



THIRTEEN SHORT ESSAYS

A PICTO-READER FOR STUDENTS
OF ENGLISH AS A FOREIGN LANGUAGE

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Festival of the Whale

EIGHT FUR-CLAD ESKIMOS, their brown parkas camouflaged by white cloth shirts, crouch behind a breast-high wall of snow blocks along the edge of the Arctic Ocean at Point Barrow, Alaska. They gaze intently at a narrow area of blue water between the ice floes where a great creature of the sea comes closer and closer. They watch anxiously as he surfaces, blows a stream of water into the air and disappears, only to surface later a little nearer.

Finally the huge monster, a 30-ton bowhead whale, bulks up almost close enough to touch. One man rushes toward him with a darting gun—a short, heavy, brass barrel on the end of a pole, with the sharp nose of a bomb protruding from the muzzle. He thrusts the gun hard against the whale's side and explodes a cartridge that goes through the bowhead's skin. The big mammal dives again but in a few minutes he floats, belly upward, to the surface of the sea.

Picture No. 1: Point Barrow, with 2,000 people, is Alaska's largest Eskimo village. Facing the Arctic Ocean, it is the northernmost point in the state, over 300 miles above the Arctic Circle. Source: Bruce McAllister.





Picture No. 2: After a successful hunt, the huge whale carcass is slowly drawn up onto the ice, where it is cut up and processed. Edible portions are stored in the frozen ground and consumed later at Nelekatuk. Source: Bruce McAllister.

Seven of the men jump into their *umiak*, a large sealskin boat, and tie a rope around the big flukes of the whale. The other man raises a flag on a nearby pole to signal the catch. By the time the boat crew has towed the carcass to the edge of the ice, villagers are streaming toward it. They come running, or riding on sleds. A few roar up in snowmobiles.

The hunters chop a ramp down to the water's edge and rig block and tackle. Villagers grab the line and haul away with shouts and laughter. Slowly the carcass, more than four times the weight of a bull elephant, inches up onto the ice to be cut up (see photo), loaded on the sleds, dragged to the village and stored in pits excavated in the permanently frozen ground.

Eskimos have been catching whales for many hundreds of years. One ancient house near Point Barrow, dating from the 10th century and fashioned from whale skulls and ribs, yielded stone lances and other tools used in whaling. But today's Eskimos use weapons introduced by American bow-head whalers between 1880 and 1890. Before that they used walrus-ivory harpoons edged with slate cutting blades and floats of inflated seal skins. The hunt usually ended after a long sea battle involving repeated harpoon thrusts from umiaks, until the whale expired from his wounds and from

the exertion of dragging numerous floats underwater.

The *baleen*, or whalebone, from the bowhead once was used to make corset stays, umbrella ribs and other articles requiring strength and flexibility. These have since been replaced by strong fabric or steel and there is now little commercial market for whalebone. But Eskimos still use the bone for drying racks, baskets and handicrafts. The inch-thick skin, or *muktuk*, which has a nutty flavor, is a favorite Eskimo food. And oil from the blubber is used as cooking fat for caribou, dried fish and other foods.

By agreement between several northern nations, bowheads can now be taken only by Arctic peoples for their own use. With this protection, the population of whales is gradually increasing. The Eskimos of Point Barrow, 350 miles above the Arctic Circle at the northernmost tip of Alaska, usually catch from 10 to 20 bowheads a year. At the end of the whaling season in June, when the sun circles above the horizon for weeks without setting, the boat crews which have caught whales give parties for everybody in the village. Whale meat is the *pièce de résistance* but the guests provide additional food—boiled seal, walrus, goose, sea duck and caribou (Arctic deer) meat.

Picture No. 3: An Eskimo family comes to the festival with its sled drawn by a modern truck, instead of the familiar dog team. Dogs would find it difficult to drag a heavy sled over ground from which the snow has melted in June. Source: Bruce McAllister.





Picture No. 4: A modern Eskimo story-teller acts out an epic of heroic and legendary hunting feats. Source: Bruce McAllister.

At each *Nelekatuk*, or whale festival, there are several kinds of whale meat—the popular *muktuk*, *mikeaq*, which has been fermented in barrels, the flukes and the tongue. After the feast comes the game of tossing friends into the air from a walrus hide. An old legend says this originated as part of the whale hunt, when an ice ridge separated men from the open water. Unable to see the whales, they tossed one of their number into the air—as an aerial observer.

After the tossing come traditional dances, performed to drums and sometimes to story-telling. Many of these ancient tales deal with whale hunting. One, held indoors, features a model of a whale wriggling across the floor. The merriment often goes on all night. Sometimes the whole party starts up again in the morning and may continue for several more days and nights. When several parties follow one another, *Nelekatuks* can become exhausting. But the Eskimos have the whole summer in which to rest up for the next whale hunting season.



Picture No. 5: A pantomime of an old-fashioned whale hunt is watched intently by spectators at the festival. Source: Bruce McAllister.



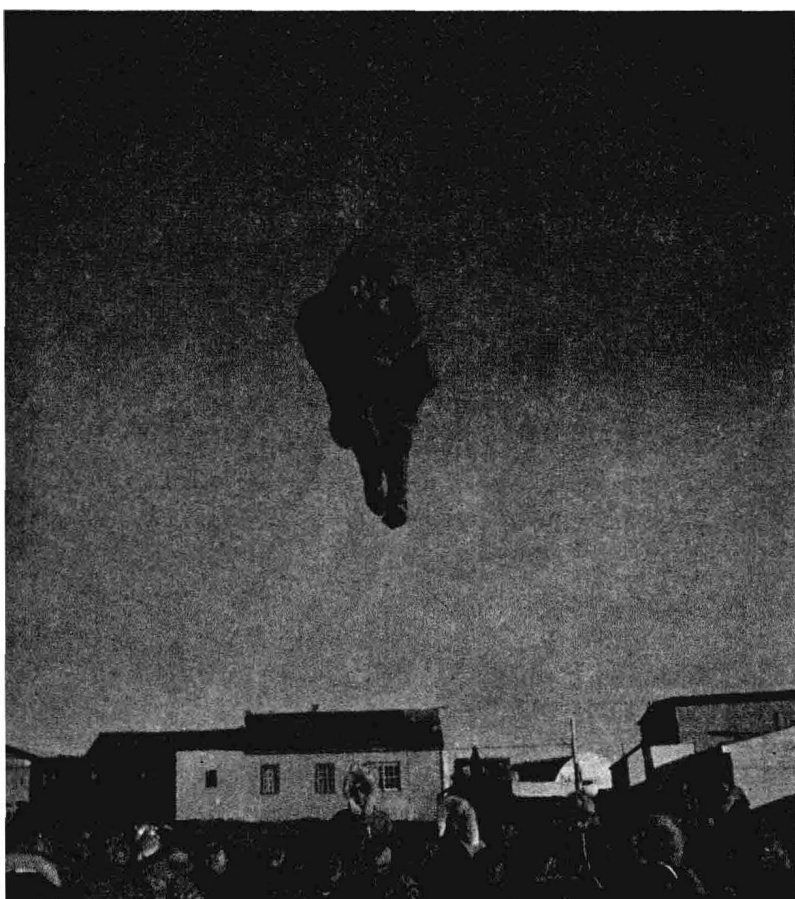
Picture No. 6: Dancers at the festival have an opportunity to show off their distinctive fur costumes. Source: Bruce McAllister.

Picture No. 7: Drummers accompany the dramatic dances; they also chant and sing the stories enacted by the dancers. Drums are the only musical instruments used in traditional Eskimo ceremonies. Source: Bruce McAllister.





Picture No. 8: This Eskimo youngster records the ancient festival with his up-to-date camera. Source : Bruce McAllister.



Picture No. 9: An old legend says that this game of tossing friends into the air from a walrus hide originated as part of the whale hunt. Unable to see the whale because piles of ice obstructed their view, the hunters tossed one of their number into the air—as an aerial observer. The game continues today as part of the festival of the whale.

WORD LIST (Festival of the Whale)

- baleen**, n., whale bone
- block and tackle**, n., a pulley made up of a frame holding one or more wheels on which ropes move, used for lifting and hauling, etc.
- blubber**, n., the fat of whales, seals, and walruses, used as a source of oil
- bulk up**, v., to loom up; appear in a form that seems large and threatening
- camouflage**, v., to hide or disguise
- carcass**, n., body of a dead animal
- caribou**, n., Arctic deer
- cartridge**, n., case made of metal or cardboard, containing powder and a bullet or shot for a firearm
- corset stays**, n., ribs of a tight-fitting under-garment worn to support the back or to shape the back and hips
- enact**, v., to act out
- epic**, n., a long poem written or sung in a dignified manner, telling the story of a hero or heroes
- excavate**, v., to dig out; hollow out
- fashioned**, adj., made from
- ferment**, v., to go through a chemical change because of the action of tiny living plants such as yeasts, bacteria, etc.
- flexibility**, n., having the capability to be easily bent
- float**, n., an inflated bag to sustain an object in water
- floe**, n., a large sheet or mass of drifting ice on the sea
- fluke**, n., either of the two lobes or rounded parts of a whale's tail
- handicraft**, n., manual art
- harpoon**, n., barbed spear with a rope attached, either shot from a gun or thrown, used to catch whales and large fish
- inflate**, v., to blow up; swell out with enclosed air or gas, as a balloon
- intently**, adv., firmly; full of purpose
- mammal**, n., a class of animal whose young feed upon milk from the mother's breast
- muzzle**, n., the front end of a gun barrel
- pantomime**, v., to show meaning without words by actions, gestures, and facial expressions
- parka**, n., short coat with a hood
- piece de resistance**, n., (French word) the principal dish of a meal
- protrude**, v., to project; stick out
- ramp**, n., sloping walk or roadway leading from one level to another
- rig**, v., to set up; fit out; erect
- seal**, n., sea animal with a round head, long body, and flippers instead of

feet. Some kinds are valuable for their fur.
snowmobile, n., vehicle for riding over snow or snowy surfaces
stay, n., thin strip of metal, plastic or similar substance used for stiffening corsets, shirt collars, etc.
tow, v., to pull by means of a rope or chain
walrus, n., large arctic sea animal related to the seal. It is valued for its blubber, its tusks, and its skin, which makes a tough leather.
whale, n., any of several large air-breathing sea animals that live in herds. Some are hunted for their oil and bone
wriggle, v., to move or cause to move by twisting and squirming

I *Key Ideas*: Place a check by ideas which are expressed in this article.

- 1. Eskimos possess a well-developed art and are skilled artisans in bone, ivory, antler, and stone.
- 2. An *umiak* is a large sealskin boat.
- 3. Bowhead whales weigh as much as 30 tons, more than four times the weight of a bull elephant.
- 4. Eskimos at Point Barrow have been catching whales with darting guns for over 1,000 years.
- 5. One of the favorite items in the Eskimo diet is whale skin.
- 6. *Nelekatuk* is a time of rejoicing when several kinds of whale meat are eaten.
- 7. The bowhead whale is in danger of extinction because there is no international treaty concerning how many and by whom it may be caught.
- 8. *Nelekatuk* usually takes place at the end of the whaling season in June.
- 9. Point Barrow is Alaska's largest Eskimo village.

II *Picture Talk*: The following exercises are based on the photographs accompanying the article.

1. How many items can you identify in the pictures? From the list given below, select the names of items found in the photos and then draw circles around them.

parka	<i>umiak</i>	<i>baleen</i>	caribou	<i>mikeaq</i>
bowhead whale	bull elephant	corset stay	seal	fluke
darting gun	harpoon	<i>muktuk</i>	walrus	walrus hide
blubber	quonset hut	drum	igloo	

2. Explain the role played in the life of the Eskimo of each of the items you have identified. How do you think the Eskimo has adapted to his environment?
3. What function do you suppose *Nelekatuk* plays in the life of the Eskimos of Point Barrow?

III *Sentence Completion*: Select the word or phrase that would best complete the sentence, according to the sense of the article.

1. The Eskimos, in brown parkas _____ (1) _____ by white shirts, gaze _____ (2) _____ at a narrow area of blue water.

1a) clad	1b) camouflaged	1c) rigged
2a) surfacing	2b) gradually	2c) intently

2. The whale's _____ (1) _____ is dragged to the village and stored in pits _____ (2) _____ in the permanently frozen ground.

1a) blubber	1b) fluke	1c) carcass
2a) excavated	2b) inflated	2c) enacted

3. The hunters chop a _____ (1) _____ down to the water's edge and rig _____ (2) _____.

1a) floe	1b) ramp	1c) harpoon
2a) block and tackle	2b) piece de resistance	2c) sealskin boats

4. The whale tires from his wounds and from the _____ (1) _____ of dragging numerous _____ (2) _____ underwater.

1a) exertion	1b) pantomime	1c) strength
2a) flukes	2b) floes	2c) floats

5. The *baleen*, or _____ (1) _____, was once used to make _____ (2) _____, umbrella ribs and other articles requiring strength and _____ (3) _____.

1a) whaleskin	1b) whale meat	1c) whalebone
2a) corset stays	2b) handicrafts	2c) cartridges
3a) exertion	3b) resistance	3c) flexibility

IV *Matching Sentence Parts*: Match the sentence parts in column A with the appropriate sentence parts (according to the article) in column B.

- | A | B |
|---|---|
| 1. When several parties follow one another, | 1. the boat crews which have caught whales give parties for everybody in the village. |
| 2. Unable to see the whales, | 2. he floats, belly upward, to the surface of the sea. |
| 3. By agreement between several Northern nations, | 3. <i>Nelekatuks</i> can become exhausting. |
| 4. In a few minutes | 4. they tossed one of their number into the air—as an aerial observer. |
| 5. At the end of the whaling season in June, | 5. bowheads can now be taken only by Arctic peoples for their own use. |

V *Discussion Questions:*

1. What is *baleen*? What is it used for?
2. How do the Eskimos kill a bowhead whale?
3. How long have Eskimos been catching whales?
4. How do the Eskimos preserve the meat of the whale?
5. What is *muktuk*?
6. What happens during a *Nelekatuk*?
7. Name some typical Eskimo food.
8. When does the whaling season end?
9. What is the Eskimos' only musical instrument?
10. Retell the account of how the tossing game originated.

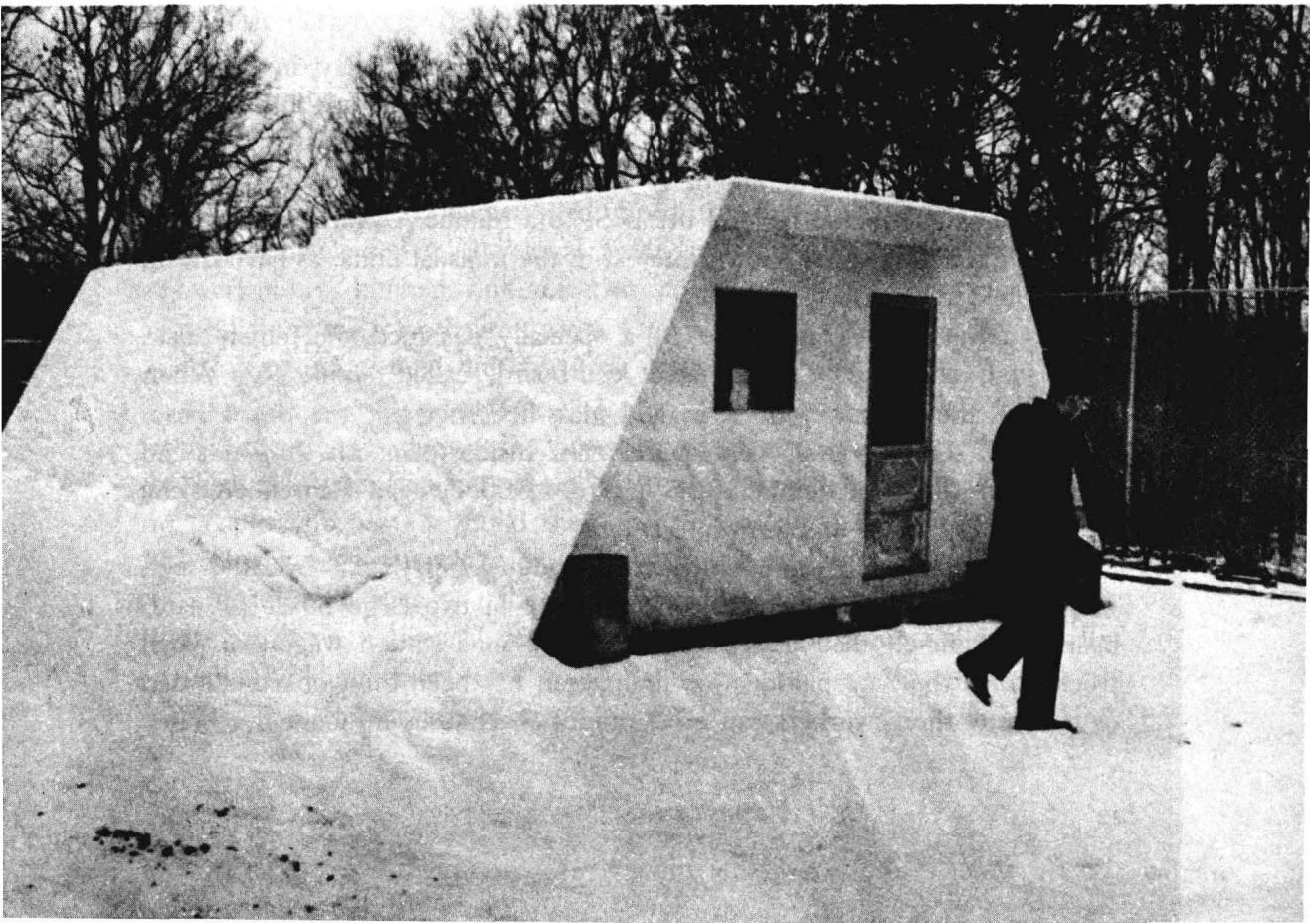
Paper Housing

ALL OVER THE WORLD men are searching for new techniques to provide mass housing, inexpensively and quickly, for millions of low- and middle-income families, and to meet the urgent housing requirements brought on by such natural disasters as flood and earthquakes.

A Hatfield, Pennsylvania firm, the Universal Papertech Corporation, believes it has found one solution to the problem: houses made of paper, although this term is a little misleading when you consider the strength and endurance of the construction material.

The concept of paper houses was developed about 10 years ago by Universal. About six years ago the company supplied a number of the then-current model as emergency housing for thousands of migratory farm workers in California. Because the houses were new on the market, no one really

Picture No. 1: This paper house serves as a combination maintenance office and garage in a park. The winter setting underlines the durability of the house. Source: George Szabo.





Picture No. 2: Nigeria's U.N. Ambassador Edwin Ogbu (left) and Ambassador to Switzerland, Sule Kolo inspect sample paper houses with a Papertech official. Source: Universal Papertech Corp.

knew just how long the unusual structures would last. Today, in California they are still holding up well under the elements and also are accommodating more people than at first. The manufacturer now estimates that the houses will have a useful life of at least 15 to 20 years. Interest in the paper houses has spread beyond the U.S. to a number of foreign countries. Nigeria, for example, has shown interest in the unusual units, as have Libya, Zambia and Ivory Coast.

The newer houses are made of a specially designed, 5/16-inch-thick, corrugated, chemically impregnated kraftboard, called "unikraft." When coated on the outside with resin and glass-fiber netting, the board has a strength of 2,000 pounds per square inch. Inside, paint on the walls and ceiling can withstand temperatures up to 1,900 degrees Fahrenheit. The kraftboard is water- and vermin-resistant.

The basic housing unit, which costs about \$950, is 20 by 20½ feet, weighs about 450 pounds, and comes packed in two large boxes (of cardboard, of course!) that are easily transported in a station wagon or panel truck. Once the base platform or foundation has been built of either wood or concrete, three workers can erect one of the houses in about five hours.



Picture No. 3: The sections of the houses are simply stapled together. Three workers can assemble a house in about 5 hours after the foundation has been built. Source: Universal Papertech Corp.



Picture No. 4: After the house has been erected, a coating of glass fiber and resin is applied to make it weatherproof. Source: Universal Papertech Corp.

The basic design can be extended to any length, or can be customized in a wide variety of ways that will adapt it to some special use, such as a classroom, meeting hall or library.

Construction of the house is simple; except for the end pieces which are tapered to fit the slope of the roof, all sections are identical and interchangeable and are merely stapled and taped together. A factory-made center core is available for an additional \$400, and serves as a room divider with shower, toilet, kitchen sink, electric stove, refrigerator, electrical wiring, closet, and space for a heating unit. One center core can serve several basic units, arranged around the core like spokes of a wheel.

John M. Earrell, president of Universal Papertech, predicts widespread acceptance of the unique structures. In addition to the relatively low cost, he feels that the simplicity of construction makes them especially attractive to people who want to build their own homes without having to take any special training or purchase expensive tools or equipment.

The ultimate success of the paper houses will depend a great deal on breaking down traditional patterns and concepts of home building and restrictive building codes. One thing seems certain, though: the shelter revolution is already under way.

WORD LIST (Paper Housing)

break down, v., to cause to give way by pressure

bring on, v., to cause

concept, n., a mental image or general idea (of something)

core, n., central or essential part

corrugated, adj., bent or folded into wavelike folds

customize, v., to build to order, according to a customer's specifications

durability, n., lasting quality

elements, n., the forces of nature, such as rain, wind and the like

hold up, v., to last

impregnated, adj., filled or saturated with something

interchangeable, adj., capable of being put in place of one another

kraftboard, n., a type of board made from heavy paper

migratory, adj., traveling from one region to another as the crops grow

misleading, adj., that leads astray

panel truck, n., transport vehicle in which the part behind the driver is enclosed by a frame and steel panels

resin, n., a sticky substance found in certain trees, especially firs and pines

restrictive, adj., keeping within certain limits; confining

spoke, n., bar connecting the center part of a wheel to its outer edge

staple, v., to fasten with a piece of metal shaped like a U

technique, n., method used in carrying out a mechanical, artistic, or scientific work; technical skill

urgent, adj., calling for immediate action or attention; pressing

vermin, n., unpleasant or harmful insects or small animals

weatherproof, adj., able to withstand exposure to all kinds of weather

widespread, adj., distributed over a large region

withstand, v., to endure

I True or False: Write T for True in front of each sentence below which is true according to the article. Write F for False in front of the sentence if it is not true.

- 1. The term "paper house" can lead one into an error of judgment in view of the strength and durability of the construction material of these buildings.
- 2. It appears that unless traditional patterns and concepts of building and restrictive building codes are changed, paper housing may not live up to the expectations of its manufacturers.
- 3. Up to now, there has been little acceptance of paper housing.
- 4. One objection to paper houses is the excessive time it takes to erect them.
- 5. The manufacturer believes that his product will withstand the forces of nature such as rain, wind, and the like, for at least 15 to 20 years.
- 6. Universal Papertech Corporation developed the idea of paper houses about ten years ago.