

Understanding Clues From the Past: School Days

Overview

This lesson allows the students to work with both primary and secondary sources. The students will study schools in early Kansas. After reading an expository text on the topic, students will connect clues from primary sources to the text. This will introduce students to the idea that historians use clues from primary sources to interpret the past in secondary sources. The lesson concludes with the students retelling the story in their own words. This lesson can be completed in one period or can be broken into sections done over several days.

Standards

Current standards can be found on kshs.org.

Objectives

Skills

- The students will compare information in primary and secondary sources to understand how we piece together the past.
- The students will use an expository text and clues from primary sources to retell the story of rural schools in early Kansas.

Essential Questions

- How do we put clues together to understand the past?
- What were rural schools like in early Kansas?

Activities

This activity uses the following *Read Kansas* cards:

- **School Days**
- **How Do We Know What It Was Like Long Ago?**

Day 1

1. As a class, read the expository text **School Days** *Read Kansas* card.
2. As a class, discuss the text identifying the main ideas and supporting details.
3. Ask the students if they know how the author knew what schools were like in the past? Explain that we look for clues that help us piece together what happened a long time ago. We find these clues in old photographs, diaries, newspapers, and other documents from the past. Putting together the story of the past is like being a detective.
4. As a class, read and discuss the **How Do We Know What It Was Like Long Ago?** *Read Kansas* card. Using the **How do we know what it was like?** worksheet, have the students identify which of the four clues the author used to make each of the statements.
5. Using whatever method works within your classroom, have the students use the worksheet to retell in their own words the story of early schools in Kansas. The story can be retold either in writing or orally.

Assessment

1. Observe the students' abilities to discuss the expository text. Can they identify the main topic and at least one supporting fact?
2. Evaluate the students' worksheets.
3. Evaluate the students' abilities to retell the story.

Answers for worksheet:

- Clue 1 = Story C
- Clue 2 = Story D
- Clue 3 = Story B
- Clue 4 = Story A

For the Teacher

What is a primary source?

- Historians use primary sources to determine what happened in the past.
- A primary source is a document or an artifact that was created at the time of an event or by a person that was present at the event. Photographs, newspapers, census records, and diaries are all primary sources.
- Once an historian pieces together the events of the past through primary sources, he or she interprets those materials to tell the story of the past.
- The clues in **How Do We Know What It Was Like Long Ago?** come from primary sources.

What is a secondary source?

- When a historian or someone else writes an interpreted account of the past, that is considered a secondary source.
- The expository text, **School Days**, is a secondary source.

What do we know about the primary sources in this lesson?

- The historic photographs are from the collections of the Kansas State Historical Society.
- The reminiscences included in this lesson come from the following sources:
 - Selections from the reminiscence of Irene Henderson in *The Time That Was: Rawlins County, Kansas, 1875-1915*, by Ruth Kelly Hayden, published by H.F. Davis Memorial Library, Colby Community College, 1972.
 - Selections from the Reminiscence of Lulu Craig in "History of Nicodemus: Nicodemus School Organized, July 1879," manuscript on file, Kansas Collection, University of Kansas Libraries.

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Resources for this lesson are from:

- Kansas State Historical Society collections

Name: _____

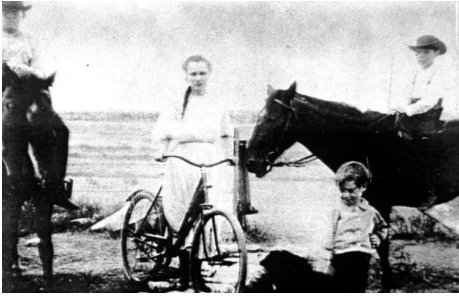
How do we know what it was like?

Match the clues used to create the story by drawing lines between the clues and the story.

Clues

Story

Clue 1



Clue 2

"The only question they asked me was 'Can you build a fire?' When I said 'yes' they hired me for a six-month term at \$45 per month. It was a one-room school heated by a big pot bellied stove."

Clue 3

"The teacher got the little squares of cardboard on which she had written the alphabet and passed them to the primary pupils. She turned her attention to others. Some of those had books. Some had none."

Clue 4



Story A

"Many rural schools did not have playgrounds. Games that could be played without equipment and by children of all ages were popular."

Story B

"She had to be ready to teach lessons from 1st to 8th grade. Sometimes she had books for the students, sometimes she did not."

Story C

"A long time ago, when Kansas first became a state, most students walked to school. A few lucky kids came on horses or bicycles."

Story D

"The teacher arrived at the school very early in the morning. She would clean the school and build a fire in the stove."