

CAN YOU PICTURE THIS?

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Keeping the Past Project

OVERVIEW

Using written primary sources, students will investigate some of the houses of early settlers in Colorado and speculate about why they built the kinds of houses they did.

STANDARDS

- History Standard 2: Students know how to use the processes and resources of historical inquiry.
- History Standard 3: Students understand that societies are diverse and have changed over time.
- Geography Standard 2: Students know the physical and human characteristics of places and use this knowledge to define and study regions and their patterns of change.
- Geography Standard 6: Students apply knowledge of people, places, and environments to understand the past and present and plan for the future.
- Reading and Writing Standard 1: Students read and understand a variety of materials.
- Reading and Writing Standard 2: Students write and speak for a variety of purposes and audiences.
- Reading and Writing Standard 4: Students apply critical thinking skills to their reading, writing, speaking, listening, and viewing.

OBJECTIVES

After completing this activity, students will be able to:

- Visualize at least one kind of house built by early settlers in Colorado.
- Interpret a written primary source.
- Transfer information from one medium to another.

INQUIRY QUESTIONS

- What do you think houses described in written primary sources looked like?
- Why did early settlers in Colorado build the kind of shelters described in the sources?

Doing History/Keeping the Past Project
Inquiry Activities

PROCEDURE

1. Primary Sources Use: This activity requires classroom sets of the following primary source documents (see below):
 - Dugouts
 - A Homestead Cabin
 - A Good Sod House
2. Make classroom sets of the above and hand out and hand out copies to students (individuals or small groups).
3. Ask students to read the documents and draw a picture of one of the houses described in the documents.
4. As the student(s) to write a paragraph explaining why the early settlers built this kind of shelter (dugout/cabin/house).
5. Collect and post the drawings and explanations.
6. Use the drawings and explanations to begin a discussion of the kinds of houses early settlers built in Colorado.
7. Following this discussion, show students some of the photos of houses of early settlers in Colorado and have students compare their drawings and descriptions with the photos.

Dugouts

"Some [of the first settlers] were in tents, some in dugouts and some just had a cave in the hillside. The first year there were but seven families in the settlement and we had only three teams [of horses]. . . . That winter only two of us had wooden houses, and the suffering was intense. We had scarcely any wood to burn. Buffalo chips and sagebrush were our chief fuel. Three of our horses died from starvation and the other three were too weak to pull the empty wagon."

Source: O. T. Jackson, quoted in Karen Waddell, "Dearfield... A Dream Deferred," *Colorado Heritage*, 2 (1988), p. 5.

A Homestead Cabin

"An 8 by 10 [feet] plank house was erected with one door and one window, and all of the "built-in" features--a cracker box over the head of my bed for books and one over the table for dishes. The table and bed were stationary, made of up-to-date planks. A trunk, small stove and two chairs were the furnishings of one of the first domiciles [homes] where Holyoke is now situated."

Source: Lizzie Gordon Buchanan (1934), CWA Interviews, Doc 341/18, Colorado Historical Society

A Good Sod House

"We had a good sod house and a barn in the side of a hill. We never went hungry and always had plenty of fuel to keep us warm. The Frenchman Creek crossed our land and there was a water hole that did not ever go dry. . . . The coyotes yelped at night, but we soon got used to their cry. I brought a great many flowers with me from Illinois, and they did fine in our sod house."

Source: Mary E. Wood (1934), CWA Interviews, Doc. 341/48. Colorado Historical Society.

Additional sources are available in the Archives, under the topic Shelter.