

Ag in the Classroom

Alabama Ag in the Classroom



Pioneer Unit

The Pioneers

Background

Hungry for land of their own and reaching for the promise of a better life, thousands of frontier Americans journeyed westward. Their bravery, resolutions, and daring spirit would forever distinguish America as a nation of courageous trailblazers. By the early 1800's, pioneer families were crossing the Mississippi River and the Great Plains to claim fertile land for farming. In 1843, after the first train reached Oregon, thousands more settlers set their sites west of the Rock Mountains.

Pioneer Farming

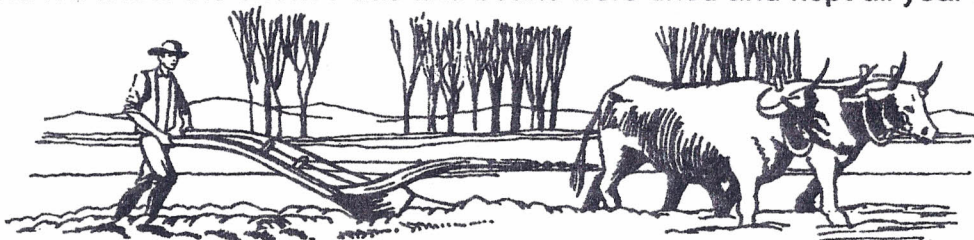
Planting the Crops

Once the early pioneer had his land cleared of trees, stumps and large boulders, the hard-packed ground had to be prepared for planting. In the early days, the pioneer would break up the land by using a "*hoe*" or a "*mattock*". He would hack at the hard ground until he broke up the lumps of earth. If the farmer had *oxen* or *horses* he could use a *plough* or *harrow* to break up the soil. The plough had a sharp blade which cut into the earth and turned it over. It was dragged along the ground by oxen or horses with the farmer walking behind to guide the plough. The harrow, a heavy wooden frame with sharp teeth, was drawn across the ground to break up the large clumps of earth. Sometimes the farmer would attach a large log behind the oxen. They would pull the log across the field to make it more even.

The next job was *sowing* the seeds in the field. Wheat, oats, barley and rye seeds were scattered by hand as the farmer traveled up and down the field. The seed was carried in a bag slung over the farmer's shoulder. The farmer would then attach a large branch to the oxen's yoke. The oxen dragged the branch over the sown ground spreading the soil over the seeds.

The farmer also planted corn. It was planted in "*hills*". One person hoed up a hill of earth while another person followed along and dropped six seeds into each hill and then covered the seeds with his foot. Sometimes a fish was buried under each hill so the corn would have fertilizer. Later in the season, squash, pumpkin or bean seeds were planted around each corn plant.

Every pioneer farm had a vegetable garden. Turnips, carrots, onions, cabbages, peas and beans were the vegetables that the pioneer grew most often. These vegetables were easy to grow and kept well during the winter. Turnips, carrots and onions were stored in a root cellar. Cabbages were pulled up and left under the snow. Peas and beans were dried and kept all year round.



Pioneer Farming

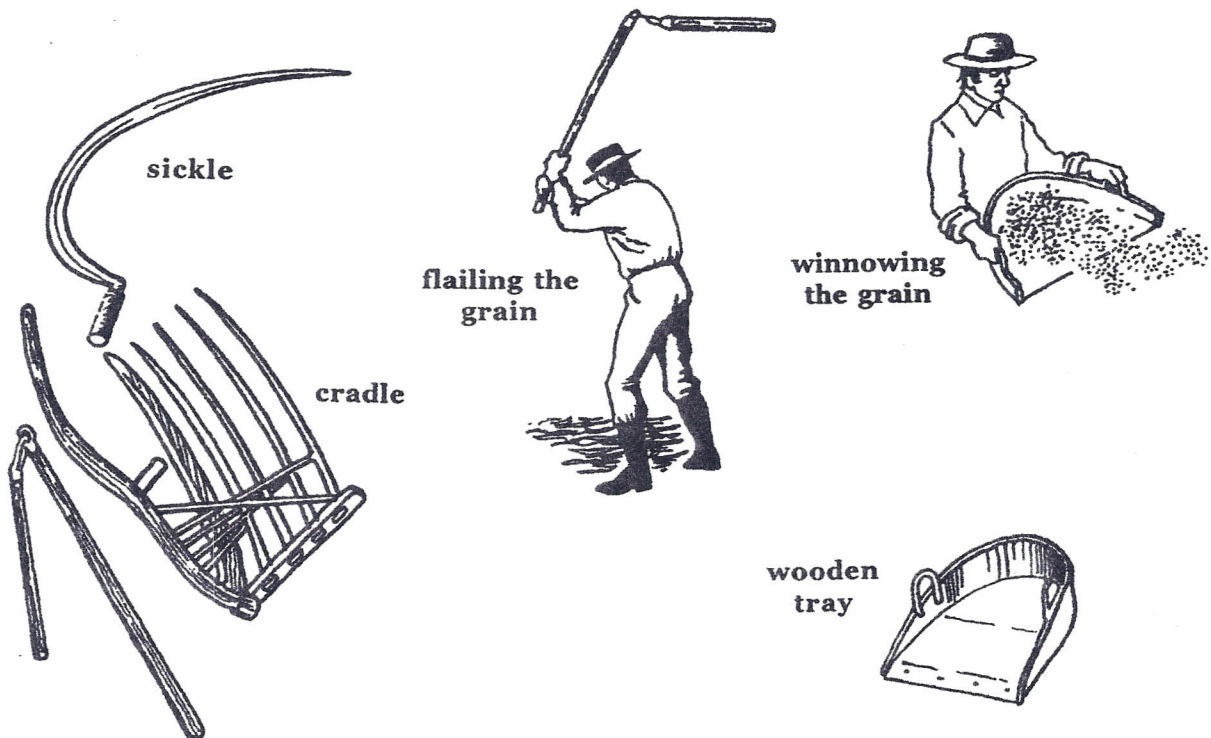
Harvesting the Crops

In late August, the wheat would be ripe and ready to harvest. First, the grain had to be cut. It was cut with a "scythe" or a "sickle", which were tools with sharp, curved knives. The "scythe" was the most useful as it had a longer blade and a longer handle. More grain could be cut with a single stroke. Eventually the "cradle" replaced both the sickle and the scythe as it kept the stalks of grain together in a bundle that could be gathered up easily.

One person would cut the grain and one person would follow to gather and bind the grain and leave it standing in "stooks". The stooks were dragged to the barn by oxen before the grain was damaged by rain or frost.

In the barn, the grain had to be "threshed". This meant the small grains had to be shaken out of their hulls and separated from the straw. Early pioneers used a tool called a "flail" which was two sticks attached together loosely. One stick was shorter than the other. The grain was spread on the barn floor and then the "flailer" (the person using the flail) would hit the grain with his flail and knock the grains loose. Sometimes horses or oxen were used to thresh the grain. They would walk around and around on the grain spread over the barn floor.

After the grain was threshed, the straw was raked away and the grain was then gathered up. Next the grain had to be separated from the "chaff", the little pieces of seed head that were not any good to the farmer. The chaff was removed by a process called "winnowing". The grain and chaff were put into a big wooden tray. The tray was gently shaken in the wind. The heavier grain fell back into the tray while the chaff would be blown away.



Pioneer Farming

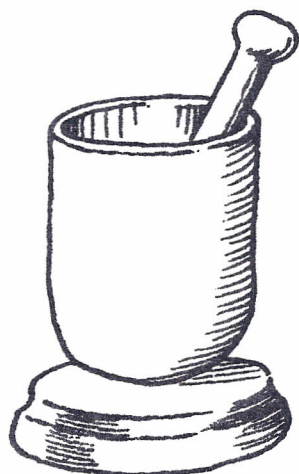
Milling the Crop

Not all pioneers lived in an area which had a gristmill nearby. They had to grind their own grains into flour by hand. One method was to use a "hominy block" (a hollowed out stump) and a wooden "pestle". The grain was put into a hominy block and the wooden pestle was used to pound the grain. This method worked fairly well with corn or wild rice. Some pioneers used a hand mill called a "quern". It was made from two round flat stones. One person turned the top stone with a wooden handle while a second person poured grain into the central hole. The flour was caught in a basket underneath. These two methods often produced very coarse flour but often the pioneer had no other choices.

As settlements gradually grew larger, "gristmills" were built. Grain that was good enough to be ground into flour was called "grist". Wheat kernels were extremely hard and required grinding with a great deal of pressure. Gristmills had large, heavy, flat grinding stones.

In order to turn these great "millstones", wind power and water power were harnessed. Most North American gristmills were operated by water power. Water was diverted from a river into a "millpond" and held there by a dam. When the grain was to be ground, the "miller" opened the gates in the dam. This allowed water to flow past a "waterwheel", turning it. The wheel turned a shaft that rotated the millstones. While the millstones were turning, the miller poured wheat kernels into a hole in the center of the stones. The meal that came out of the bottom was sifted to separate the coarse, brown, hard, shells of the kernels from the fine, white flour. The coarse, brown particles were called "shorts". Today we call it "bran".

The farmer usually paid the miller for his services by giving him ten per cent of his grain. The miller used the flour for his own family needs or sold it for cash in the closest town.



Hominy block
and pestle



quern



gristmill

Pioneer Farming

Farm Animals

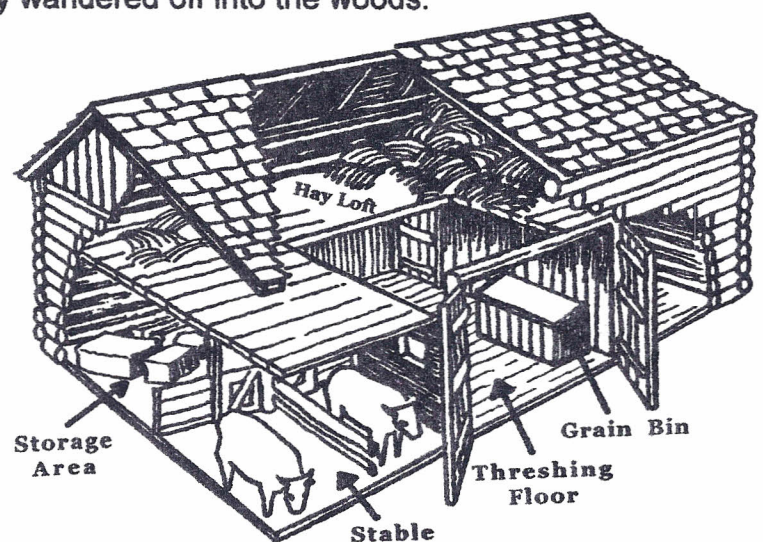
Cattle and *sheep* were also brought to North America on the same ships that brought the early pioneers. There were many reasons why animals were important to the pioneers. Animals such as *oxen* and *horses* were used to pull ploughs, sleighs, wagons and carriages. *Dogs* were used to pull small sleds full of wood.

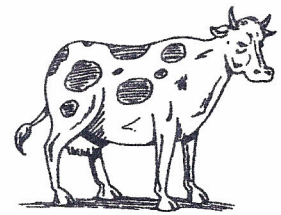
Animals provided food for the pioneers. Every part of a *pig* was turned into something useful. Pigs were very popular. Salt pork was one of the main foods of nearly every settlement and pioneer home. Lard, the soft fat from pigs, was used for candles and soap making. Cattle were kept to supply the pioneer farmer with milk for drinking and to make butter and cheese. Sheep were needed for their meat but more for their wool. It was spun into yarn and then woven to make material for pioneer clothing.

The pioneer farmers also kept *hens*, *ducks*, *turkeys* and *geese*. These birds supplied them with eggs and meat. *Geese* were useful barnyard creatures. Their large feather quills were made into pens used as writing tools called quill pens. Goose feathers were used to make pillows and warm mattresses. Many pioneers sold their geese and pigs at the market, but some were also kept for their own food. Eggs were also sold at the general store.

Every farm needed a *watchdog* for protection and to warn of strangers. It was used to chase foxes and other barnyard predators away. Pioneers always wanted a *cat* to catch mice and rats so they wouldn't get into their grain and eat it.

The animals were very useful but they also meant problems. The pioneer farmer had to feed them, especially in the winter when cattle, sheep and horses couldn't graze in the fields. Hay had to be grown, cut and stored in the barns which were often too small. The barns were often too cold and drafty in the winter and many animals would die. The pioneer farmer had to erect fences to keep his animals from wandering off into the woods. Wild animals such as wolves often killed farm animals in the field or if they wandered off into the woods.





Pioneer Farm Animals Activity

Farm animals were kept and uses in different ways. On the chart below list the ways the animals were useful creatures.

pigs 	cattle
hens, ducks, turkeys 	geese
horses, oxen 	dogs
cat 	sheep

Little House on the Prairie

Laura Ingalls Wilder

Children of all ages love Laura Ingalls Wilder's "Little House" books. Read the second book in the series, *Little House on the Prairie*. Have students imagine what it would have been like to travel a long distance by covered wagon as Laura and her family did. Discuss how differently we travel now (include differences in time, comfort, places to stop for food and lodging, etc.). Then let students make covered wagons.

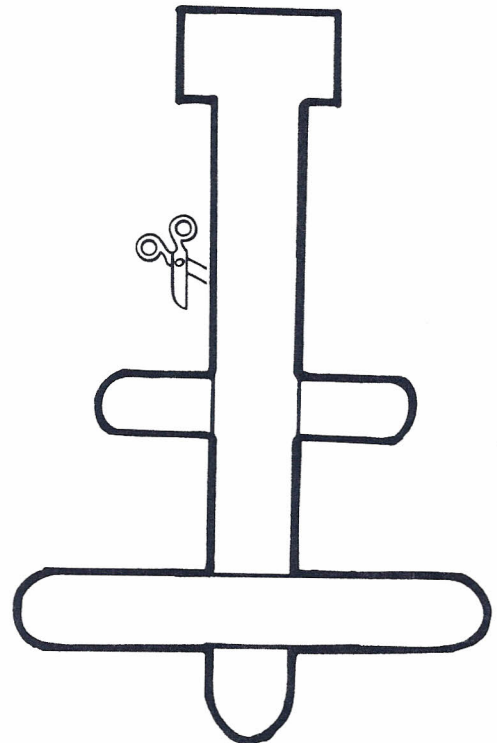
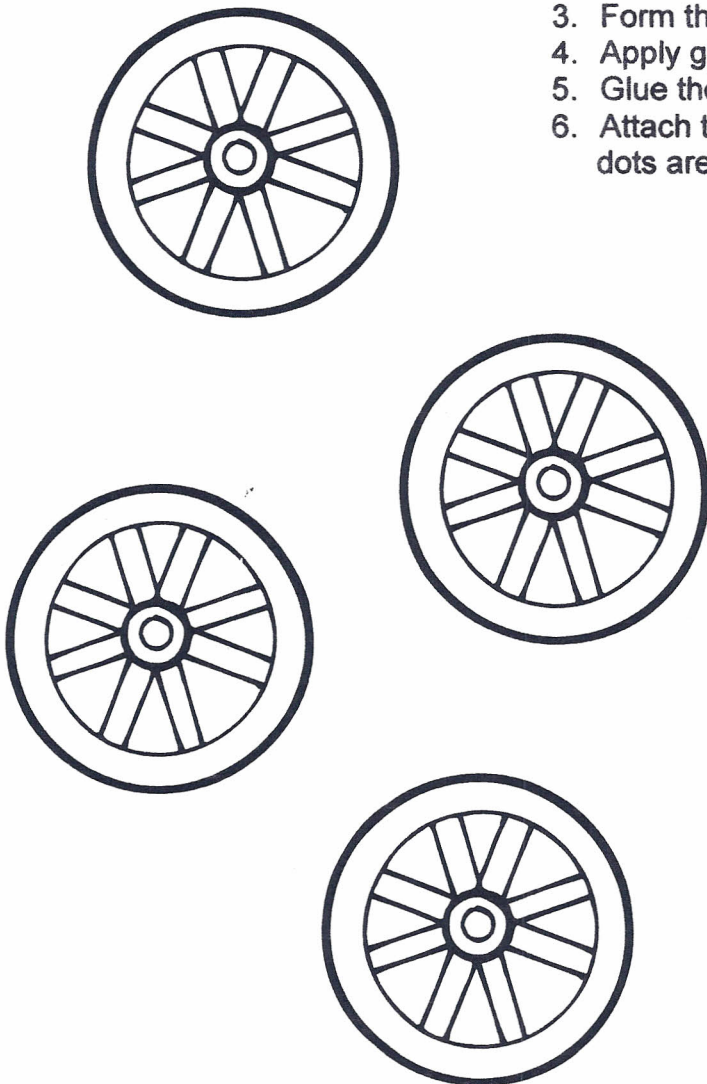
Materials Needed

patterns copied on cardstock
crayons
scissors
four small brad fasteners
glue

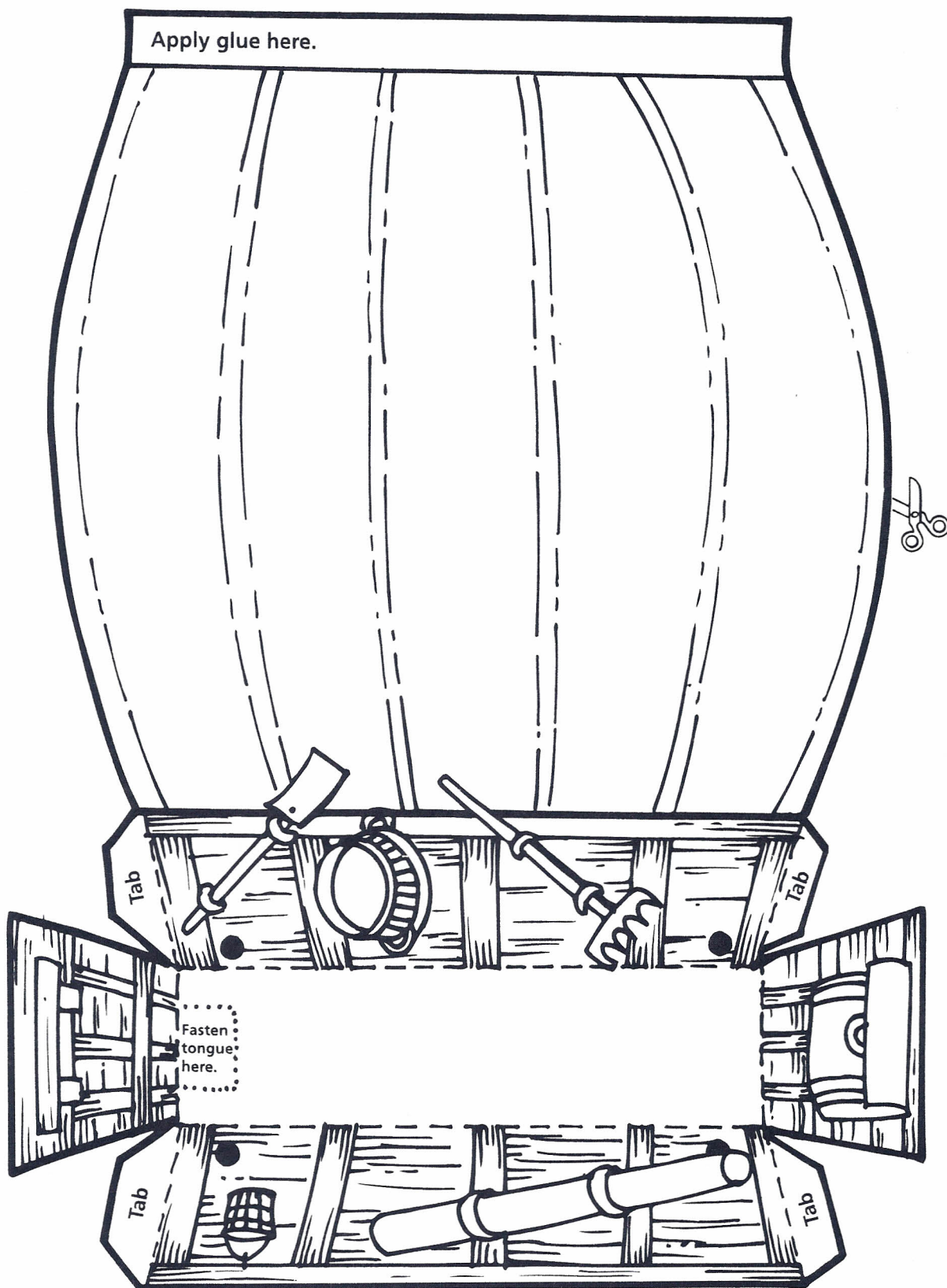


Directions

1. Color the patterns and cut them out.
2. Fold the wagon pattern on the broken lines.
3. Form the wagon in a box shape.
4. Apply glue to the tabs and fasten the wagon together.
5. Glue the tongue to the front of the wagon.
6. Attach the wheels to the wagon where the black dots are, using brad fasteners.



Covered Wagon Pattern



Pioneer Day Activities

Experiencing a variety of pioneer activities is a fun way for students to learn about pioneer life on the trail. Invite students to wear pioneer-type clothing to school on a designated day. Explain that pioneers wore plain and durable clothes. Clothing that could get plenty dirty and last for months. Boys usually wore shirts and pants, and girls wore skirts or dresses. Everyone wore strong and sturdy shoes for walking. To protect their eyes from the sun, boys wore wide-brimmed hats and girls wore bonnets. Throughout the day, engage students in a variety of pioneer-related activities.

Chores

Everyone worked hard during the long days of traveling west, even the children. Offer ways your students can experience a few chores which pioneer children were responsible:

Milking a cow: Fill a clear food handler's glove with water and punch holes in the fingers and let the children "milk" in a bucket

Fetching water: Have small groups transport partially filled buckets of water from "the river" to the "covered wagon"

Making Johnnycakes: make cornbread johnnycakes (Ag in a Bag)

Collecting firewood: Ask students to collect trash from the playground

Making Butter: pour whipping cream in a jar with lid, shake, shake, shake, pour the liquid off and have butter with the johnnycakes

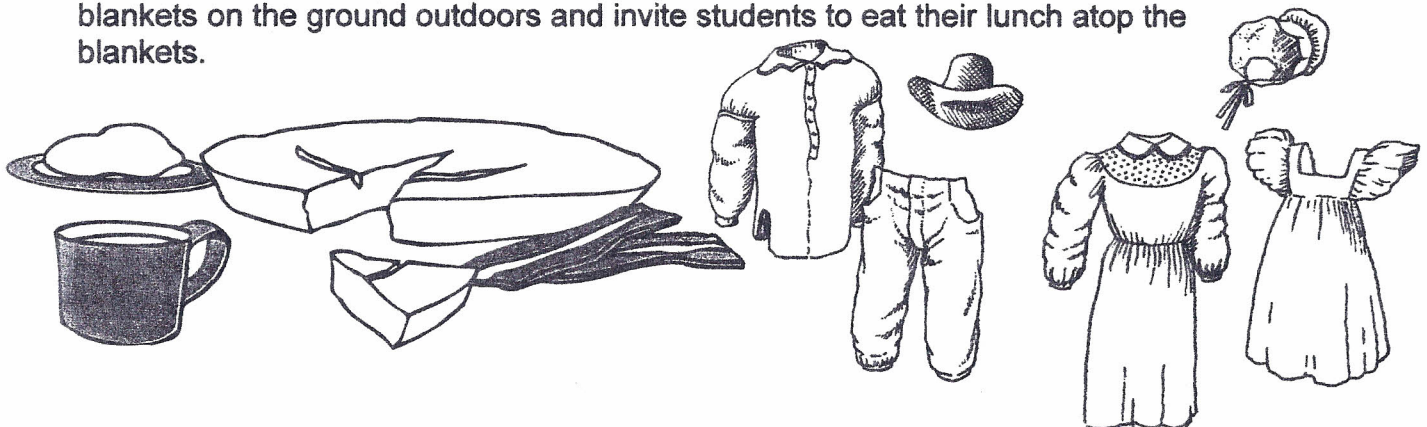
Pioneer Dolls: have students make a pioneer doll

Covered Wagons: let students make a covered wagon and discuss what the families would have carried in their wagons



Lunch on the Trail

After five hours on the trail, most wagon trains stopped for about an hour. The noon meal eaten by most families were leftovers from breakfast there was no time for cooking. For your pioneer students, have each child a bucket for their lunch. Attach a rope handle and have a cloth to cover their lunch. This meal should consist of things that a pioneer child would have had; biscuit and ham, beef jerky, dried fruit, baked beans and trail mix. This meal gives students an idea of the kinds of foods eaten by pioneers. For a more authentic setting, spread blankets on the ground outdoors and invite students to eat their lunch atop the blankets.



Pioneer Doll

Materials:

- 1 – 14"x8" muslin
- 1 – scrap for apron
- 1 – scrap for dress
- 1 – scrap for bonnet



Directions:

1. Measure and rip muslin.
2. Mark 16 ½ inch increments along the short length of the muslin.
3. Rip the 16 ½ inch strips.
4. Fold 15 of the strips in half, using one strip to tie off the doll's head. The tie also serves as arms.
5. Cut a ½ inch hole in the center of the dress and apron and place over the head of the doll.
6. Tie the arms on top of both layers of the dress in front.
7. Tie on the bonnet.

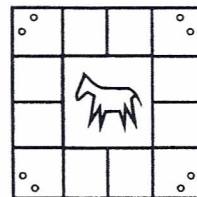
Quilting Squares

Materials:

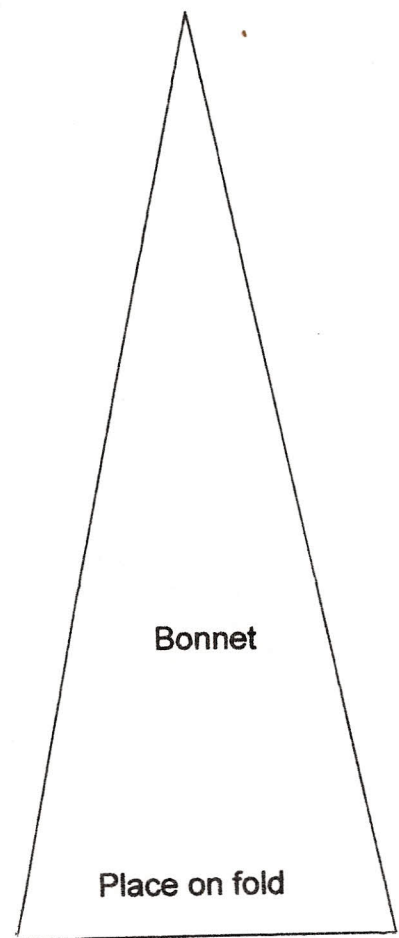
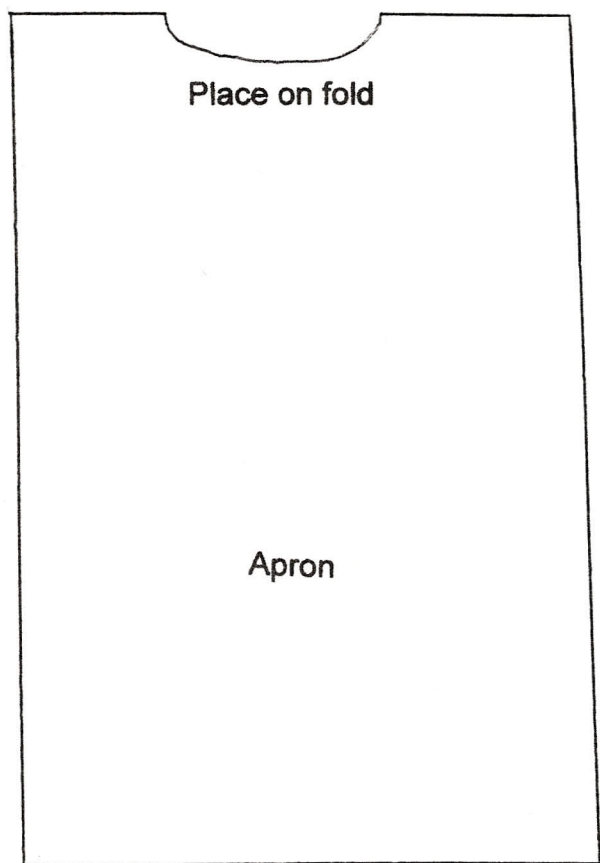
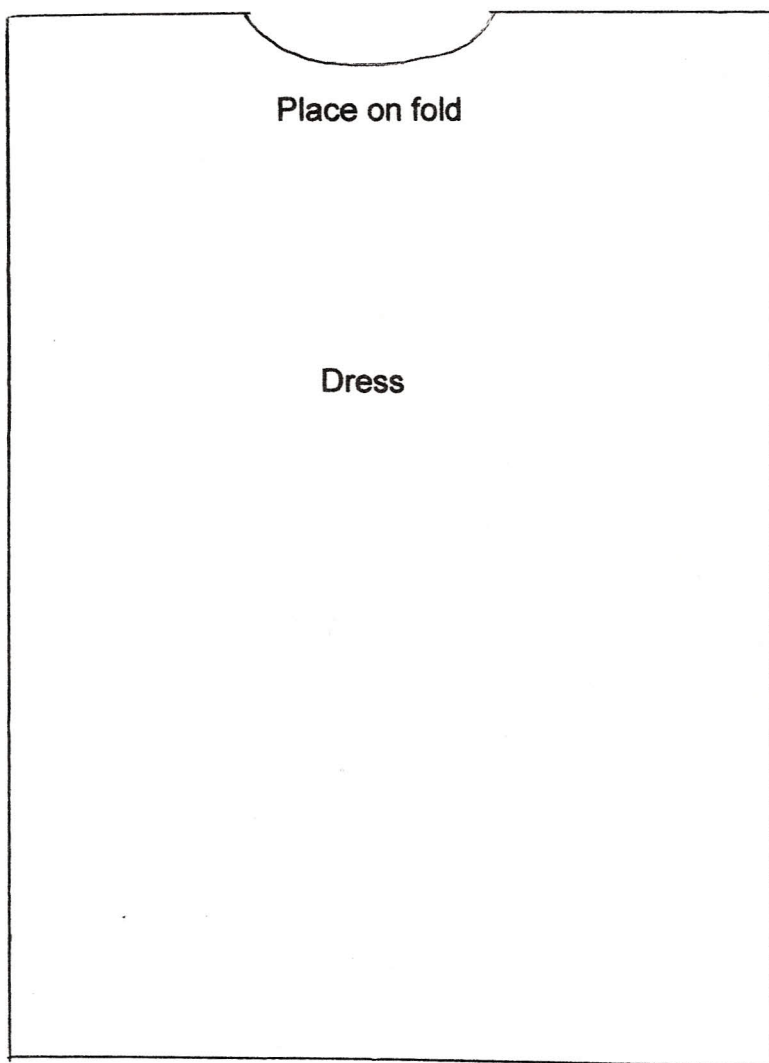
- Construction Paper
- 1' fabric squares, cut with pinking shears
- Scissors
- Pinking shears
- Glue

Directions:

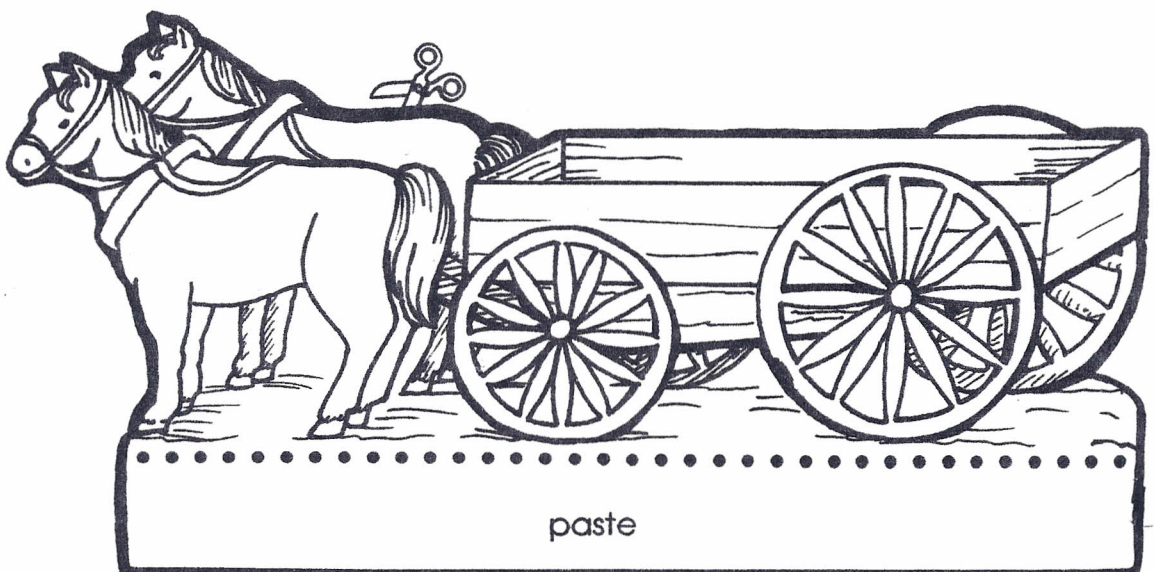
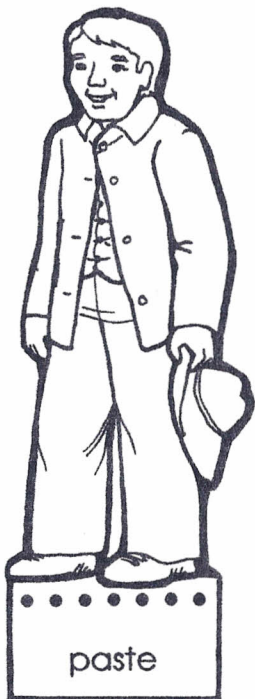
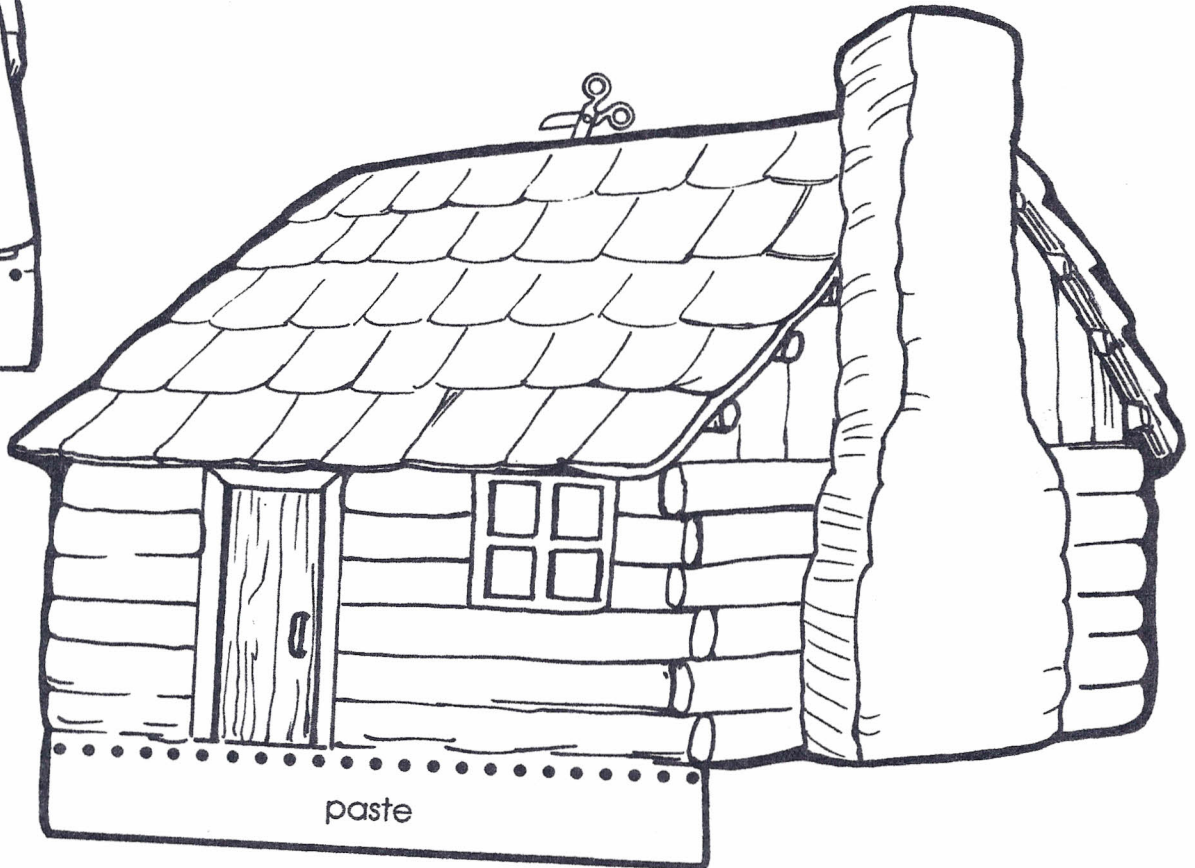
1. Cut white (or other colors) construction paper into large squares (5"x5", 6"x6", 7"x7")
2. Cut farm animal shapes from construction paper.
3. Glue an animal cutout in the center of the big construction paper square.
4. Glue material squares around the sides. (Option – laminate completed squares)
5. Punch two holes on each side of each square as shown.



6. String squares together with yarn to make a class quilt.



A Pioneer Farm



Popcorn and Milk

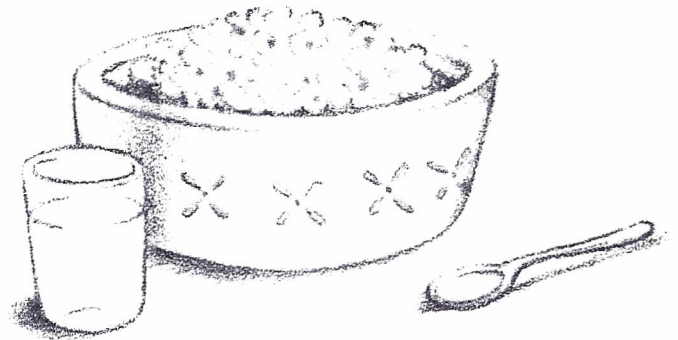
A Favorite Treat of Pioneer Children

Equipment

- microwave
- bowl for tossing
- glasses
- spoons

Ingredients

- popped popcorn
- salt or sugar
- milk



1. Pop the popcorn. When the popcorn is cool enough to handle, toss with salt or sugar.
2. Fill the glasses with milk. Give each student a glass of milk and a glass of popcorn. Drop the popcorn, one kernel at a time, into the milk. Slow down toward the end to give the popcorn a chance to settle.
3. When the students have added all the popcorn to the milk, eat the popcorn with a spoon and drink the milk.

Hasty Pudding

This recipe will let you taste the kind of hearty meals that pioneer kids ate. Hasty pudding can provide a stick-to-your-ribs breakfast or can be eaten any time. Leftover hasty pudding is also good fried.

Equipment

- large saucepan with lid
- mixing spoon

Ingredients

- 4 cups water
- 1 teaspoon salt
- 1 cup cornmeal
- maple syrup

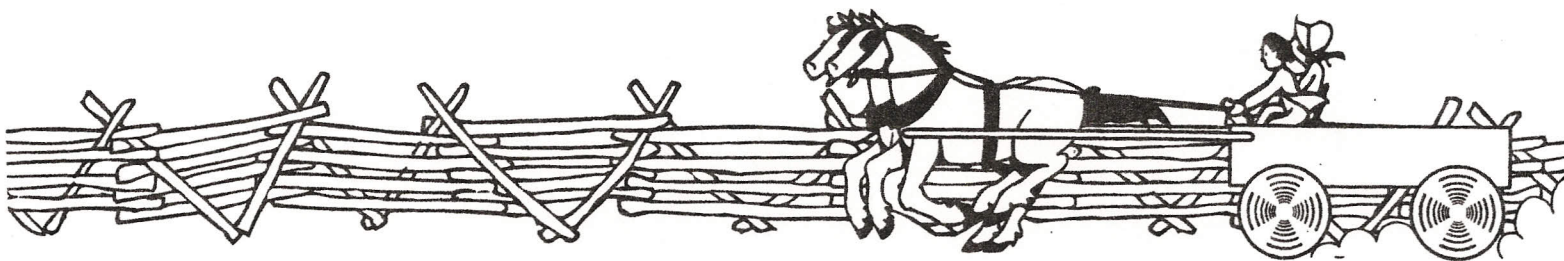
1. Put the water and salt in saucepan.
2. The teacher should heat the water and salt to a boil in a covered saucepan.



3. When the water is boiling briskly, sprinkle in the cornmeal, a little at a time. Stir constantly as you add cornmeal to keep lumps from forming.
4. Lower the heat, cover the saucepan, and simmer for 1 hour. Stir the mixture every few minutes so it won't stick to the pan. The pudding is ready when it is about as thick as oatmeal.
5. Serve the pudding hot with plenty of maple syrup.

Other Resources

- King, David C. Pioneer Days Discover the Past with Fun Projects, Games, Activities, and Recipes
- Stanley, Diane Roughing It on the Oregon Trail
- MacLachlan, Patricia Sarah, Plain and Tall
- Kamma, Anne ...If You Were a Pioneer on the Prairie
- Coerr, Eleanor The Josefina Story Quilt
- Erickson, Paul Daily Life in a Covered Wagon
- Levine, Ellen If You Traveled West in a Covered Wagon



Alabama Course of Study
Social Studies: Kindergarten Standards 1, 2, Grade 1 Standard 1, Grade 2 Standards 1, 11, Grade 3,
Standard 3, Grade Four Standard 6, Grade Five Standard 10

Skip to My Lou

Lively

Traditional



1. Lost my part - ner, what will I do,
 Lost my part - ner, what will I do,
 Lost my part - ner, what will I do?
 Skip to my Lou, my dar - ling.
 Skip, skip, skip to my Lou, Skip, skip, skip to my Lou,
 Skip, skip, skip to my Lou, Skip to my Lou, my dar - ling.

- I'll get another one, better than you, etc.
- Can't get a red bird, a blue bird will do, etc.
- Little red wagon, painted blue, etc.
- Fly in the sugar bowl, shoo, shoo, shoo, etc.

The notes of this melody make two chords.



School Days

By Cobb & Edwards

School days, school days,
 dear old gold - en rule days,
 Read - in' and 'rit - in' and 'rith - me - tic
 Taught to the tune of a hick - 'ry stick,
 You were my queen in cal - i - co,
 I was your bash - ful bare - foot beau, And you
 wrote on my slate, I love you Joe, When
 we were a coup - le of kids.

A FAVORITE COUNTRY SONG

She'll Be Comin' Round the Mountain

Southern Mountain Song



1. She'll be com-in' round the moun-tain when she comes,
2. She'll be driv-in' six white hor-ses when she comes,



She'll be com-in' round the moun-tain when she comes,
She'll be driv-in' six white hor-ses when she comes,



She'll be com-in' round the moun-tain,
She'll be driv-in' six white hor-ses,



She'll be com-in' round the moun-tain,
She'll be driv-in' six white hor-ses,



She'll be com-in' round the moun-tain when she comes,
She'll be driv-in' six white hor-ses when she comes,

3. Oh, we'll all go out to meet her when she comes.
4. Oh, we'll all have chicken and dumplings when she comes.
5. She will have to sleep with Grandma when she comes.

Oh, Susanna!

Verse

I come from Alabama with a banjo on my knee
I'm goin' to Louisiana my true love for to see.

Chorus

Oh Susanna oh don't you cry for me
I've come from Alabama with a banjo on my knee.

Verse

It rained all day the night I left, the weather it was dry
The sun so hot I froze to death, Susanna don't you cry.

Repeat Chorus

K-K-K Katy

K-K-K- Kathy, beautiful Katy,
You're the only g-g-girl that I adore
When the m-m-m-moon shines over the cowshed
I'll be waiting at the k-k-k-kitchen door.

Happy Trails

Happy trails to you, until we meet again
Happy trails to you, keep smiling until then
Happy trails to you, till we meet again.