

COOPERATIVE LEARNING ACTIVITY

Make your own woolly mammoth skeleton using the drawings that Rembrandt Peale made of the mammoth and any other sketches or information that the students find through research.

Have each student make one bone of the mammoth using any kind of material (wood, paper mache, cardboard, etc.) When all the bones are complete, the mammoth can be assembled with string or glue, or you can make a large papermache ball and stick all the bones onto it.

After it is assembled, the students might draw the finished creature.

TEACHERS GUIDE

Mr. Peale's Bones

by Tracey West



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In *Mr. Peale's Bones*, written by Tracey West, it is 1801, and young Will Finch helps Charles Willson Peale, the portrait artist and friend of US presidents, uncover an entire skeleton of an ancient mastodon. After spending three years working on his uncle's farm, Will is more than happy to be reunited with his father, who is a carpenter for the dig, and to help with Peale's excavation. Readers share in Will's excitement as he follows Peale's expedition across upstate New York trying to dig up and piece together the bones of the mastodon.

BACKGROUND

Peale's excavation sites were in upstate New York in the Hudson River valley. This was the first excavation of its kind in the United States and the second that we know of in the world. Since this early dig, many mastodon bones have been found in the state—more than in any other part of the world.

PRE-READING ACTIVITIES

Before reading, you might want to have a discussion around a semantic or web map drawn on the blackboard. This will enable you to know how much prior knowledge the students have about fossils, mammoths, mastodons, and paleontological digs.

Ask the students about the time period during which the mammoths and mastodons lived. What did the world look like at the time?

Ask if they have seen pictures of mammoths or mastodons. Those who have may describe or draw a picture of one for the class.

Summarize the answers and information in the form of a **KWL** chart. Ask what they already know, what they wish to know, and after reading and/or research, what they have learned.

Know

Would like to know

Learned

CURRICULUM CONNECTIONS

Science • Nature • Art • Writing

1. Have the class research and recreate the habitat in which mammoths and mastodons lived.
2. Draw or build the wheel that was used to drain the pit where the bones were found.
3. Write:
 - A diary that Will might have kept.
 - A class newspaper that might have existed in the early 1800s. (What else was going on in history at the time).
 - A story about a mammoth or mastodon. How did it get food? What did it eat? What did it do during the day? How did it become extinct?

Social Studies • Writing • Research

4. Problem/Solution discussion in small groups: List all the problems that arose on the dig. List all of the solutions that Peale's group used to solve these problems. Then ask the students to think up their own solutions to these problems (can compare modern technology with what was available in Peale's time).
5. Have the students research Charles Willson Peale focusing on him as the painter or the scientist or the patriot. Students can create their own stories around this famous man.