Pioneer Skills
Pre-Visit Activities

The activities in your pre-visit packet have been designed to help you and your students prepare for your upcoming program here at the St. Joseph County Parks. The information in this packet will help your students become familiar with what pioneer life was like here in northern Indiana.

Spinning and Weaving Tools

Write the correct term under each diagram:

**Shears:** A scissor-like device used to remove the fleece from sheep.

**Cards:** Instruments with fine wire teeth to comb the wool fibers to remove dirt and tangles.

**Drop spindle:** A basic, hand-held tool which is used to twist fibers into yarn.

**Spinning wheel:** A machine worked by a spinner sitting in a chair. The wheel turns, twisting fibers into yarn.

**Floor loom:** A piece of equipment used to weave cloth.

1. 

2. 

3. 

4. 

5.
**Pioneer Homes**

When pioneers got to their destination, there were no hotels, and no houses that they could buy or rent. They had to learn to create their own homes. Their first homes may have been their own covered wagons if need be.

Many pioneers began their lives in the new land by living in lean-tos. These were “tents” made of canvas and could be hung from trees or put up with posts. The front flap was left open during the day and closed at night to protect those sleeping inside from the weather.

Below, cross out the types of houses that would not be found in the days of the pioneers. Then find the pioneer homes in the scrambled words.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>trailer</th>
<th>log cabin</th>
<th>skyscraper</th>
<th>lean-to</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>mansion</td>
<td>tepee</td>
<td>shanty</td>
<td>houseboat</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
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1. bcloigna ___ ___ ___ ___ ___ ___ ___
2. olnate ___ ___ ___ ___ - ___ ___
3. thansy ___ ___ ___ ___ ___ ___ ___
4. etpee ___ ___ ___ ___ ___ ___ ___

**Johnny Cakes**

“Laura always wondered why bread made of corn meal was called johnny-cake. It wasn’t a cake. Ma didn’t know, unless the northern soldiers called it johnny-cake because the people in the South, where they fought, ate so much of it. They called the Southern soldiers Johnny Rebs. Maybe, they called the Southern bread, cake, just for fun.

Ma heard some say it should be called journey-cake. She didn’t know. It wouldn’t be very good bread to take on a journey.”

From: *Little House in the Big Woods* by Laura Ingalls Wilder

Have your students research johnny-cakes to see where they originated from. Was Ma right in how they originated?

**Ingredients:**
- 1 cup corn meal
- 1 teaspoon sugar
- 1 teaspoon salt
- 1/2 cup water
- 1 lb. of bacon

**Instructions:**
1. In a bowl, mix the corn meal with the salt and sugar.
2. Add water and mix until you get a nice paste. Form the paste in to patties and set aside.
3. Fry bacon. Remove bacon and fry the cakes in the bacon grease until golden brown.
Then and Now

The items in the left hand column were used in pioneer schoolhouses. Match them to the items (in the right hand column) that have replaced them in modern classrooms. The first one has been done for you.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Pioneer Schoolhouse</th>
<th>Modern Classroom</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Blackboards (made using charred potatoes)</td>
<td>A. Lots of homework</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Beatings with wooden cane, hickory switch or leather strap</td>
<td>B. Calculators and computers</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Hand-made benches and tables</td>
<td>C. Electric lighting</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. Stove which burned wood, coal, straw, corncobs or “cow chips”</td>
<td>D. Dry erase boards and markers</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. No homework because of chores at home or on the farm</td>
<td>E. Paper and pencil</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6. Kerosene lamps (or no lamps at all)</td>
<td>F. Individual desks, often arranged in groups</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7. Slate and chalk</td>
<td>G. Central heating</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8. Abacus (counting machine with wires and wooden disks)</td>
<td>H. Detention, suspension or expulsion</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Picture Gallery

Write a caption for the pictures in the gallery!

Imagine what it would be like to be a kid 150 years ago. Write a caption under each of the pictures below.

A caption is a short description of a picture. It tells what the picture is about, what is happening in the picture or who the people are in the picture.

A.

B.

C.

D.
Spinning and Weaving Word Search

CARDS  SHEEP
DROPSPINDLE  SHUTTLE
DYE  SPINNINGWHEEL
FLAX  WARP
FLOORLOOM  WEAVE
LANOLIN  WEFT
SHEARS  WOOL
Pioneer Chores

What kind of chores do you do at home? Do you do the dishes, clean your room or take care of your pets? Pioneer children had a very different life. Many of them did not even attend school because there may not have been a school available and the children were needed for work at home. Even if they did attend school, most of them would not have graduated, having to drop out of school at a very young age to help with the work at home.

Read the chores below. If the chore would have been done by pioneer children, write a “P” in the blank next to the sentence. If the chore is one that would be performed by children today, write a “T” in the blank next to the sentence.

1. Get up at sunrise and milk the cows and feed the farm animals. __________
2. Work all day in the fields plowing, planting, weeding and harvesting. ____________
3. Mow the lawn with a gas powered lawn mower. ____________
4. Load the dishes into the dishwasher. ____________
5. Bring in water from the creek, rain barrel or well for cooking and washing. ____________
6. Hunt for food. ____________
7. Vacuum the carpeting. ____________
8. Cleaning and preparing food, which may include cleaning and salting or smoking meat as well as drying and canning the vegetables. ____________
9. Cleaning the bathroom, including the tub, toilet and sink. ____________
10. Looking for firewood, then chopping and stacking it. ____________
11. Spinning wool to make thread. Using thread to make material. Using material to make clothes. ____________
12. Searching for herbs for cooking and healing. ____________
13. Making butter. ______________
14. Sweeping the garage. ____________
15. Making candles. ____________
The Laundry

Pioneers had very little time for entertainment. Most of their time was spent performing chores. Modern items make our chores much easier now. Below is a detailed explanation of how to do the laundry. The way it was done in Pioneer days is mixed up with the way it is done now. Read the description below and cross out the things that are NOT included when we do laundry today.

Doing Laundry

**Writing Prompts**

1. Imagine stepping out of a time machine into a pioneer home. Write about what you see, hear and smell. How do you feel about it?

2. Now imagine that you are a pioneer stepping out of a time machine into a modern home. Write about what you see, hear and smell. How do you feel about it?

**Websites**

Pioneer toys: https://www.nps.gov/fosc/learn/education/childrentoy.htm
Pioneer games: https://www.nps.gov/fosc/learn/education/childrengame.htm

**Books**

_Journey of a Pioneer_ by Patricia J. Murphy  
_Going West_ by Laura Ingalls Wilder (book seven in the My First Little House Book series)

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**Answer Key**

<table>
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<tr>
<th>Spinning and Weaving Tools</th>
<th>Pioneer Homes</th>
<th>The Laundry</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Floor loom</td>
<td>1. Log cabin</td>
<td>Load laundry basket. Take basket outside to the wash tub. Boil water and pour into the wash tub. Turn on the washing machine. Place soap in washing machine. Dump clothes in the wash tub.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. Drop spindle</td>
<td>4. Tepee</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. Shears</td>
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<td>8. B</td>
<td>8. P</td>
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