



## One-Room Schoolhouse \*2021

**Grade:** 4th

**Setting:** Bobcat Ridge (outside near cabin or inside cabin)

**Theme (Bottom Line):** School was a lot different 100 years ago, but children still learned many of the same lessons.

**Description:** Children experience a one-room schoolhouse setting and do several lessons that pioneer students may have been taught a century ago.

**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:**

- Pledge of Allegiance Sign
- Slate Boards and Chalk
- Photos of US Presidents
- McGuffey 4<sup>th</sup> Grade Reader
- McGuffey Spelling Book

### **ENGAGE/INTRO:**

- Explain to the group that today we will experience what it was like to go to school in the early 1900s.
- Ask: What do they think was different? (all grades were together in one room—sometimes working on the same project and other times working on individual projects, no bathroom inside, wood stove to keep warm, no notebooks or backpacks, etc.)
- Ask: What are common rewards/consequences in school today vs. back then? (lots of rewards used today vs back then- consequences might be detention, missed recess, speak to principal). Students had to behave—there were strict disciplinary measures. Sometimes students might get rapped on the hand with a ruler or had to sit in the corner with a dunce cap on if they missed a question. They were only allowed to speak when called upon.
- Ask: How do you get to school now? (bus, car, maybe walking or riding a bike). 100 years ago, children would have walked (sometimes a long way) or rode a horse to school. The distance they walked from the parking lot to the cabin is similar to what children would have walked to school a century ago. Children who went to school near Bobcat Ridge had to walk in the middle of the road to make sure they didn't get bit by rattlesnakes!

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



- Ask: Do you have chores to do before or after school? Children had chores to do for school—some would bring in wood for the stove, some would bring in water to drink, some would help sweep the floor.
- Ask: What do you know about your teacher’s family? Teachers were usually men or unmarried women. Once a woman got married, she had to quit teaching! Many times, teachers lived with one of the student’s families. How would you like your teacher to live with you? Teachers usually made only about \$9 a week.

**EXPLORE/EXPLAIN:** Let’s see what a school day might have been like in the 1900s.

- (If the daily chores station is not being done, children can go out and fill a bucket at the well to bring into the schoolhouse for drinking water.)
- Who knows who the president of the United States is? Show the photos of the three presidents from the early 1900s. Ask if they have heard of these presidents. (Teddy Roosevelt helped start the National Park System. Rocky Mountain National Park was established in 1915).
- Ask if any of them say the “Pledge of Allegiance” at school. The pledge was worded differently in the early 1900s than it is today. Show them the sheet with the pledge printed on it and ask them to read it with you. Notice the photo of the flag on the page—it only has 48 stars. Hawaii and Alaska were not states yet. When did Colorado become a state? (1876)
- It’s time for a reading lesson. Show them the McGuffey reader. These readers were used for many years and some are still used today. Children would not have had their own book to read. They would take turns reading a lesson from the book. Many of the stories were written to also teach a lesson. Ask for a volunteer who would like to read. Turn to page 25 in the reader and have the first child read several paragraphs in the story “Perseverance.” (paragraphs are numbered). Have several other volunteers from the class read the remainder of the story. Ask, “what was the lesson in this story?”
- Now it’s time for Math. Pass out slate boards and chalk. Explain that paper was hard to find and very expensive. Give them a few simple math problems to write on their boards. Then, give them a math word problem, and they should figure out the answer and write it on their chalkboard (students may do this in pairs or groups of 3).
  - You have a turkey to sell. Turkeys sell for 10 cents per pound. Your turkey weighs 16 pounds. How much money should you get when you sell your turkey? ( $.10 \times 16 = \$1.60$ )
  - You have a chicken that weighs 3 pounds. Chickens usually sell for 7 cents per pound. How much can you sell your chicken for? ( $3 \times .07 = .21$ )
- Congratulate students who got the answer correct and encourage other students to work on the problem as their homework.

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- The third lesson is writing. It was important 100 years ago to write very nicely and students practiced this. Have them practice writing their names on their blackboards as neatly as they can.
- The fourth lesson is spelling. Spelling bees were often held for the whole community. It was a time for a social gathering as well as a way for children to show what they had learned. Have the students line up and come up one at a time to the front of the class. Pick a list of words from the McGuffey speller and have each child spell a word. If they spell it correctly, they get to go to the back of the line. If not, they sit back down. Continue until you have a winner, or if it is taking too long, just stop and declare the remaining students standing the winners of the spelling bee.

### **ELABORATE/EVALUATE:**

- If time, a geography lesson can also be incorporated. Use a globe to point out where certain countries are or ask them to identify on the globe where specific countries are.
- The lessons children learned 100 years ago were similar to what we learn today, even though the classroom and teaching techniques were different, and many other things (like computers, pencils and paper, etc.) were not available.
- Ask: What would the school experience been for Native American children? How would it have been different than that of a one-room schoolhouse? (“School” wasn’t the same concept for youth within the Native American culture. Emphasis was placed on learning stories about heritage and ancestors, learning how to hunt, grow/gather food, take care of children, or provide assistance to the tribe as a whole in other ways.)
- Ask students what they appreciate most about school now given what they know of how school was conducted 100 years ago.

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