young drink milk, fur, warm-blooded

examples

rabbit



bison



Birds

born from hard-shelled eggs, feathers, warm-blooded

examples

bald eagle



flamingo



Fish

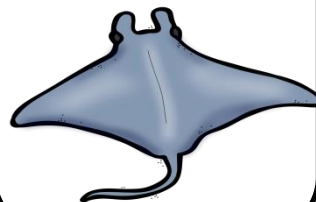
gills, scales, and fins, live in water

examples

clown fish



manta ray



Reptiles

breathe through their skin, born in water, cold-blooded

examples

turtle



snake



Amphibians

scaly skin, born on land, cold blooded

examples

frog



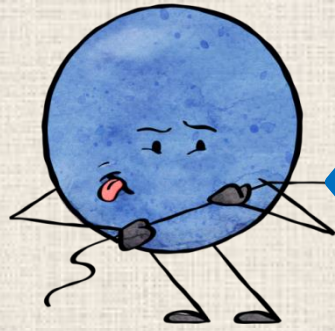
salamander





Credits

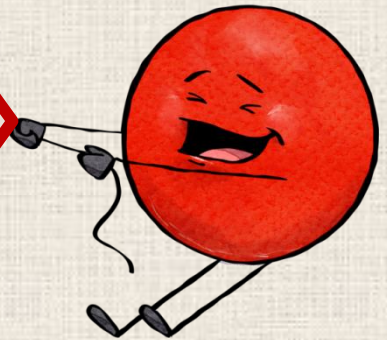




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