

Lesson 3: What We KNOW About Pioneer Life

Learning Goals

Students will complete the first column of a K-W-L chart (What we KNOW...)

Students will identify key “facts” about Iowa Pioneer Life

Iowa History Benchmarks:

4. Pioneer Life on the Prairie
 - a. Most pioneer settlers came to Iowa from the eastern United States and Europe.
 - b. Iowa land was surveyed by the government and sold at auctions held by government land officers.
 - c. For most settlers, living on the prairie meant a change in farming and household practices.
 - d. Pioneer raised or made most of the items they needed for daily life.
 - e. Pioneer families developed a sense of social community and interdependence by sharing work and social events.

Materials:

Chart paper

Activities:

1. Introduce the lesson by reading to students one of the children’s books related to the theme Pioneer Life (see bibliography).
2. After reading the book put the words “Iowa Pioneer Life” in large letters on the board.
3. Ask students to identify “facts” that we know to be true about the pioneers who settled the prairies of Iowa.
4. As students identify facts, write them on the chart paper.
5. When all “facts” have been shared, display the charts in the room as the K part of a K-W-L chart.
6. The following sample statements were identified by a group of second and third grade students regarding pioneer life. These statements illustrate the kinds of “facts” primary students may possess when beginning a unit study on Iowa Pioneer Life. Some of these statements reflect a degree of misinformation or limited perspective.
 - Cabin doors had a latchstring that was used to open the door.
 - Pioneers are people who invent things first.
 - Pioneers moved by horse and covered wagon.
 - Prairie grass got very high in the state.
 - Schools were often a long way from home. They walked or rode a horse.
 - Towns were small.
 - Pioneers settled the S.E. part of Iowa first.
 - Homes were made from logs or sod.
 - Pioneers usually moved west.
 - Pioneers walked a lot.

- Pioneers used rifles.
- They had no electricity.
- Girls wore dresses.
- Clothes were made from wool.
- Pioneers spun wool into thread and wove it into cloth.
- Pioneers cooked on stoves that burned wood, coal or twisted hay.
- Pioneer furniture was made by hand.
- Pioneers slept on the floor.