



David Douglas Duncan

THE ISLANDS TIME FORGOT

The life of Caymanian Turtle Fishermen



WHO IS DAVID DOUGLAS DUNCAN?

Before there was a photograph, there was a man and his camera. Born in 1923 in Kansas City, USA, his career as a photojournalist began when he took photographs of a hotel fire in Tucson, Arizona where he was then studying archaeology. His photos included one of a hotel guest who made repeated attempts to go back into the burning building for his suitcase. That photo proved to be newsworthy when the guest turned out to have been the notorious bank robber John Dillinger and the suitcase to have contained the proceeds of a bank robbery in which he had shot a police officer.

Duncan went on to become one of the most gifted photojournalists of the chaotic 20th century, taking part in every major military conflict from World War II to Vietnam. By assigning himself the most forward position at every opportunity, Duncan not only captured the fatigue, the tragedy, and the resilience of the human spirit in the men on the battlefield, but he also managed to miraculously escape personal injury and his own death over and over. In fact, one account of Duncan has him waking up in a bunker one morning, standing up to stretch, and getting hit in the chest with a machine gun bullet. The only reason he lived was that the bullet was at the end of its range and it simply ran into him and fell to the ground without so much as tearing his Army-issue camera vest.

In the Forties and Fifties, he worked for *Life* magazine, travelling the world and capturing stunning accounts of many major historical events. He has produced 27 books, including the 1966 autobiography *Yankee Nomad*. Duncan even spent 17 years photographing Pablo Picasso and his works in Cannes, France. He mischievously reports that he helped to create “the only Duncan-Picasso in existence” by taking one of Picasso’s charcoal drawings and, in attempting to dust it off, accidentally smudged the entire artwork! Despite Duncan’s unique addition, the Picasso drawing still hangs to this day - smudges and all - in the Picasso Museum in Barcelona.



Even so, with such a variety of worldwide subjects at the end of his lens, Duncan is best known in Cayman for his time spent with Captain Allie Ebanks in and around the Cayman Islands in 1939, whereupon he coined the well known phrase “The Islands Time Forgot.” He described his time in the Cayman Islands as the most carefree time of his life. While hunting giant sea turtles with Cayman Islanders, Duncan wrote home to his parents stating, “This is the life I’ve dreamed of. What more could I ever desire!” His photographs from this time are vivid accounts of the ancient seafaring profession that our Caymanian ancestors’ embodied.

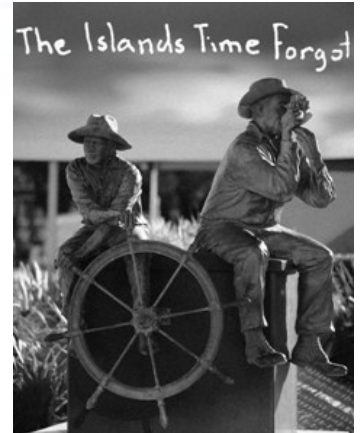
THE ISLANDS TIME FORGOT

DAVID DOUGLAS DUNCAN ACTIVITY SHEET



As you walk around and look at the photographs, try answering these questions:

1. How can we tell that these people lived in the past?
2. There are clues in the picture that tell us about the wealth of the person. What are the clues?
3. Can we learn anything about the personality, social standing, relationships, profession, age or gender of the person?
4. What are the people doing? Do people still do these things today?
5. Which person from the past is most like you or someone in your family? How are they similar and different?



Write the Title of the Portrait that shows:



• How many boats can you find: _____



• What is the Captain's name? _____



• The person who you would like to have a conversation with: _____



• Find the man playing a musical instrument _____



• Which is your favourite photo and why? _____

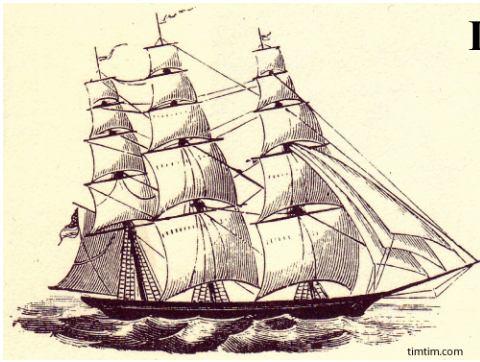


• The one you like the least, why?: _____



• Can you find the photographer? _____

• What type of film did he use? _____



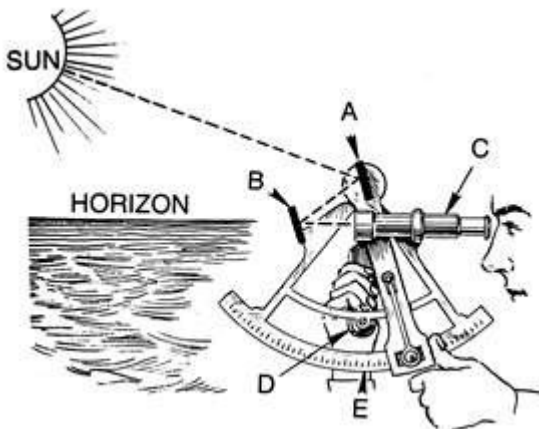
I SAW A SHIP COME SAILING IN ART PROJECT

Materials: pencil, newspaper, light-coloured chalk, crayons, construction paper, white drawing paper, ballpoint pen, masking tape



Directions:

1. To prepare your construction paper for transfer, begin by placing newspaper under the construction paper. Completely cover the construction paper with **light-coloured chalk** (no paper should show through). Then, using light-coloured crayons (pink, yellow, white, peach, pale blue), firmly colour in one direction all over the construction paper. Finally, turn the paper, colouring in the other direction with dark crayons (dark purple, dark green, dark blue, black, red) completely covering the light coloured crayons.
2. On a piece of white drawing paper, do a completely detailed pencil drawing of one or more boats either in a harbour or near a beach. Think about details you find near the water, such as docks, wooden posts, people fishing, beaches, buoys, waves, rocks.
3. Tape the white drawing paper (or alternatively, you can tape an already drawn picture like the one provided on the next page) in two places along the top of the crayoned paper, with the pencil-side up (or drawing face up). Retrace the picture you have drawn or are copying, pressing **VERY** hard. This will transfer the colour from the underneath paper, and etch a drawing onto the dark paper.
4. If you peek from time to time, you will see that drawing firmly is important and that putting in enough detail is important before the two pictures are untapped. If the picture looks too plain, you can draw a fancy "frame" around the outside. When you have finished, display the two pictures side by side.



Draw an Artwork from a Description

Have one student be the describer of an object (like the sextant on the left) or a work of art (like a portrait). This student is the only one who will actually see what the piece looks like. The other students must draw a picture based on a verbal description. Ten questions can be asked of the describer that must be answered "yes" or "no."



PRACTICE DRAWING = Parts of the face

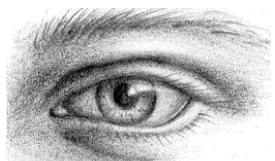


THE EYE

1. Note the difference in shape between the upper and lower eyelids, and how the upper eyelid covers the top of the iris. Draw an initial line drawing of the shape of the eye.

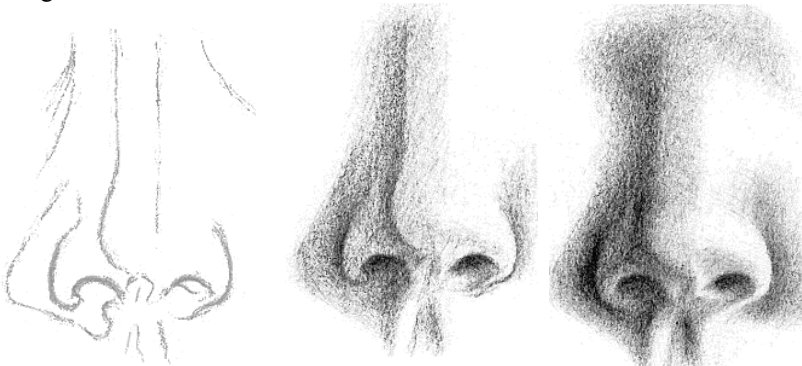


2. When drawing the glassy surface of the eyeball, always leave an area of unshaded paper (pure white) to show an area of bright reflected light. The pupil is always the darkest part of the eyeball. The iris (colourful part of the eye) has flecks of colour which radiate to the centre of the pupil. The outside edge of the iris is usually the darkest. Add shading where the eyelids meet the eye. Draw one hair of the eyebrow at a time - noticing how the direction of the hair changes.



3. Our eyeballs are sunk deep within our eye sockets. You can show this by shading around the top and bottom eyelids. Add more light strokes to the eyebrow and eyelash areas, paying attention to the direction of their growth.

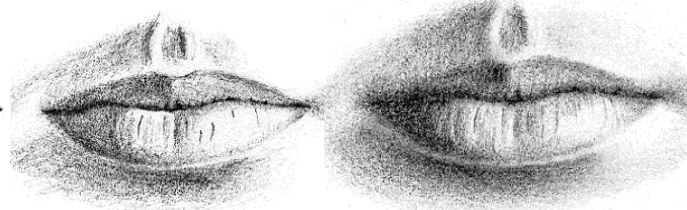
Practice an eye here:



Practice a nose here:

THE NOSE

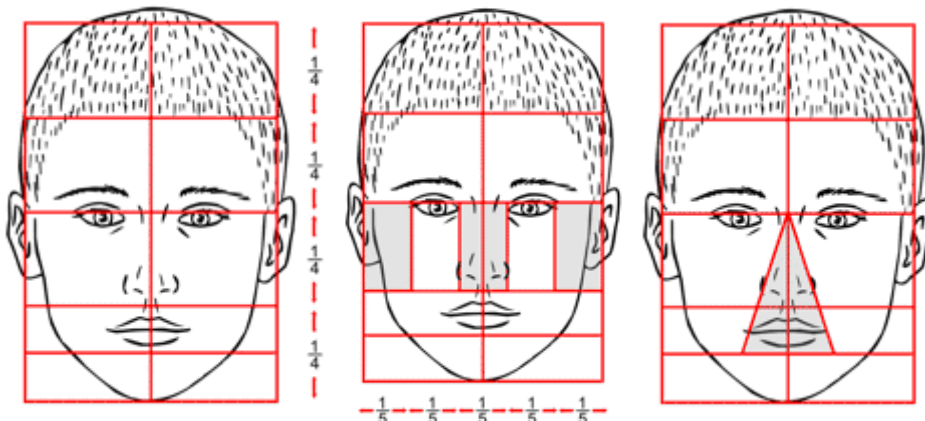
1. Start by drawing the inside and outside edges of the nostrils. Then try to lightly outline the main areas of shadow created around the nose.
2. Shade areas with either light, medium or dark shading.
3. Soften the lines that join each area with graduated shading.



Practice a mouth here:

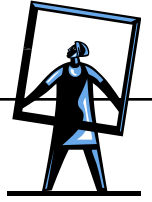
THE MOUTH

1. Draw the shape of the line that is formed where the lips meet. The top lip has its characteristic bow shape but varies greatly from person to person. The bottom lip is usually larger and more creased with up and down lines.
2. The top lip is normally slightly shaded and the bottom lip is distinguished by the shadow underneath the lip.
3. Blend the edges of the lips into the face. The detail at each corner of the mouth should blend into in a small area of shading.



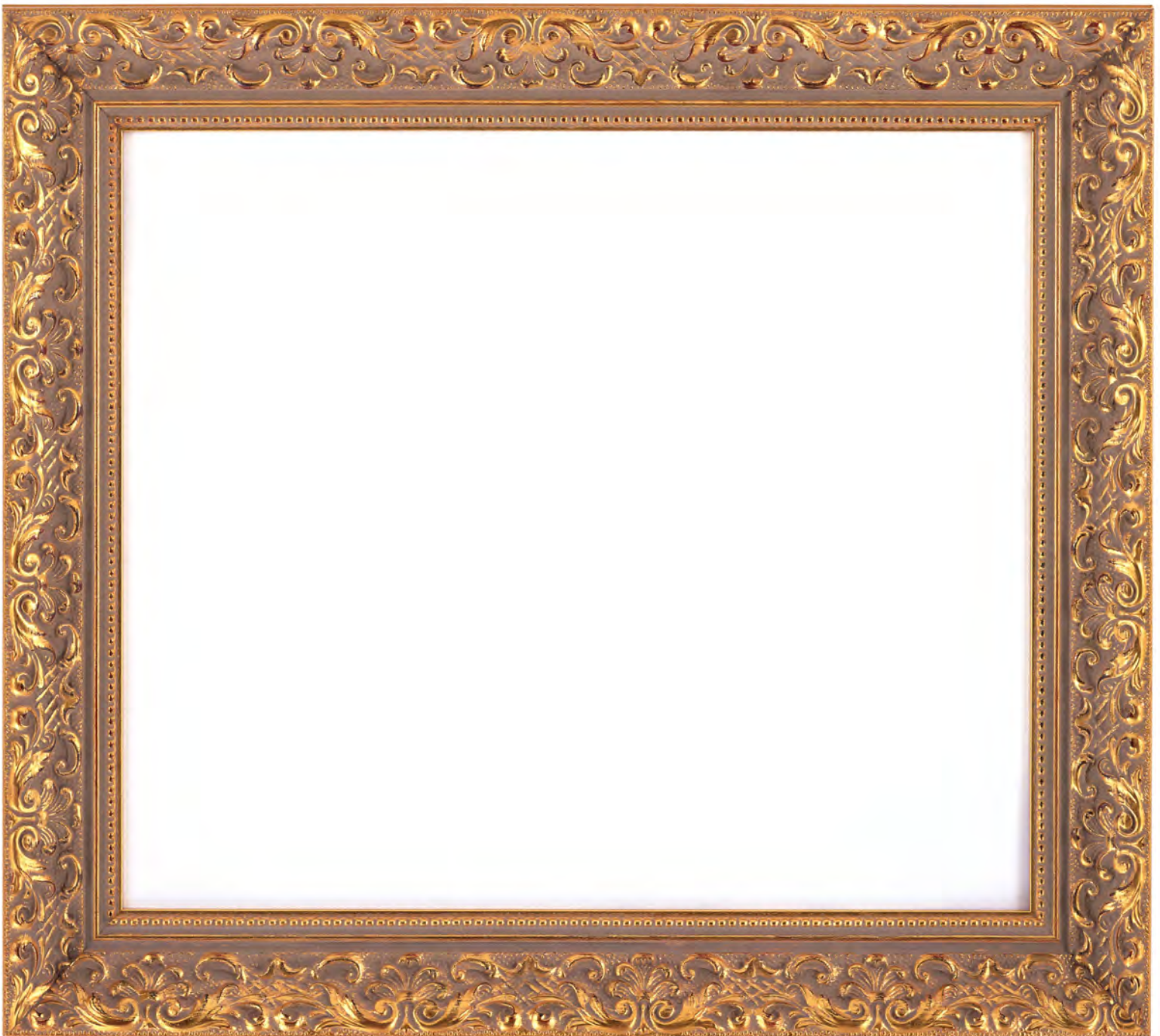
Note how the parts of the face are proportioned. Now you're ready to put them all together! For a challenge, try drawing these parts expressing different emotions!

CREATE A PORTRAIT



Consider these questions:

- Who will be in it?
- How much of the person will be in your portrait? This is called the **crop**. Do you want all of them? Just the head and shoulders? Or something in between?
- Will they be still or doing something? The **pose** describes how someone stands or sits in a portrait. The more stiff and upright their pose, the more formal the portrait appears. If their pose is relaxed, the portrait will seem less formal and more natural.
- What emotions will their face express? **Facial expression** is a very important part of a portrait. It conveys emotion to the viewer.
- What clothes will they wear? The clothes will provide very important clues about the person!
- Where will they be? The **background** is the area behind the person you are focusing on.
- Will there be any other clues about them in the picture? Certain objects in the portrait can say a lot about the person's life and character.



ONE DAY IN 1939

Ever wonder what a day in the life of a Caymanian Turtle Fishermen in 1939 might be like? David Douglas Duncan gives a good idea of what it might have been like in this letter he wrote¹ while travelling in the Caribbean with his Caymanian friend and Captain, Allie Ebanks:

Dear Folks:

Pardon the worse-than-usual scrawl but there are a couple of reasons for it. First, I'm sitting on the afterdeck dodging the mainsail boom, hoping I don't get knocked overboard. We're anchored between two little islands while the crew gathers coconuts ashore.

I spent the day on a little island catching huge iguanas (two are in a sack under my bunk right now) which really look prehistoric. Leathery frills run down their spines. They have beaded old hides of dusty gray or green or even faded rose, piercing eyes, and claws as sharp and long as eagles' talons. They're about six feet from snout to tail - creatures surviving from the beginning of time.

As the islands are made of coral which has been eroded by rain and surf into razor-edged fissures, I managed to fall down a cliff about fifty feet high. Didn't hurt my camera but tore up my right arm between elbow and wrist. Captain Ebanks wasn't prepared for that kind of repair job so I had the first mate file the barb off a small fish hook and tighten the eyelet. Then I sewed everything together again with sail thread that had been stuck in boiling water. Being right handed made it tough because everything seemed backwards, but it worked okay. Captain Ebanks poured iodine on it so it's well cared for. Should be fine by the time I get home. But I must look like an old Chinese patched shirt.

The lookouts have been out seeking shoals - some fifty feet down - to which the great green turtles will return to at dusk. Deckmen are tossing weighted floats to mark every lair. With sunset, Captain Ebanks and his crew will sail dugouts back into those buoy-flecked water, spreading meshes above rocks where their quarry will awaken during the night to rise and breathe and - if the trap was perfect - be snared. Away from the schooner at dawn - racing sharks to the catch - each Cayman Islander will clear his net gratefully for even an average two-hundred pound turtle. For theirs is an ancient profession, where a boy earned manhood upon an often empty sea.

After taking pictures on the little islands this morning, we soon were cutting coconuts for their milk. Got dirty chasing another iguana so went right into the surf, clothes and all. This is the life I've dreamed of. My shipmates - all cousins - are quiet, proud, hard men. What more could I ever desire!

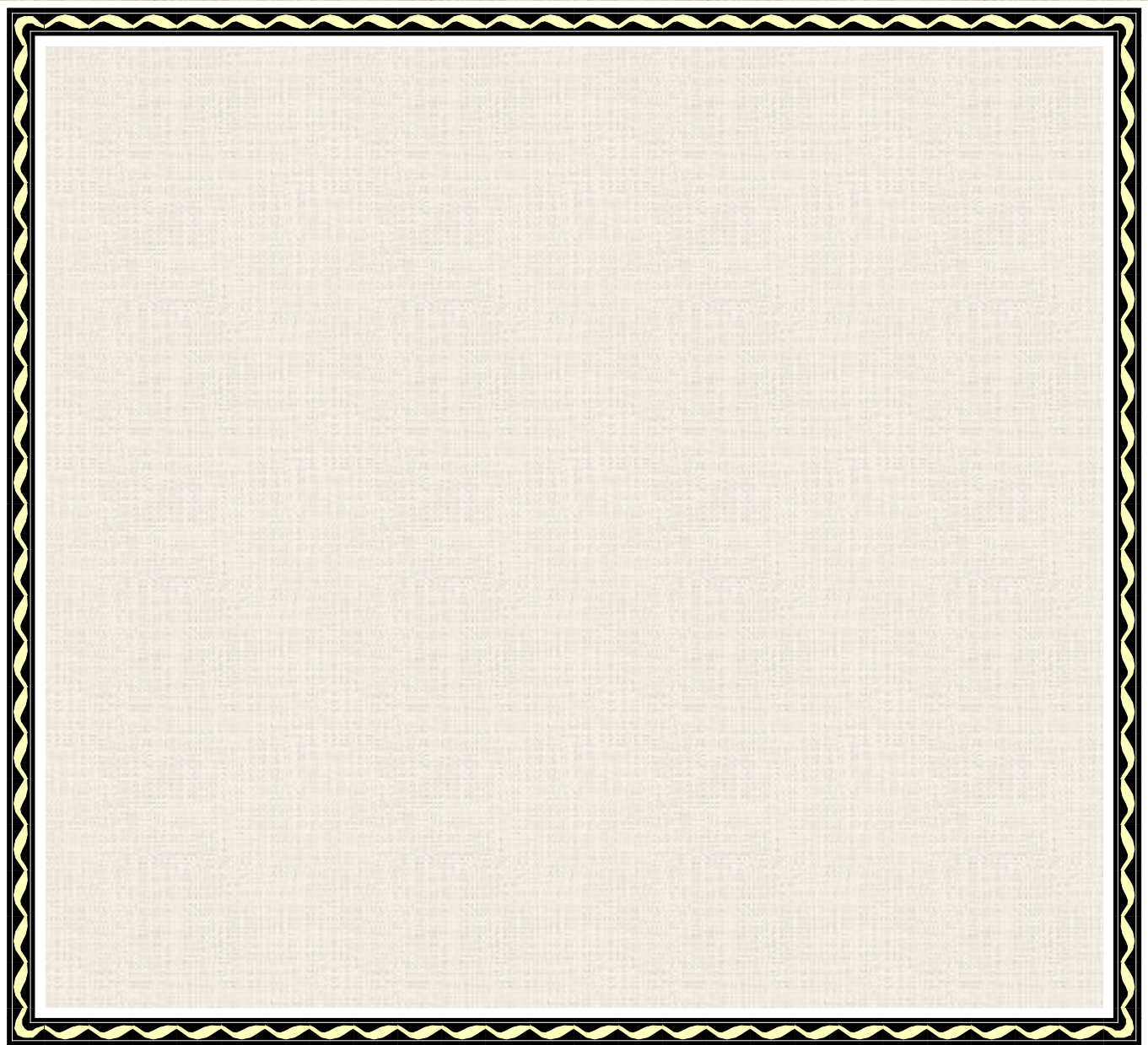
DDD

¹ David Douglas Duncan. *Yankee Nomad: A Photographic Odyssey* (1966)

Imagine A Day of Your Life in 1939...

Now your turn! Imagine the year is 1939. Write a letter to a friend telling them the adventures of your day in the Cayman Islands. Remember that the clothing, hygiene, food, work, homes, and schools would all be very different than today:

- Students' classes were often taken outside under the trees on the school grounds due to lack of accommodation
- Sun-dials in each district were accepted as the Official time-keepers and school clocks were set from these
- no fridges, freezers, televisions – not much in the way of electric living
- the **caboose** and firewood together were primary source of cooking
- a major task was keeping the kitchen supplied with firewood daily
- Clothing was limited except when home-sewn
- **wattle-and-daub** houses were common - with the wooden door “locked” with bits of line tied to a nail on either end – back then it was mostly important to guard against the weather rather than thieves
- Some housewives cleaned the floor with a piece of fish hide while on hands and knees (imagine the smell!)
- Beds and pillows were sacks sewn from sail cloth called ‘ducking’ then stuffed with dry **plantain trash**
- The bathroom was an outdoor **privy** in the back yard - with no flushing!
- One main meal of the day was served usually in the afternoon and consisted of something like a **Cayman Rundown**

A large rectangular area with a decorative border, intended for writing a letter. The border consists of a black outer line and a yellow inner line with a scalloped or wavy pattern. The interior of the rectangle is plain white, providing a space for the student to write their letter.

VOCABULARY

Afterdeck

-the part of the main open deck of a boat that extends from the bridge or midships to the stern, also known as the rear deck.

Caboose

-is a traditional cooking stove originating from 1) a ship's galley where the cooking is done, 2) various cast-iron cooking ranges used in galleys during the early 19th century, 3) an outdoor oven or fireplace. One of the essential elements of a caboose is a box with sand so you can have a wood fire for cooking.

Cayman Rundown

-a stew usually made from dry coconuts, local ground provisions (such as cassava, yam, sweet potato and changed plantains), fish (salted or fresh) or salt beef, onion, celery and green peppers, and a few tablespoons of flour)

Deck men

-men who work on the surface of a ship

Dugout

-a canoe or boat hollowed out from a log or tree trunk

Fish hook barb

-a sharp pointed tip facing away from the head of a fishhook, designed to make it difficult to remove

Fish hook eyelet

-a small hole at the top of the hook for a fishing line to be passed through

Kraals/crawls

-an enclosure, usually of upright sticks, used to keep live turtle until a sufficient number has been obtained to ship

Mainsail Boom

-A mainsail is the most important sail raised from the main (or only) mast of a sailing vessel. The boom is the beam to which the bottom edge of the mainsail is attached in order to hold the sail at an advantageous angle to the wind.

Photography

The art of using a camera and film to capture images; can be expressive or realistic; useful for portraits, landscapes, and all other forms of picture taking.

Photojournalist

-A photojournalist uses the art of photography to capture a story, tell a story, or impart history as seen through a camera's lens and developed on photographic paper. Uses mainly pictures to report a story. Additional written text may accompany the photos.

Vocab continued on next page...

VOCABULARY

Portrait (or Portraiture)

-is a representation or description of a person, especially of the face, made from life, by drawing, painting, photography, engraving, etc.; a likeness. A portrait can represent the subject's social position or "inner life" such as their personality, character or virtues, as well as their physical features. A portrait can be effected by historical or social conventions of their time, and it can also explore the uniqueness of an individual, setting the person apart from his or her context. It is a powerful form of representation.

Plantain trash

-also know as plant trash; it is the dried parts of a plantain tree used for stuffing

Privy

-an outdoor toilet consisting of a small building that encloses a seat with a hole in it built over a pit

Quarry

-something that is chased or hunted by another

Schooner

-a fast sailing ship with at least two masts and with sails set lengthwise fore-and-aft

Seafaring

-means to regularly travel by sea or work at sea. It refers to the work and way of the life of a sailor.

Sextant

-a navigational instrument incorporating a telescope and an angular scale that is used to work out latitude and longitude. An astronomical object is viewed through the telescope and its angular distance above the horizon is read off the scale. The data is then used to calculate the viewer's position.

Shoal

-can mean an area of shallow water in a larger body of water, or an underwater sandbank or sandbar that is visible at low water.

Stern

-the rear part of a ship or boat

Wattle and Daub

-building made with stakes or poles interwoven with branches and twigs, used for walls, fences, and roofs, then covered with mud or clay, often containing lime, dung, or straw

Interdisciplinary Connections

Be A Painting / Portrait - Dramatic Connections

Have students “become” a painting, artist, or person in a portrait. Have pictures and books available that would allow students to get ideas for how they could dress. Bring in a few large frames and plan to take photographs of your student as they “frame” themselves dressed as a painting, artist, or portrait subject. This could be combined with a writing and research exercise about the subject’s life.

Give it a Life - Language Arts Connections

Students can make up an adventure story or biography about their favourite portrait. They can either find out their real name (if available) and interview living family members about their lives, or make up where they lived, what work was like for them, adventures they went on, what their favourite hobbies were, and other aspects of their lifestyle. Have the students compare “Then to Now” by considering the differences in jobs, entertainment, environment, homes, transportation, food, family life, etc.

The Islands Time Forgot The Life of Caymanian Turtle Fisherman By David Douglas Duncan

