

Early Settlers' Houses

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Overview:

This activity focuses on the houses of early (non-Native American) settlers in Colorado. Students will investigate regional styles of the houses, the materials from which they were made, and the importance of preserving these buildings.

Standards:

- History Standard 2: Students know how to use the processes and resources of historical inquiry.
- History Standard 4: Students understand how science, technology, and economic activity have developed, changed, and affected societies throughout history.
- 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.
- Reading and Writing Standard 2: Students write and speak for a variety of purposes and audiences.

Objectives:

After completing this activity, students will be able to:

- Describe different kinds of building materials available to Colorado's early settlers.
- Identify regional differences in available building materials.
- Express values and opinions about the importance of historic preservation.

Inquiry Questions:

- What kinds of materials did early settlers in Colorado use to build their houses?
- Why did people in different places use different kinds of materials to build their houses?

- What size were the houses built by the early settlers?
- Do houses built by early settlers still remain in your community?
- If so, what materials were these houses made of and what size were they?

Procedure:

A. Materials

1. CD-ROM/Internet Use: The seven photos of houses in the Shelters sequence of the Farming/Ranching topic will be used by the whole class and by small groups of students.
2. Show the students the above photos on a multimedia projector or as transparencies on an overhead.
3. Discuss the location of and building materials used for each house.
4. Divide students into small groups to decide why settlers in different places used different kinds of building materials. Make one or more copies of the CD-ROM disk available in the classroom to allow students to inspect the photos close up.
5. Have students report and discuss their conclusions. Make sure they include locational, geographic, and cultural variables.

B. Size

1. CD-ROM/Internet Use: The seven photos of houses in the Shelters sequence of the Farming/Ranching topic will be used by the whole class and by small groups of students.
2. Show the students the above photos on a multimedia projector or as transparencies on an overhead.
3. Discuss the size of these houses. Estimate the square feet and number of rooms in each house.
4. Compare the size of these houses with the students' homes.
5. Discuss why early settlers' houses were much smaller than houses today.

C. Historic Preservation

1. CD-ROM/Internet Use: None.
2. Find out if any of your local historic sites includes a preserved log cabin, sod house, or adobe house.
3. If so, take the students to visit the site or bring a video of the structure to class.
4. Discuss the value of early houses as historical evidence about how people lived in other times.
5. Discuss what house types we might preserve to let people a century from now understand what our lives are like.