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Becoming an Adult

The passage from childhood to adulthood has been marked in many different ways throughout history. The age at which one becomes an adult varies from culture to culture, as do the ways by which a child shows that he or she is ready for adulthood. Most cultures have specific requirements and responsibilities for children to “come of age.” In *The Sign of the Beaver*, Attean and Matt both cross over into manhood during the same year, but the ways they do this are as different as the cultures which have formed their ways of life.

How does Attean become a man?

How does Matt become a man?

What do you think a person needs to do to prove he or she is an adult? Are your ideas closer to Matt’s or Attean’s passage to adulthood? Explain your answer.

Describe the ways in which the boys and girls of your culture enter adulthood.

boys: _____

girls: _____

As an extension of this activity, research the ways children become adults in at least one other culture. Share your research with the class.

Alone in the Wilderness!

Suppose you must learn to survive in the wilderness. Do you think you could do it?

For this culminating activity, you will make a detailed plan of how you intend to survive in the wilderness for one month. Here are the rules:

- You may choose February, May, August, or October as the month for your wilderness survival trip. The plans you make must take into account the month you have chosen.
- You will travel alone.
- You may bring only what you can carry on a mile walk. List what you will take on the form on page 39.
- There is no electricity, gas, or propane in or near where you will be staying.
- You will be dropped by helicopter one mile from a one-room cabin in the wilderness. This cabin has been constructed according to the design you have made on page 40.
- Your only heating is a fireplace.
- There is a wide stream that runs by your cabin.
- Wild animals are known to inhabit the area.
- There are no markets within walking distance.
- You must keep a diary of the things you do, the problems you face, the food you eat, the feelings you have, and anything else you wish to record. You will need at least ten entries in your diary. A diary worksheet can be found on page 41.
- You must devise an accurate way to measure time.
- In one month, a helicopter will pick you up in the same location where it dropped you off.

