



Pioneer Life Pre-visit

Classroom Activities

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.

Ages: Designed for 5th-8th grade

Time Considerations: 45 minutes for each activity

Materials:

- **Activity 1**
 - flip chart paper or chalkboard
 - sticky notes
 - "Promise of America" student worksheet
- **Activity 2**
 - Austin Farnsworth's journal
 - student highlighter or pencil
 - "Life in America" student worksheet

Vocabulary:

- Immigration, Natural Resource, Scandinavian, Pioneer, Frequency Table, Isothermal Line

Outcomes:

1. Students will create a frequency chart to calculate and compare student data.
2. Students will infer the difference between push and pull factors.
3. Students will identify specific factors that pushed immigrants from their homeland and factors that pulled immigrants to America in the 1800's.
4. Students will compare the use of natural resources and family life from earlier times and today.

Minnesota Academic Standards:

Social Studies: 4-8th. II.C.1, II.E.2, II.G.4

Geography: 4-8th. V.A.2, V.D.1, V.D.5, V.D.1

Math: 5.IV.A.3, 6.IV.A.1

Language Arts: 5.I.A.2, 5.I.C.1, 5.I.C.5, 6 I.C.5, 7.I.A.1

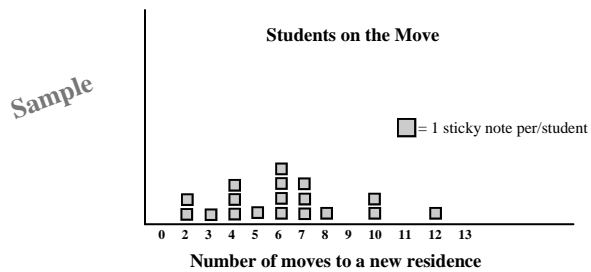
Revised April 2008

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.



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 individuals to leave their home country and which factors may have pulled them to America.
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.



COMING TO AMERICA

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

- | | | |
|--------------------------|--------------------------|--|
| <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | 1. During the years of 1845 and 1849, Ireland experienced a total crop failure causing wide-spread famine throughout the country. |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | 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. |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | 3. The Russian government revoked many of the privileges given to Germans who settled in Russia in the 1870's. |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | 4. Modernization made travel by steamboat and train more convenient and faster. |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | 5. Letters sent home from pioneers from Minnesota were filled with the "American Fever", highlighting plenty of jobs, land, and freedom. |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | 6. Increases in population led to a strain on the amount of land available for farmers in Sweden. |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | 7. The failed German revolution in 1848 stimulated many people to seek political and religious freedom. |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | 8. American westward expansion promoted new industries to be developed, creating thousands of factory jobs for both men and women. |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | 9. Norway had a strict social system which provided special privileges for upper class citizens. |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | 10. Treaties made between the United States government and Native Americans opened land to settlers. |



COMING TO AMERICA— *Answer Key*

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 encourages an individual to settle in a new area.

Place an "X" in the box that best represents your answer.

PUSH PULL

- | | | |
|-------------------------------------|-------------------------------------|--|
| <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | 1. During the years of 1845 and 1849, Ireland experienced a total crop failure causing wide-spread famine throughout the country. |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> | 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. |
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Austin Farnsworth's Journal

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 Waukeopee. 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.

I was twelve, when I had my first pair of leather shoes. They were cowhide and how they did hurt, but I was proud of them. No one of the country boys wore under clothing. I was nineteen before I ever had any. Our pants were heavily lined and if it was cold, we wore more shirts. I never had an overcoat until I went in the army. Before we left Vermont, my mother carded and spun all the yarn and wove all the cloth that we wore for a long time after coming to Minnesota.

We found the most delicious wild, red plums, half the size of an egg and many berries and wild crabapples.

The timber wolves were plenty and fierce. My sister was treed by a pack from nine o'clock until one. By that time we had got neighbors enough together to scatter them. I was chased, too, when near home, but as I had two bulldogs with me, they kept them from closing in on me until I could get in the house.

There was a rattlesnake den near us and once we killed seventy-eight in one day. They were the timber rattlesnakes—great big fellows. I caught one by holding a forked stick over its head and then dropped it in a box. I kept it for a pet. It was seven feet, one and a half inches long. I used to feed it frogs, mice and rabbits. I thought it was fond of me, but it struck at me and caught its fangs in my shirt when I was careless, so I killed my pet.

The only time I ever went to school was for two months in '55, to John Cunningham. Wilbur made our desks out of black walnut lumber, cut in Buffalo Grove. It was very plentiful there.

Later we used to go to dances. I was great for cutting pigeon wings and balancing on the corner with a jig step. We used to dance the whirl waltz, too. Some called it the German waltz. We spun round and round as fast as we could, taking three little steps.

Morris, Lucy Leavenworth Wilder. Old Rail Fence Corners: Frontier Tales Told By Minnesota Pioneers. Minnesota Historical Society Press. Saint Paul. 1976.



Life in America—Worksheet

Name: _____

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.

THEME	THEN	NOW	WHAT <small>What actions or decisions have been made to bring about this change?</small>
School / Education	<i>Attended school only for 2 months</i>	<i>Many kids attend school for 13 years. Kindergarten through 12th grade.</i>	<i>Law requires school attendance until 16 yrs of age. More jobs require employees to be formally educated.</i>
Transportation			
Clothing			
Wildlife			
Home Furnishings			
Cooking & Food			