

PIONEER ARTS AND CRAFTS

* Silhouettes. Like families today, pioneers liked to have pictures of family members. While painted portraits was more expensive, shadow portraits or silhouettes, were an inexpensive and easy way to decorate a homestead. A person's shadow was cast upon the wall, traced onto white paper, cut out, painted with black ink or paint, and later mounted upon white paper. Occasionally a white cutout silhouette was mounted on black paper.

Today we can make silhouettes using an overhead projector. Simply tape black or white paper on the wall, shine the overhead projector on the paper, and place student in front of the paper so a shadow hits the paper. Trace the outline of the student's profile and cut carefully. If traced on black paper, the silhouette can be mounted directly on white paper. If traced on white paper, it can either be mounted on white paper and painted black or mounted on black paper. In either case, you will have a silhouette created similar to those of the pioneers.

**When you visit the Museum, make sure you see the silhouette of Sam and Margaret Houston. This is the only known portrait of the couple that portrays husband and wife together.

*Buzz Button or Button on a String. This is a simple pioneer toy created from everyday household objects--thread and a two-holed button.

Thread a 40 inch long string through both button holes to make a loop. Knot the ends of the thread. Hold the loop ends so the button is in the center of the string. Swing the button in one direction to wind up the string. Once the string is wound tight, quickly pull the ends of the strings at the same time. Move hands together and apart keeping tension in the string. The button should start buzzing as you move your hands.

*Covered Wagon. During the 19th century wagons were used as a form of transportation.

Students can create a model of a wagon to illustrate how pioneer families often traveled. Use a small rectangular box. (A shoe box would be ideal.) Cut cardboard strips to make ribs. Curve strips and glue them to inside of the longer sides of the box, forming an arch. You can also make the cover to the wagon by bending cardboard (or poster board) in the same manner. Cover ribs with paper or cloth. Cut cardboard wheels and attach to the wagon. Students can also make small paper dolls to sit in the wagon.

*Baking Hushpuppies. While making cornbread in the kitchen, the cook often had to contend with dogs sniffing around. In order to keep the dogs busy while food was being served, these small treats were tossed to the dogs in order to distract them. As the treats were tossed, the dogs were told "Hush puppies". Today these are tasty treats that your students will enjoy.

Ingredients:

1/2 c. boiling water	1 teaspoon baking powder
1 c. white cornmeal	1/2 teaspoon salt
3 tablespoons shortening	1 egg
1/4 c. cream	

Pour boiling water over cornmeal. Chill mixture for one hour. Heat 2 tablespoons shortening in a heavy skillet. Pour remaining tablespoon of melted shortening into cornmeal. Add egg, baking powder, salt, and cream. Mix well and drop by tablespoons into the hot skillet. Cook, turning once, until browned. Makes 8-10 hushpuppies. Recipe can easily be doubled or tripled.

*Making Butter. In pioneer days, butter was made with fresh milk from the family cow. The milk would be placed in a stone crock and put in a cool place to sit for 24-36 hours. At the top of the crock, cream would settle which would be skimmed off the top and churned in a butter churn. The long slender pole in the churn, the dasher, would help the cream particles stick together to form butter.

Today butter can be made easily in a classroom. Take one cup of room temperature whipping cream. Place this in a glass jar with a tight fitting lid. Shake the jar hard until the butter forms. The jar can easily be shaken by each student 2-3 times. Continue shaking until butter forms.

Washed marbles can be added to the jar in order to act like the dasher and compact the cream particles. After butter has formed, pour off the buttermilk and rinse the butter with warm water. This butter should taste delicious on your hushpuppies!

These activities have been adapted from the following sources:

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