

Granite, Schooners and Fish: How Cape Ann Towns Made a Living

GRADES 3-5 · HISTORY AND SOCIAL SCIENCE, GEOGRAPHY, ENGLISH LANGUAGE ARTS · ROCKPORT, ESSEX, GLOUCESTER

How did the land and sea around Rockport, Essex and Gloucester shape the work people did there?

Two 45-minute class periods (90 minutes total)

Rockport, Essex and Gloucester sit side by side on Cape Ann, but long ago each town became known for different work. In Rockport, people cut granite out of the ground. In Essex, people built wooden schooners. In Gloucester, people went fishing. In this lesson you will become an expert on one of these jobs by reading words written in the 1870s and 1880s. Then you will teach your group, and together you will make a map that shows how the land and the sea shaped the work in all three towns.

Primary source

R1. Expert card: Granite (Rockport)

All excerpts were transcribed from a scan; spelling as printed. The dots (...) show where words were left out.

Excerpt A (Scientific American, 1878)

"At the extreme point of Cape Ann, on the Massachusetts coast, is the small town of Rockport, where are situated the extensive granite quarries for which the region is noted."

"The Rockport granite is noted for its superior quality, being very hard, durable, and free from iron or other substances which injure and discolor granite."

"The Rockport quarries have furnished great quantities of granite for the dock improvements of New York; for the reservoir on Beacon Hill, Boston; for Forts Warren, Winthrop, and Independence, Boston Harbor ..."

"A notable enterprise in connection with the quarries is the construction of a breakwater, which enables shipping to approach the quarries at all stages of the tide and in all sorts of weather. Before it was built it was only in fair weather, when the sea was smooth, that vessels could come near."

Excerpt B (federal census report on building stones)

"Cape Ann was the next district opened to work. ... The lack of harbors near the quarries has been met by the construction of breakwaters built from the waste stone ..."

Excerpt C (federal fisheries report, 1887)

"At Rockport and at some of the outlying villages of Gloucester are large granite quarries which were opened many years ago by parties from Quincy. These now give employment to a considerable number of men."

Excerpt D (same report, about two villages in Gloucester)

"At both Bay View and Lanesville breakwaters have been built, making small harbors, used principally for the shelter of stone sloops, that are constantly employed in transporting granite from the extensive quarries situated here."

Word helper

quarry: a place where stone is cut out of the ground

durable: lasts a long time

breakwater: a wall of stone built out into the sea to block waves

waste stone: leftover pieces of stone that were not sold

stone sloop: a sailboat used to carry stone

parties from Quincy: people from Quincy, another Massachusetts town with granite

Source: Excerpt A: "The Rockport Granite Quarries," Scientific American, vol. 39, no. 20 (Nov. 16, 1878), page 314. Excerpt B: U.S. Census Office, Report on the Building Stones of the United States and Statistics of the Quarry Industry for 1880 (Tenth Census), page 112. Excerpts C and D: George Brown Goode and others, The Fisheries and Fishery Industries of the United States, Section II (Washington: Government Printing Office, 1887), pages 137, 141 and 143. <https://archive.org/details/scientific-american-1878-11-16>. Rights: Public domain (Scientific American published 1878; the census report and the Goode report are U.S. federal government works)

Primary source

R2. Expert card: Schooners (Essex)

All excerpts were transcribed from a scan; spelling as printed. The dots (...) show where words were left out. Chebacco was the old name for Essex. Sandy bay was the old name for part of Rockport.

Excerpt A (Henry Hall, 1884, about the Chebacco boat)

"First used in fishing at Sandy bay, these boats soon came into general use, the majority of them being built in the village in which they originated."

"These boats were often built in the woods, or, at any rate, a long way from the water, and as late as the revolutionary war fishing boats of from 10 to 20 tons were thus built and were dragged to the river by cattle. Though built in Chebacco (or Essex), the boats were chiefly owned in Gloucester ..."

Excerpt B (Henry Hall, 1884, about Essex in 1880)

"Essex has always lived by ship-building."

"Nearly all the clipper fishing schooners of Gloucester are built at Essex ..."

"The most profitable vessels that are built at Essex are sharp two- and three-masted schooners of from 150 to 260 tons register, as the river is not large enough to launch and float out a large hull."

Excerpt C (federal fisheries report, 1887)

"The Essex River is a narrow stream that runs from the village to Ipswich Bay, a distance of 2 or 3 miles, and has sufficient depth of water at high tide to float the largest fishing schooners from the ship-yards to the sea."

"The principal industry of the people is ship-building, upwards of 1,200 of the best fishing vessels in the New England fleet having been built here during the past fifty years."

Word helper

schooner: a sailing ship with two or more masts

clipper: built to be fast

tons register: a measure of how much space a ship has inside

launch: to slide a new ship into the water

hull: the body of a ship

sufficient depth: deep enough

revolutionary war: the American Revolution, which began in 1775

Source: Excerpts A and B: Henry Hall, Report on the Ship-Building Industry of the United States (Washington: Government Printing Office, 1884), Tenth Census, pages 7 and 108 to 109. Excerpt C: George Brown Goode and others, The Fisheries and Fishery Industries of the United States, Section II (Washington: Government Printing Office, 1887), page 140.

<https://archive.org/details/reportonshipbui00hallgoog>. Rights: Public domain (U.S. federal government works, published 1884 and 1887)

Primary source

R3. Expert card: Fish (Gloucester)

All excerpts were transcribed from a scan; spelling as printed. The dots (...) show where words were left out.

Excerpt A (about all of Cape Ann)

"The proximity of Cape Ann to the fishing grounds for cod and mackerel, and an excellent harbor for vessels of all sizes, has made this place famous in the history of the fisheries."

"Only 150 miles off the coast lies George's Bank, famous as the best of cod-fishing grounds."

Excerpt B (about Gloucester)

"Gloucester, the chief fishing port of the United States, is situated on Cape Ann, about 30 miles northeast of Boston. The harbor is one of the largest and safest on the whole coast ..."

"With the exception of the granite quarries, there is no important industry carried on in Gloucester that is not dependent upon the fisheries."

Excerpt C (about Folly Cove, a village in Gloucester with a rocky shore)

"At Folly Cove the boats are hauled high up on the rocks on inclined platforms, where they are safe from the dashing waves."

Excerpt D (about Gloucester's population)

"There has been a steady growth in population from 7,786 in 1850, to 19,329 in 1880."

Word helper

proximity: closeness

fishing grounds: places in the ocean where many fish live

cod and mackerel: two kinds of fish

chief: most important

industry: a kind of business or work

dependent upon: needs something in order to work

inclined platform: a wooden ramp that slopes up

Source: George Brown Goode and others, The Fisheries and Fishery Industries of the United States, Section II (Washington: Government Printing Office, 1887), pages 137, 143 and 144. <https://archive.org/details/fisheriesfishery02good>. Rights: Public domain (U.S. federal government work, published 1887)

Data table

R4. Where Gloucester's fishing fleet was built (1880)

This table shows only some of the places on Hall's list. The last row adds up all the other places he names, which are in Massachusetts, Maine, New Hampshire, Connecticut, New York and New Jersey. Annisquam is a village in Gloucester.

Place where the vessel was built	Number of vessels owned at Gloucester
Essex, Mass.	218
Gloucester, Mass.	133
Bath, Maine	36

Place where the vessel was built	Number of vessels owned at Gloucester
Boothbay, Maine	13
Salisbury, Mass.	9
Kennebunk, Maine	9
Rockport, Mass.	1
Annisquam, Mass.	1
All 29 other entries on Hall's list	55
Total	475

Source: Henry Hall, Report on the Ship-Building Industry of the United States (Washington: Government Printing Office, 1884), Tenth Census, pages 12 to 13. Hall lists every place that built the 475 schooners, sloops and boats owned at Gloucester in the census year. <https://archive.org/details/reportonshipbui00hallgoog>. Rights: Facts from a public domain U.S. federal government report (1884); table compiled by Cape Ann Current

Summary by Cape Ann Current

R5. Three towns, three ways to make a living

Cape Ann is a rocky piece of land that sticks out into the Atlantic Ocean north of Boston. Four towns share it today: Gloucester, Rockport, Essex and Manchester-by-the-Sea.

Rockport is at the eastern tip of Cape Ann. It was part of Gloucester until 1840, when its two villages, Sandy Bay and Pigeon Cove, became a town of their own. Much of the land there is hard granite.

Essex is on a narrow river that runs out to Ipswich Bay. It became its own town in 1819, when it split from Ipswich. Forests of oak once grew all around it.

Gloucester is the largest of the three. It has a big, deep harbor, and some of the best fishing grounds in the Atlantic are a few days' sail away.

In the 1870s and 1880s, government writers traveled to towns like these and wrote reports about how people earned a living. Your expert card has their words.

Source: Written by Cape Ann Current for this lesson. Facts from the readings above: Goode (1887), pages 137, 140, 141 and 143; Hall (1884), pages 7 and 108 to 109; Scientific American (Nov. 16, 1878), page 314. <https://archive.org/details/fisheriesfishery02good>. Rights: Text written by Cape Ann Current; facts from public domain sources

A1. Map launch (home group)

Work with your home group and your current map of Massachusetts. Take turns being the map reader, the measurer and the recorder.

1. Write the title of your map. Then name two symbols in the legend and what each one means.
2. Find the compass rose or north arrow. Which way is north on your map?
3. Find Gloucester, Rockport and Essex. Write one sentence for Rockport and one for Essex that says which direction it is from Gloucester.
4. Use the scale to measure about how far it is, in a straight line, from Gloucester to Rockport and from Gloucester to Essex. Show how you used the scale.
5. Find one water feature near each town (a harbor, a river, a bay or the open ocean) and write its name if the map shows it.

A2. Expert notes

Read your expert card with your expert group. Fill in every row. Use your own words except for the quotation row.

1. Natural resource or feature: What did the land or sea give this town?
2. The work: What did people make or do?
3. Where it went: Name one place the product or the people traveled to, if your card tells you.
4. Adapting: Describe one way people changed the land or the shore, or worked around a problem, to do this job.
5. Quotation: Copy one short sentence from your card exactly, with quotation marks, and write which excerpt it came from.
6. Teach it: Write the two most important things your home group should learn from you.

A3. Listening notes (home group)

While each expert teaches, write notes in the chart for that town. Ask each expert one question.

1. Granite (Rockport): resource, work, one way people adapted, my question
2. Schooners (Essex): resource, work, one way people adapted, my question
3. Fish (Gloucester): resource, work, one way people adapted, my question
4. Look at reading R4 together. Which town built the most vessels for Gloucester's fishing fleet? Which reading explains why?

A4. Cape Ann work map

Draw a simple sketch map of Cape Ann using your real map as a guide. It does not need to be perfect. Use shapes or letters in your legend so it can be read without colors.

1. Give your map a title.
2. Draw a compass rose.
3. Label Gloucester, Rockport, Essex and one body of water near each town.
4. Make a legend with a symbol for a quarry, a shipyard and a fishing harbor, and put each symbol where it belongs.
5. Draw at least two arrows that show a connection, such as something made in one town that was used in another or sent somewhere else. Write a few words on each arrow to explain it.

Talk about it

- Why do you think a town with hard granite and a town with a big harbor ended up doing such different work?
- The breakwaters in Rockport were built from waste stone. Why is that a smart idea? Can you think of a problem it might cause?
- Essex had no harbor and a narrow river. How did the shipbuilders make it work anyway?
- The writers of these reports worked for the government in the 1870s and 1880s. What might they notice, and what might they leave out?
- Which of these jobs still happen on Cape Ann today? How could you find out?

Show what you learned

Make two Town Work Cards on your own. Choose two of the three towns. For each town, write (1) the natural resource or feature, (2) the work people did, (3) one way people adapted to the land or sea and (4) one piece of evidence from a reading, with the reading number. Then write two or three sentences that explain one way the work of your two towns was connected. Checklist: two towns, four parts on each card, one connection with evidence.

Points: 12