



## Lesson Eight

### Bent's Fort: Historical Inquiry

**Goal:** Students will understand how to use the processes and resources of historical inquiry.

**Objectives:**

- acquire knowledge of the historical inquiry process
- realize that historical inquiry is to history what scientific method is to science
- ask a probing question about the Bent's Fort time period
- formulate a hypothesis for the question
- discover the answer through data triangulation
- prepare a class presentation

**Colorado Model Content Standards Addressed:**

History: K-4 (1.3, 2.1, 2.2) 5-8 (1.3, 2.1, 2.2)

Reading: K-8 (1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6)

**Materials Needed:**

Internet access [www.nps.gov/beol](http://www.nps.gov/beol)  
library access  
adult support and guidance

**Background Information:**

The younger students will need more assistance to successfully complete the Historical Inquiry activity. You may need to model the steps to clarify the process for them. Compare Historical Inquiry to Scientific Method. They may already be familiar with the Scientific Method from their experience at Science Fairs. Primary source data is more difficult to find and can be hard for the younger students. However, it is important for them to understand the difference between primary and secondary sources.

**Historical Inquiry Model**

1. Get an overview (need background facts before a good question can be asked)
2. Ask a probing question
  - \* something you want to learn more about
  - \* identify an issue to resolve
  - \* explore a cause and effect issue
3. Triangulate data
  - \* primary source - firsthand or eye witness account (journals, letters, photographs, autobiography)
  - \* secondary source - any document that describes an event, person, place or thing through research of primary sources (not firsthand accounts, more like a biography)
  - \* expert opinion - someone who studies and is learned in the

area of interest (1800's historian)

4. Hypothesize your answer (educated guess)
5. Collect, explore and interpret your data (research to prove or disprove your hypothesis)
6. Support and record your conclusions

**Activity One:**

You have been working on the early 1800's and Bent's Fort. By now the students have some background knowledge. Use this knowledge to come up with a probing question, something they wonder about. Discuss with the group the possibilities until they can grasp the concept of questioning. Show them how to use the Historical Inquiry Model steps to find the answer for their question. Keep it simple so the students can be successful. Stress the importance of seeking an expert's opinion. Bent's Old Fort National Historic Site historical interpreters would be glad to answer any questions.

**Activity Two:**

When the research is complete and the question has been answered, the students will share what they have learned with their classmates. Presentations should include a question, the hypothesis, information collected and the answer to the question.