

# PIONEER LIFE

## Grade 3, Social Studies

Source: Adapted from *Pioneer Life*, Earth Day Canada's EcoKids Program

### DESCRIPTION

In this learning activity, students will describe changes that have occurred in their communities since the time of early settlers. Through various exercises and discussions, students will compare and contrast the lives of pioneer and present-day children; life in a pioneer settlement with that in their own community; and the effects of modern life and pioneer life on the environment.

### CURRICULUM LINKS – SOCIAL STUDIES, GRADE 3

*Heritage & Identity: Communities in Canada, 1780-1850*

Overall Expectations: A1, A2

Specific Expectations: A1.2, A2.2, A2.5, A2.6

### PLANNING NOTES

#### Materials

- *A Pioneer Story: The Daily Life of a Canadian Family in 1840* by Heather Collins and Barbara Greenwood
- *Let's Compare: Pioneers & Today* (Appendix 1)

#### Learning Skills & Work Habits

Collaboration, independent work, organization

#### Prior Learning

A pioneer is a plant, animal, or human that inhabits a new area for the first time.

Early Canadian settler communities had a much smaller impact on the environment than today's consumer society does. Pioneers used less energy and generated less waste in their daily lives.

#### Recommended Class Time

- 2-3 periods

### TEACHING/LEARNING STRATEGIES

1. Ask the students to share what they already know about pioneers (what activities they did, where they lived, what resources they used, how they travelled, etc.) with a partner or the whole class. Create a list or concept map to summarize their ideas.
2. After recording all their ideas, ask the students if we call anything in the natural world a pioneer? Remind them that we use the word "pioneer" for plants and animals that go somewhere for the first time and ask for an example of a situation where pioneer plants would grow.
3. Read *A Pioneer Story: The Daily Life of a Canadian Family in 1840* by Heather Collins and Barbara Greenwood, or another book that depicts life as a Canadian pioneer.
4. Ask students to picture themselves as pioneer children and answer the following questions in small groups. Record and/or discuss their answers as a whole class.
  - What do you wear every day?
  - What might you have for dinner?
  - How do you spend your free time?
  - Where do you go to school?
  - What job will you have when you grow up?
  - Do you receive an allowance?
  - Do you pollute the environment? How?
5. Give each group *Let's Compare: Pioneers & Today* (Appendix 1) and ask them to describe how each resource or impact was different in pioneer times than it is today. They can add more categories on the left column if they choose.

6. After discussing the difference between lives in pioneer times and today, describe several “modern” situations in which we use energy. Ask the students to come up with a similar scenario in pioneer times, e.g. cooking over a fire is equivalent to cooking with gas/electrical elements. They can act out both situations in their groups and/or present them to the whole class. Then, ask what are the most striking differences about the situations? How was the environment different in pioneer times?
7. Review the differences between pioneer times and modern day as a whole class. Use the following discussion questions to guide your conversation.
  - Was a pioneer child’s life much different from your own? Was the family an important part of pioneer life?
  - What are some things that pioneers did that used no electricity or energy? Can we do some of these things so that we can live more like pioneers?
  - What is a “natural resource”? How do we use natural resources? How did pioneers use natural resources? What is the difference?
  - What would you like or dislike about being a pioneer?
  - If people 100 years from now look back at us, what are some new things they will see that we did we did to help the environment? How can we be pioneers in protecting the environment?

## EXTENSIONS

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**Pioneer Diary:** Students can write a diary entry from the perspective of a pioneer child. Ask them to pretend that they are traveling west with their parents and are writing a diary about their adventures. What hardships do they face? What are the fun things about being a pioneer? They can illustrate their diary entries and share with a friend.

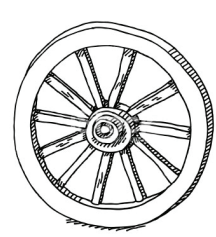
**Pioneer Charades:** Give everyone scrap pieces of paper and have them record different tasks and chores that were part of daily pioneer life. Some examples include chopping wood, driving a wagon, and sewing clothes. Students can take turns acting them out and guessing what their peers are doing.

## APPENDIX

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Appendix 1 - *Let’s Compare: Pioneers & Today*





**APPENDIX 1**  
**PIONEER LIFE**  
**LET'S COMPARE: PIONEERS & TODAY**

Names: \_\_\_\_\_

<b>Human resources/impact</b>	<b>Pioneers</b>	<b>Today</b>
Water	Well water, bucket...	Tap water in all bathrooms, kitchens, workshops, gardens...
Food	Locally produced...	Globally produced and shipped, grocery stores...
Family		
Jobs		
Transportation		
Pollution		