Brief Synopsis

Explore the life of an early pioneer! Students will begin to grasp the difficult decisions pioneers faced by identifying the push and pull factors that led many Scandinavians to settle in the Midwest during the mid 1800's. Upon arriving life was filled with chores and hard work. Students will encounter a glimpse of this life by reading a journal entry by a young boy living in Fillmore County in 1851.

Activity 1: The Promise of America

Background: The greatest migration the United States has ever seen took place between the years of 1850 and 1910. In Minnesota alone, the population exploded from 40,000 in 1853 to 150,000 in 1857. Scandinavians were the predominant ethnic group to immigrate to Minnesota. Once they arrived in the U.S., the pioneers tended to move along isothermal lines. If immigrants came from colder climates, they often traveled to colder regions of the U.S. Therefore, the pioneers that came to Minnesota were commonly from the northern areas of Europe, such as Norway, Sweden, Denmark, Germany, and Great Britain. The reasons why these individuals and families left their native land are numerous and varied. Historians often associate human migration with “push and pull” factors. A combination of factors that “push” individuals away from their homeland and factors that “pull” or attract individuals to a new area.

Procedures:
1. Begin by creating a simplified class frequency table drawn on a chalkboard or flip chart paper to illustrate and compare the number of times students have moved in their lifetime.

![Sample Frequency Table]

2. Distribute a sticky note to each student. Students should count the number of times he or she has moved from one residence to another and place their sticky note on the frequency table corresponding with this total number of moves. If a student has never moved, he or she would place their sticky note above the number “0”.

3. Lead a brief class discussion as to the reasons why the students and their family had moved. Record the answers on the chalkboard separating the answers into either a “push” or a “pull” factor.

4. Introduce the concept of the push and pull factors for early pioneers. Allow students to speculate what factors may have pushed immigrants from their homeland and factors that pulled immigrants to America in the 1800’s.

5. Distribute a “Promise of America” worksheet for each student to complete.

6. Use the answer key to check the students’ work and assess their understanding of the concept of push and pull factors in relation to immigration.

Discussion Questions:
- Recall the most recent move your family has made. How has the move changed your lifestyle? What are the negative and positive consequences of the choice that was made?
• What specific factors pushed individuals and families away from their home country in the 1800's?
• What specific factors pulled or encouraged individuals and families to travel and settle in America?
• Speculate what may have been some of the challenges, barriers and difficulties pioneers faced when settling on the frontier?

Activity 2: Life in America

Background: The dependency on natural resources is just as critical today for human survival as for a pioneer living in the 19th century. All humans have similar needs despite the location and time period in which they live. In this activity students will compare the life skills and natural resources used by an early pioneer who settled in Fillmore County in the year 1851 with the skills and resources used by individuals today.

Procedures:
1. Distribute a copy of Austin Farnsworth’s journal to each student.
2. Read the journal out loud in the classroom first to become familiar with its vocabulary.
3. Divide the students into learning teams of five. A student within each team will focus on one of the following themes: transportation, clothing, wildlife, home furnishings, or cooking/food. You can assign the themes or have each group divide them among the team members.
4. The students should read the journal a second time on their own, highlighting or underlining any skill, object, or natural resource that is reflective of their theme.
5. Distribute a “Life in America” worksheet to each student. Students should only complete the boxes for their assigned theme completing the first two columns labeled “Then” and “Now”.
6. Once completed, students will share their answer with their learning team so all members can complete the first two columns on their worksheet.
7. Finally as a team, discuss and complete the final column; “What”. This column is to encourage students to critically think through the actions and decisions that had taken place in order for the changes to occur.

Extension: Add a fourth column to the student worksheet, “Life in America” and label this column “Future”. As a class speculate what skills and natural resources will be needed for an individual living 150 years from now. What similarities are prevalent in all three columns?

Discussion Questions:
• What are some of the ways our life today is similar to that of a pioneer living in the 1800’s?
• List the skills and natural resources used by pioneers for day to day survival.
• What skill and natural resources do you need to survive day to day?
• Knowing people must rely on natural resources to sustain life, what advice would you give a student who is living 150 years from now?

Teacher Tips
• Pinpoint on a map the countries that represent Scandinavia: Norway, Denmark, Sweden, Finland, and Iceland. Scandinavia is a historical and geographical region centered on the Southern Scandinavian Peninsula of Northern Europe. Ireland and Finland are also included due to their close historic and cultural relations to Denmark, Norway and Sweden.
• You can determine what a “move” represents for the frequency chart in Activity 1. It may be as broad as a move from state to state, or as narrow as house to house.
• Students reading Farnsworth’s journal will come across unfamiliar words and phrases. This document has not been altered from its original text.
• To encourage additional group sharing separate all the students into five groups for Activity 2. Each group will be assigned a different theme. Students in the group together will complete the columns labeled “Then” and “Now”. Once completed students must find a member of a different group to complete the worksheet.

Additional Resources:
http://www.mnsu.edu/emuseum/history/mnstatehistory/
An easy to read site highlighting the Scandinavian immigration to MN, plus additional facts and a timeline of MN history.

http://www.mnhs.org/school/
The Minnesota Historical Society’s website contains student focused interactive activities.

http://www.naha.stolaf.edu/pubs/nas/volume32/vol32_05.htm
St. Olaf College’s Norwegian American History Association tells the story of Jacob and Gro Abrahamson and their travels to Iowa and Minnesota. Student’s will encounter these individuals during their Pioneer Life class at Eagle Bluff.
Name: ___________________________________

**Directions:** Carefully read the statements below to determine which ones represent a push factor and which ones represent a pull factor for those settling in America during the 1800’s. A push factor is a circumstance or situation that pushes or drives away an individual to leave their home while a pull factor pulls or attracts an individual to settle in a new area. **Place an “X” in the box that best represents your answer.**

**PUSH** | **PULL**
--- | ---
1. During the years of 1845 and 1849, Ireland experienced a total crop failure causing wide-spread famine throughout the country. & 
2. In 1862 the Congress of United States passed the Homestead Act. This Act gave virtually anyone over the age of 21 the right to purchase 160 acres of government-owned land West of the Mississippi River. & 
3. The Russian government revoked many of the privileges given to Germans who settled in Russia in the 1870’s. & 
4. Modernization made travel by steamboat and train more convenient and faster. & 
5. Letters sent home from pioneers from Minnesota were filled with the “American Fever”, highlighting plenty of jobs, land, and freedom. & 
6. Increases in population led to a strain on the amount of land available for farmers in Sweden. & 
7. The failed German revolution in 1848 stimulated many people to seek political and religious freedom. & 
8. American westward expansion promoted new industries to be developed, creating thousands of factory jobs for both men and women. & 
9. Norway had a strict social system which provided special privileges for upper class citizens. & 
10. Treaties made between the United States government and Native Americans opened land to settlers. &
COMING TO AMERICA— Answer Key

Name: ___________________________________

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PUSH   PULL

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3. The Russian government revoked many of the privileges given to Germans who settled in Russia in the 1870’s. X

4. Modernization made travel by steamboat and train more convenient and faster. X

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Mr. Austin W. Farnsworth—1851

We came to Fillmore County in the Fall of 1851 from Vermont. We were strapped. Not one cent was left after the expenses of the trip were paid. A neighbor took my father with him and met us at McGregor Landing with an ox team hitched to a prairie schooner. We were four days getting to Fillmore County, camping on the way. The nearest town, only a post office, was Waukopee. Father had come the previous spring and planted two acres of wheat two acres of corn, and one-half acres of potatoes. The potatoes all rotted in the ground.

I was only nine years old and my brother thirteen, but we made all the furniture for that cabin out of few popple poles and a hollow basswood log. For beds, beams were fitted in between the logs and stuck out about a foot above the floor and were six feet long. To these we fastened cross pieces of “popple” and on this put a tick filled with wild hay and corn stalk leaves. It made a wonderful bed when you were tired as everyone was in those days, for all worked. After we had cut off a section of our big log by hand, we split it in two and in one half bored holes and fitted legs of the unpeeled popple for the seat. The other half made the back and our chair was done. As we had no nails, we fitted on the backs with wood pegs. Our table was made of puncheons split with a wedge and hewed with a broadax. The cabin would have been very homelike with its new furniture if it had not been for the smoke. My mother had to do all the cooking on a flat stone on the floor with another standing up behind it. She nearly lost her sight the first winter from the smoke. Our attic was filled with cornstalks to make the cabin warmer. Our fare was good, as game was very plentiful and we had corn meal and a coarse ground wheat more like cracked wheat. There was a little grist mill at Carimona, a tiny town near. My mother made coffee from corn meal crusts. It would skin Postum three ways for Sunday.

When I was nine years old I killed a buffalo at Buffalo Grove near us. That grove was full of their runs. Elk were very plentiful, too, and deer were so plenty they were a drug in our home market. I have counted seventy-five at one time and seven elk. Pigeons were so thick that they darkened the sky when they flew. Geese and ducks, too, were in enormous flocks. In season, they seemed to cover everything. We used the eggs of the prairie chickens for cooking. They answered well.

Once my brother shot a coon and my mother made him a cap with the tail hanging behind and made me one too, but she put a gray squirrels tail at the back of mine. She knit our shoes and sewed them to buckskin soles.
Directions: Read the journal entry and highlight or underline any skill, household object or natural resource that is reflective of the theme your teacher has given you. Review what you have highlighted and complete the columns “Then” and “Now”. Describe how the skill, object or resource of a pioneer compares to your life. Share your answers with your learning team. Together with your team complete the last column listing the decisions or actions that had to be made in order for the change to have occurred.

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>THEME</th>
<th>THEN</th>
<th>NOW</th>
<th>WHAT</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>School / Education</td>
<td>Attended school only for 2 months</td>
<td>Many kids attend school for 13 years.</td>
<td>Law requires school attendance until 16 yrs of age. More jobs require employees to be formally educated.</td>
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