



Fun and Games in History *2021

Grade: 4th

Setting: Bobcat Ridge (outside near cabin)

Theme (Bottom Line): Even though children had lots of chores to do 100 years ago, they still found time for fun. The games they played were different than many children play today, there were no computers, TV, or video games, and the games often had a real-world application that would help them later in life.

Description: Children get a chance to learn about games that children played 100 years ago and take part in those games.

Recommended Time: 25-35 min.

Recommended Group Size: 10-15

State Standards: Social Studies Standard 1.1 History: Understand the nature of historical knowledge as a process of inquiry that examines and analyzes how history is viewed, constructed, and interpreted. **Social Studies Standard 1.2 History:** Analyze historical time periods and patterns of continuity and change, through multiple perspectives, within and among cultures and societies.

MATERIALS LIST:

- Bean bag and small ball
- Bags of marbles
- Buffalo Wheel and 2 or 3 long sticks
- Pick-up sticks

ENGAGE/INTRO:

- Welcome students. Introduce self. Ask the students what types of games they play or what they do for fun at home (many will mention computer games, watching TV, IPODs, etc.). Have them think about life without electricity, TV, and computers. What would you do for fun?
- Now ask them what they do at school recess. (This may get them to think a little more about outdoor and/or creative games). Some of the games children played outdoors are still played today (jump rope, hopscotch).
- Children, both pioneer and Native American, played games as a way to connect to each other and have fun, but also to learn lessons and sharpen specific skills. Invite them to play some of those games with you!

EXPLORE/EXPLAIN:

- Start with a group game. **Fox and Goose** is a good one to start with. Have kids sit in a circle. The bean bag represents the goose. It can only be passed one direction, from one child to the next. The fox is the ball. Start it on the other side of the circle. The fox can be passed in any direction or thrown to someone across the circle and passed around. If a child gets caught with both the fox and goose in

*This lesson was written by Zoe Shark, Susan Schafer, and Dolores Daniels of the City of Fort Collins Master Naturalist Department.



their hands or lap, the fox has caught the goose! (and that child is out). Play a few rounds.

- Discuss, what skills did this game strengthen? (Critical thinking, coordination, quick decision-making).
- Divide the group into 2-3 smaller groups. These groups will alternate playing two or three of the three games:
 - Marbles- draw a circle in the dirt. Place all the smaller marbles inside the circle. Have two teams—each team gets a shooter (larger) marble. They take turns trying to shoot the smaller marbles out of the circle with the larger marble (The shooting hand is on the edge of the circle. Hold the marble in the crook of the index finger with the thumb behind it, and flick the marble out with the thumb). The team that shoots the most marbles of the circle wins. (Pioneer boys often played marbles while the girls played “Graces” or hopscotch. “Graces” or “Hoops and Sticks” is where a pair of children takes two sticks each. Placing the hoop over the ends of the two sticks together, the first child flicks the hoop off the stick towards the second child, and the second child tries to catch the hoop with their sticks. This game was often played by girls to help them be graceful and coordinated. Children will not play hoops and sticks but note it’s similarity to the Hoop & Pole Game below.)
 - Buffalo Wheel or Hoop & Pole Game- Played by Native American boys (Arapaho) to sharpen hunting skills and hand-eye coordination. Natives of different groups have their own special ways to play the Hoop and Pole game, but in all the games a person tosses a long dart of some kind at a circular hoop. In this version of the game the hoop is rolled along the ground, set into motion by a third player, while the two other players throw their pole as the hoop rolls in front of them. The score depends on how or if the pole falls on or through the hoop.
 - Pick-Up Sticks- This would have been an easy game for pioneer children to play because they could find sticks lying around the school. Gather the sticks in a bundle and hold right above the ground. Drop the bundle of sticks. Each child takes turns trying to pick up a stick without moving any of the others. If they move another stick, they miss their turn and go on to the next child. If a child picks up a stick without moving another one, they keep the stick on their pile. The child with the most sticks at the end wins. (This is a good game for coordination and concentration.) A similar game using sticks was played by Native American children in which sticks were painted with different symbols on different sides and dropped on the ground. Children would add up points based on the symbols that would turn face-up, like dice. (This game taught math skills).

Hint: You may need to go over the rules of all three games before you divide the children into smaller groups. If you have someone helping you at the station, you can do this after the group is divided.

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ELABORATE/CONCLUSION:

- Ask the children how they liked playing the games? Which was their favorite?
- Many of the games that children played 100 years ago had other benefits in addition to being fun. They often taught coordination, manners, and team-work, including survival skills such as hunting and keen observation.
- Children always found a way to have fun, and sometimes they even made up their own games.

If time allows:

- Ask them to think about some of the games they play on the school playground today.
- Are some of them like games that were played 100 years ago? If time, they can play a game they are familiar with today.

Other game possibilities:

Jump rope (especially the type where two people hold the rope on each end and have kids run in and jump while the rope turns).

Hop-Scotch

Variations of tag (can also be done with an environmental theme—"it" is a predator while everyone else is prey, i.e. coyote and rabbits)

Ring toss (long sticks can be stuck into haybales and hoops can be thrown on sticks)