



# Local Economy on The Prairie \*2021

**Grade:** 4th

**Setting:** Bobcat Ridge (picnic table near cabin)

**Theme (Bottom Line):** In the early 1900s, you had to sell and trade what you produced to get food and other supplies you needed. You couldn't just go to the store!

**Description:** Children are divided into small family groups. They will buy and trade goods with each other and with the Masonville store.

**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. **Economics 3.5:** Understand the allocation of scarce resources in societies through analysis of individual choice, market interaction, and public policy. **Economics 3.6:** Apply economic reasoning skills to make informed personal financial decisions (PFL).

## **MATERIALS LIST:**

- Packets for each family and Masonville store to include play money
- Photos of food and products to sell and trade
- Photos of NA items for trade
- A list of items that students need to obtain

## **ENGAGE/INTRO:**

- Explain to the group that we are taking a trip back in time to see how families got food and supplies that they needed around 1915. Provide background to that date in time (What was going on in history? What was happening on the Colorado Plains in particular?)
- Ask them how they get items or food they need or want today (grocery store, Wal-Mart, etc.). What would you do if you didn't have these places to go to? Let them think about this and share their answers.
- Tell students about the economic life in this area in the early 1900s: people worked at home, mostly farming (growing food and crops) and ranching (raising cattle and horses). Children helped with the chores.
- Many food and supplies that were needed were acquired by trading things that were made or raised at home. Families had very little cash.
- They also planted vegetable gardens—these provided food for their family and also food that they could trade with neighbors for other things they needed.
- The Masonville store (that the students probably passed on the way here on their bus ride) was the center of the community where people bought and traded for supplies they needed, and also caught up on community news.

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



## **EXPLORE/EXPLAIN:**

- Explain to the students that we are going to divide them into four smaller groups. Three groups will be families that lived in the community, and one group will be the Masonville Store. They will actually be able to trade and buy goods just like people would have done 100 years ago.
- Divide the group equally into four smaller groups. Give each group a packet with their family (or store) name. All family names are taken from families who actually lived at or near Bobcat Ridge. Their packet contains information about how they make their living, how much money they have to spend (coins totaling \$3 or less), and photos of products that they can sell or trade. It also contains a little stack of money that they have put away for savings. (Note: If you have a small group of kids, you can also have the teacher, or you, be the Masonville Store.)
- Ask students if they should use their savings money for getting things at the store. (only in an emergency—this is for unexpected expenses!)
- Have each group share what they have to trade with the other small groups.
- Tell the groups that it is now Saturday, and time to go to the Masonville store to buy, sell or trade for the things they need and want for the coming week. Have the groups spend time together for a few minutes to talk about what items they may need to acquire at the store or from neighbors. They can make a list of items.
- Allow the four smaller groups to trade, buy and sell items for about 5-10 minutes.
- Return to the larger group setting and have each group reveal what they bought or acquired. Have them think about whether they have everything they need for the coming week. Is there something they forgot? What would happen if they couldn't get everything they needed? See if anyone thought to add a few coins to their savings—you never know when your roof may leak or your horse might break its leg. You need extra money for that!

## **ELABORATE:**

- Think about how items are packaged today. Would items in the 1900s been packaged in plastic or cardboard? Do you think people in the early 1900s would have just thrown away a box or bag that they received something in? Why or why not? What would they have done with the boxes or bags? (probably used them for something else—recycled everything).
- Think about how this economical system would be the same/different within the Native American community. Would Native Americans have traded goods/services in the same manner? Would they have traded with the European settlers? How was their economy/needs different from those of the Europeans? If you were a Native American, what could you have made/produced that could have been traded with the Europeans- and what would have you needed/wanted in return? (Show pictures of NA trade items- explain that the NA community had

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been mostly removed to reservations by 1915, but a few tribal members remained in the area).

## **EVALUATE:**

- Remind students that in the early 1900's money was scarce. Much of what a family needed was made at home or traded and all members of a family helped earn the living.
- Ask: How was this experience different from what you are used to today? Do you think this made life easier or harder back then, than it is today- why or why not?
- Have students share the way in which they feel they could have contributed to the family economy in the early 1900's (what skills do they feel good at or would have liked to have learned- i.e. sewing, cooking, woodworking, labor, etc.)

### **Family Descriptions**

#### **Spence Family**

Your family raises cattle for meat and cows for milk. You use milk to churn butter. You have a little money to spend and milk and butter to trade. What will you need at the trading post?

#### **Hyatt Family**

Your family raises chickens and gathers eggs. You use the eggs to make baked goods like bread. You have a little money to spend and eggs and bread to trade. What will you need at the trading post?

#### **Nicodemus Family**

You raise sheep and grow sugar beets. You weave cloth from the sheep's wool and make sugar from the beets. You have a little money to spend and cloth and sugar to trade. What will you need at the trading post?

#### **Kitchen Family**

You run a store and trading post. You have flour, jelly beans, pickles, bacon, and apples to sell. What do you need to buy or trade for from some of the families that visit? How much money will you make after you finish selling and trading for items? You have some change at the store, plus some larger bills.

#### *Notes to Leader:*

*Spence family needs to buy bread to eat with their butter and any other food items.*

*Hyatt family needs sugar or milk or flour for baking and other food items.*

*Nicodemus family needs most food items because they don't produce consumable items.*

*Kitchen family needs cash to buy more goods for the store, or items that they can resell.*

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