

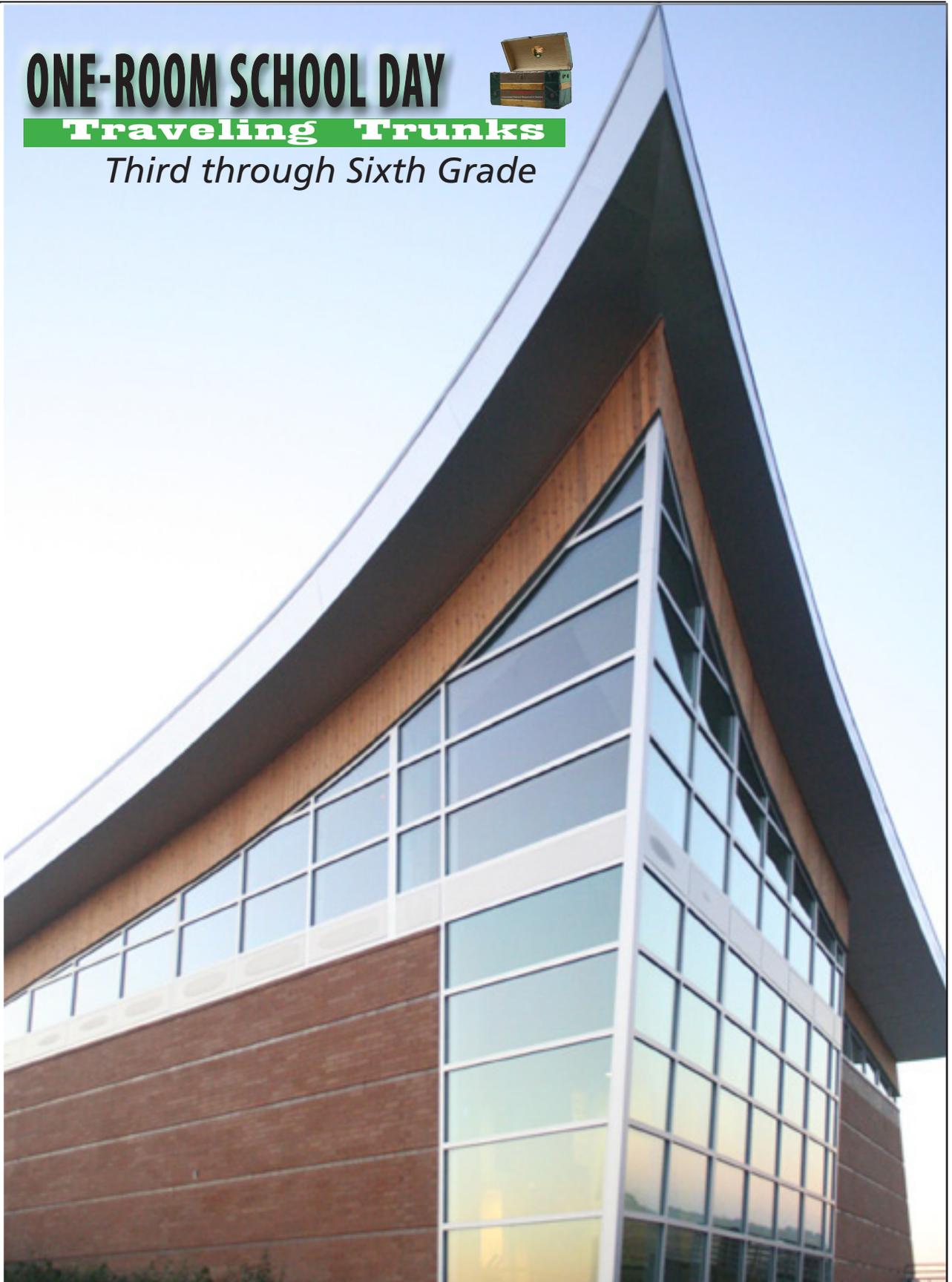
**Free Land was the Cry!**

# ONE-ROOM SCHOOL DAY



## Traveling Trunks

*Third through Sixth Grade*



# Homestead

National Park Service  
U.S. Department of the Interior

Homestead National Monument  
of America, Nebraska



# ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

## Primary Authors

Tina Miller, Education Coordinator,  
Homestead National Monument of America  
Doris Martin, Park Guide,  
Homestead National Monument of America

Our thanks to the following people  
for their contributions to our project:

Merrith Baughman, Chief of Interpretation and Resource Management,  
Homestead National Monument of America  
Mark Engler, Superintendent, Homestead National Monument of America

## National Park Visionaries and Supporters



None of Nature's landscapes are ugly  
so long as they are wild.  
*John Muir*

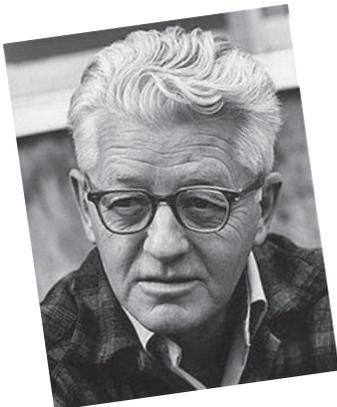
In dedicating the gateway to Yellowstone in 1903, President Roosevelt said that the “essential feature” of the National Parks was their “essential democracy” in that the parks preserved wilderness and scenery “for the people as a whole.”

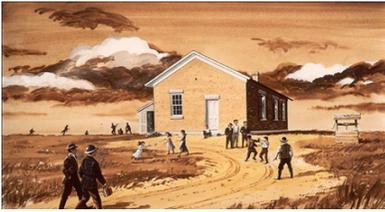
*President Theodore Roosevelt*



“National parks are the best idea we have ever had. Absolutely American, absolutely democratic, they reflect us at our best rather than our worst.”

*Wallace Stegner*





# TABLE OF CONTENTS

This unit has activities to acquaint students in grades third through sixth with the National Park Service and its mission to preserve and protect the natural and cultural resources of the United States.

<b>Program Description .....</b>	<b>Page 4</b>
<b>Curriculum Objectives, National Standards .....</b>	<b>Page 5</b>
<b>Activities</b>	
<b>One-Room Schools .....</b>	<b>Pages 6, 7</b>
<b>Spencerian Penmanship .....</b>	<b>Pages 8, 9</b>
<b>Children’s Blizzard of 1888.....</b>	<b>Pages 10, 11</b>
<b>Looking Back at the Blizzard .....</b>	<b>Pages 12, 13</b>
<b>Let’s Have a Picnic.....</b>	<b>Pages 14, 15</b>
<b>McGuffey’s Readers .....</b>	<b>Pages 16, 17</b>
<b>Additional Resources including Homestead Handouts .....</b>	<b>Pages 18 - 25</b>

Some of the ideas in this lesson may have been adapted from earlier, unacknowledged sources without our knowledge. If the reader believes this to be the case, please let us know, and appropriate corrections will be made. Thank you.

# PROGRAM DESCRIPTION



The Freeman School stands as a reminder of the role schoolhouses played on the prairie frontier. Officially known as School District 21, the Freeman School was a center for the education of children from 1872 until 1967. At that time, it was

one of the oldest continuously operating schools in Nebraska. During its long history, the school served as a meeting place for the First Trinity Lutheran Church, a polling place for Blakely Township, and a gathering place for many organizations and clubs.

Homesteaders placed a high value on public education. Simple one-room schoolhouses were often built before their permanent homes.

Unlike many of the more typical wood or sod-walled schools found west of the Missouri River, the Freeman School was constructed of locally-baked brick. According to school records, Thomas Freeman was paid \$100.15 “on account of brick.” Furnishings were usually handmade, but the Freeman

*It seemed, as I recall it, a lonely little house of scholarship...But that humble little school had a dignity of a fixed and far off purpose...It was the outpost of civilization. It was the advance guard of the pioneer, driving the wilderness farther into the west. It was life preparing wistfully for the future.*

*James Rooney in 'Journey from Ignorant Ridge,' 1976*

School was furnished with desks shipped from Indiana.

Teachers were young, often younger than their oldest students. Salaries were meager and many teachers collected a large portion of their wages in room and board. It was not uncommon for a teacher to rotate from one

prairie community to another to be housed and fed.

Books were precious. Many students had to supply their own texts. Family Bibles were often used. Different editions and often different titles added to the teacher’s woes. When more money was available, McGuffey readers reduced this problem. In 1881, the Freeman School provided textbooks for its students, ten years before schools were required to by the Nebraska legislature.

The schoolhouse was often the focal point for a young community. Many homesteaders saw their children baptized in the schoolhouse, heard friends eulogized there, and shared a box supper with their neighbors at the Saturday night social.

# CURRICULUM OBJECTIVES

- Students will practice Spencerian penmanship skills.
- Students will pack an 1880's lunch.
- Students will learn about school yard games from the 1880's.
- Students will be able to identify the impact the media can have on how an event is remembered.
- Students will analyze the characteristics of a hero and heroine.
- Students will be asked to consider the design and content of an early reading textbook and will compare it to the books they use for reading today.

# NATIONAL STANDARDS

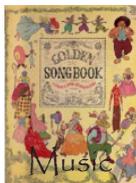
This unit is broken up into different grade levels, so there are many standards that could apply. These are just a few of them.

## NL-ENG.K-12.1 READING FOR PERSPECTIVE

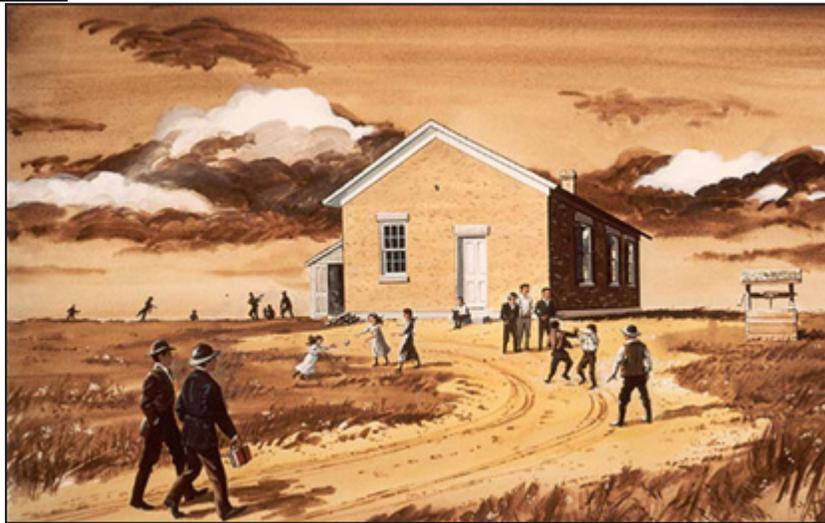
Students read a wide range of print and nonprint texts to build an understanding of texts, of themselves, and of the cultures of the United States and the world; to acquire new information; to respond to the needs and demands of society and the workplace; and for personal fulfillment. Among these texts are fiction and nonfiction, classic and contemporary works.

## NL-ENG.K-12.5 COMMUNICATION STRATEGIES

Students employ a wide range of strategies as they write and use different writing process elements appropriately to communicate with different audiences for a variety of purposes.

<b>SPECIAL ICONS</b>		<i>Enrichment Activities</i>		<b>Cool Internet Sites:</b>		<i>Language Arts</i>
	Indicates a reproducible handout is included		Indicates an additional math lesson		Indicates an additional music or art activity	
		Indicates advanced lessons				Indicates an additional language arts lesson

# ONE-ROOM SCHOOLS



Painting by George Marsden

*“Without a murmur and before the settlers had built themselves comfortable homes, they sacrificed to provide for their children.”*  
Everett Dick in *“The Sod House Frontier, 1854-1890”*

Daniel Freeman, along with his homesteading neighbors, established School District 21 in 1865, just two years after filing his homestead claim. In 1872 this brick one room schoolhouse was opened and operated for 95 years. During this period the school served as a meeting place for First Trinity Lutheran Church, a polling place for Blakely Township, and a gathering place for many organizations and clubs.

A typical day for students might have looked like the day which Marshall Barber describes in his book, “The Schoolhouse at Prairie View.” He describes his experiences as a student in a one room schoolhouse in the 1870’s and 1880’s in southeastern Kansas.

## Arithmetic

He said the day began with arithmetic because it was considered so practical. The youngest students worked on addition and subtraction while the most advanced students extracted square roots. Reading was next. “It (reading) was thought the gateway to all knowledge,” said Barber.



## Penmanship

Next in importance was penmanship. “It was largely an affair of copybooks and Mr. Spencer, and I hated it,” said Barber. Platt Rogers Spencer, author of the five copybooks used to teach Spencerian Penmanship, would have disagreed. “Writing is almost as important as speaking, as a medium for communicating thought...Scrawls that cannot be read may be compared to talking that cannot be understood; and writing difficult to decipher, to stammering speech,” wrote Spencer in “The Theory of the Spencerian Penmanship. This elegant style of penmanship required much practice and students spent time each day perfecting the formation of letters.



## History

History was taught from a single textbook at Prairie View. “Our teachers did not stray far from the book; perhaps some of them feared to get into politics, which would hardly do for a public school,” said Barbers.

### Spelling



Spelling was also an important course in the curriculum. “There was perhaps more disgrace attached to misspelling in those times than at present; correct spelling was the mark of an educated person,” said Barber. A commonly used approach to teaching spelling was to have the students line up along a board in the schoolroom floor. “A word was called out and if the pupil missed it, it was repeated to the pupil next in line. If he got it right, he went above (to the right in our school) the misspeller, and in the course of the recitation might get to the head of the class—he did not need to be graded, his “standing” was evidence that he knew his lesson. There was a touch of the dramatic in standing up for oral recitation. I still have a picture in my mind of the correct speller marching head up to the top of the class and the misspellers shuffling downwards with eyes on their toes,” said Barber. More formal spelling contests were held at Prairie View on Friday afternoons or nights with parents in attendance.

### Science

Unlike today, science formed no part of the regular curriculum at Prairie View. “Farming itself was an important study in science. But that was learning which we were supposed to get at home, not in school,” said Barber.

### Grammar

Another area of study which did not have a well-defined curriculum was grammar. “The other studies had a more or less well-defined tradition behind them, but grammar might be taught in any way the teacher pleased,” said Barber. At Prairie View it was taught through the students learning the parts of speech followed by parsing and diagramming. Barber explained parsing with this illustration.

We will parse “cow” in the following sentence. “Hasten, the naughty cow is eating our melon.” “Cow, noun, common, third person, singular number, feminine gender, nominative case, subject of the verb ‘is eating’ and modified by the definitive article ‘the’ and the adjective ‘naughty.’” Then there followed all the other words in the sentence, if there were enough time in the recitation period to parse them.

Other subjects which were taught, according to the third annual report of the Commissioner of Schools in 1861, included vocal music, astronomy, geography, orthography, and Latin.

Students were expected to work on their lessons on their own and were called forward with students in the same grade to show the teacher what they had learned. This was done through showing the teacher their work and through recitation.

Recitation worked for several reasons according to an educational website maintained by Middle Tennessee State University. “First, when you know you are going to recite something in your own words, you pay more attention. It forces you to employ the principle of intent to remember. Second, you get immediate feedback. You know if you are able to explain something in your own words out loud. You understand it. Third, when you hear something, you have used an entirely different part of the brain.

School was not in session as long as it is today. According to Dick in “The Sod House Frontier” there was a territorial law in Nebraska which required a seven months’ session of school each year, but this was widely ignored...The average number of months was five.”

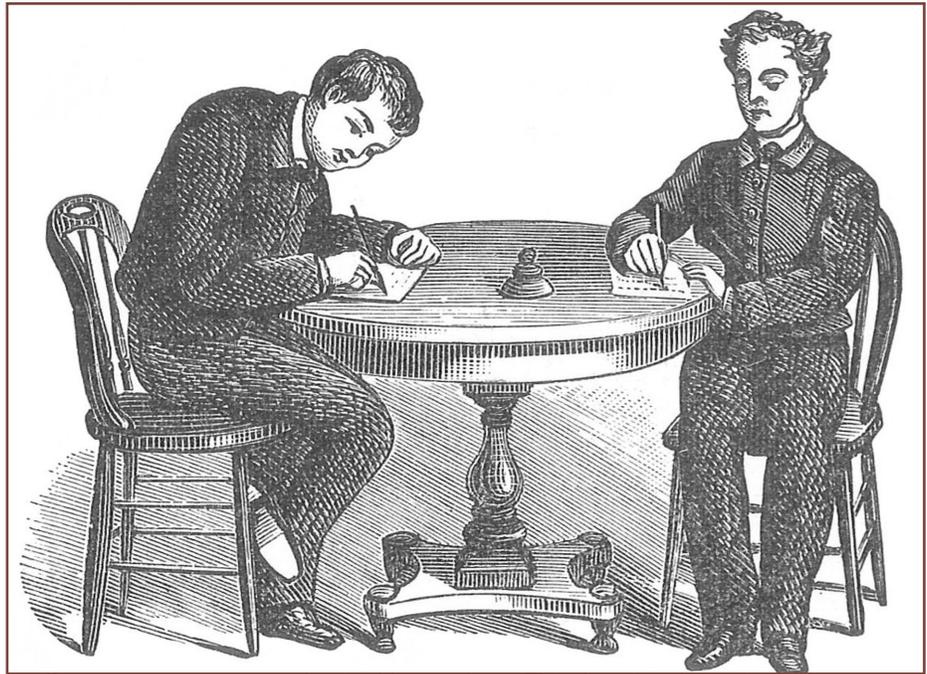
## Station Activity



Platt Rogers Spencer grew up loving graceful lines and beautiful writing. As a young child he drew letters on birch bark and on the sandy shores of Lake Erie. He admired the elegant signature of John Hancock on the “Declaration of Independence.” Thus he seemed destined for the distinguished career in penmanship which became his. He developed a system of handwriting which dominated the schools for almost a century and he spent his life teaching it.

- *Theory of the Spencerian System of Practical Penmanship*

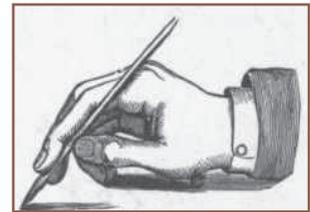
# SPENCERIAN PENMANSHIP



Correct posture was emphasized by teachers. This drawing shows incorrect posture on the left and correct posture on the right. Teachers were encouraged to have all students use the same position. Students learned to sit upright and to keep the shoulders square.

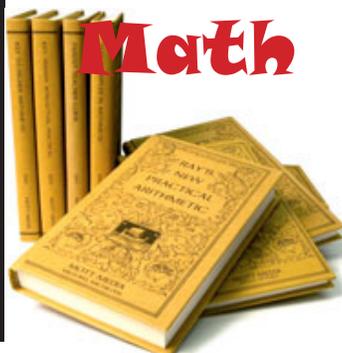
The correct manner of holding the pen was also important.

“Take the pen between the first and second fingers and the thumb, observing, 1st, that it crosses the second finger on the corner of the nail; 2d, that it crosses the fore finger forward of the knuckle; 3d, that the end of the thumb touches the holder opposite the lower joint of the fore finger; 4th, that the top of the holder points towards the right shoulder; 5th, that the wrist is above the paper, and the hand resting lightly on the nails of the third and fourth fingers; 6th, that the point of the pen comes *squarely* to the paper.”



-*Theory of the Spencerian System of Practical Penmanship*

## Other Activities

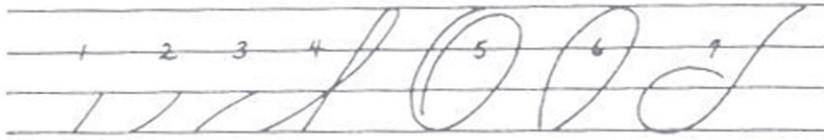


Spencerian Penmanship was done at a 52 degree angle. Why do you think a 52 degree angle was selected?

*The greatest speed is obtained with the 52 degree slant.*

# SPENCERIAN PENMANSHIP

## EXAMPLES.



In the Spencerian Penmanship System seven principles were used.

Principles were the basic parts of letters. Students began learning the style of writing by practicing these strokes over and over. They were:

- The 1st is a straight line.
- The 2nd is a right curve.
- The 3rd is a left curve.
- The 4th is an extended loop.
- The 5th is a direct oval.
- The 6th is a reversed oval.
- The 7th is the capital stem.

Once students had mastered the seven principles and learned how to write each letter they would practice by writing sentences which also taught a moral lesson. Practice writing one of the following sentences in cursive penmanship. A student in the 1800's would have been expected to write each sentence at least thirty times before going to the next sentence.

- Angels are guardian spirits.
- Better to live well than long.
- Criticize your own writing.
- Doing nothing is doing ill.
- Exercise strengthens the body.
- Freedom is a precious boon.
- Gaming has ruined many.
- Hold truth in great esteem.
- Industry increases wealth.
- Justice holds equal scales.
- Kind words can never die.
- Let your promises be sincere.
- Modesty always charms.
- Opinion misleads many.
- Reputation is not character.
- Time present is our only lot.
- Virtue commands respect.

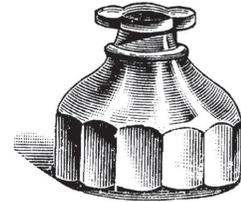
Using the Homestead Handout have students practice writing the sentences above.

Students may also practice on the slates provided in the traveling trunk.



## Station Activity

### Enrichment Activities



Up through the middle of this century, steel pens fulfilled many of the same roles that ballpoints fill today. Using these highly flexible points, writers of the 19th century learned to write in very stylized cursives including Spencerian.

Try using a steel pen and inkwell to write.



## Other Activities

**Pre-Visit  
Activity #1  
(suggested)**

# THE CHILDREN'S BLIZZARD OF 1888



On Jan. 12, 1888, a sudden fierce blizzard slashed across the Midwest. The temperature fell to between 30 and 40 degrees below zero. A howling northwest wind swept the plains. The storm raged for 12 to 18 hours and is probably the most severe single blizzard to have hit the plains since settlement began after the passage of the Homestead Act of 1862.

The storm had its greatest impact on children in portions of Nebraska and South Dakota. Therefore, it was later named the Children's Blizzard, the Schoolchildren's Blizzard or the Schoolhouse Blizzard due to the high proportion of children that died.

"Winds accompanying the storm whipped snow into the air, limiting visibility to near zero, which made even the shortest journey difficult at best. But the real killer in this storm was the frigid air advancing behind the low pressure system to replace the spring-like conditions that preceded the storm," according to Dr. Keith C. Heidorn, in an article on The Weather Doctor website.

As darkness fell, temperatures from Montana to Kansas plunged to double digits below zero. When the sun rose on the glittering windless morning of January 13, hundreds lay frozen to death on the open prairie -- many of them children.

## Activity

Have students read *The Schoolchildren's Blizzard* by Marty Rhodes Figley.

Discuss Questions:

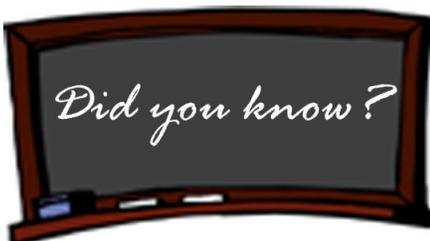
What type of day was it when Sarah and Annie went to school?

How were they dressed?

When the storm arrived why did Miss Freeman keep the students at school?

Why did they leave the school and where did they go?

How did the students stay together?



Blizzards are characterized by low temperatures (usually below 20 degrees fahrenheit) and accompanied by winds that are at least 35 mph or greater. There must also be sufficient falling and/or blowing snow in the air that will frequently reduce visibility to 1/4 mile or less for a duration of at least 3 hours. A severe blizzard is considered to have temperatures near or below 10 degrees fahrenheit, winds exceeding 45 mph, and visibility reduced by snow to near zero.

[www.weather.com/encyclopedia](http://www.weather.com/encyclopedia)

# THE CHILDREN'S BLIZZARD OF 1888

## Pre-Visit Activity #1 (suggested)

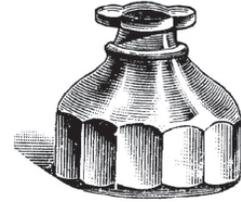
### What happened to the weather?



Visit <http://bit.ly/d0y3IS> and answer the following questions.

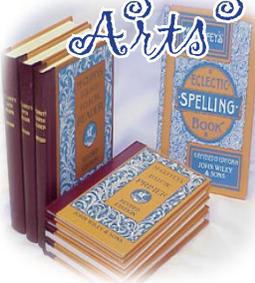
1. Why is it called The Children's Blizzard?
2. Where did the cold air mass sit the second week of January?
3. What organization provided weather services for the nation?
4. Where did a small storm system develop on January 5?
5. What direction did the cold air mass continue to slip?
6. To what did the author of the article liken the proximity of the two very different air masses?
7. What was the morning temperature in Denver, Colorado?
8. How many degrees warmer was North Platte, Nebraska than the previous day?
9. When did the storm cross into the Dakota Territory?
10. When did it reach eastern Nebraska?

### *Enrichment Activities*



The biggest natural disaster of recent years is Hurricane Katrina, and there are some striking parallels between Katrina and The Children's Blizzard. Both affected large geographical areas; both were forecast well in advance but nonetheless caught residents unprepared; both provoked a huge response in the media. Do you think The Children's Blizzard was the Hurricane Katrina of its day? What, if anything, have we as a nation learned since 1888 about how to cope with natural disaster?

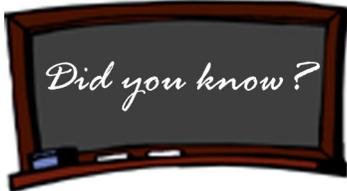
### *Language Arts*



Write a short story about a blizzard or other weather event you remember. Try to include details about the temperature, the wind speed and snowfall/rain. Check the NOAA Central Library Data Imaging Project to get this information at: [1.usa.gov/EyBqD](http://1.usa.gov/EyBqD)

## Other Activities

## Post-Visit Activity #1 (suggested)



The afternoon of the storm, three of the Friesen children of Henderson, Nebraska walked to visit their older brother about a mile and a half away. When the blizzard struck, the trio headed home, but blinded by the driven snow, they quickly became disoriented and lost their way. They, like many others on the Plains that day, burrowed themselves into a haystack to get out of the frigid winds. When the children did not return home as scheduled, their parents Anna and Jacob became worried. First, Anna placed a lamp in the window, hoping they could see it and use it as a beacon home. Then Jacob ventured out to find his children. He used a barbed-wire fence as a guide as he pushed through the storm. The children heard him call their names, and they emerged from the hay. The foursome followed the barbed wire home, and all arrived safe and unharmed.

# LOOKING BACK AT THE BLIZZARD



This mosaic was one of six commissioned in 1967 to celebrate Nebraska's Centennial. This one by Jeanne Reynal shows Minnie May Freeman and her students making their way to Freeman's boarding house during the Children's Blizzard of 1888.

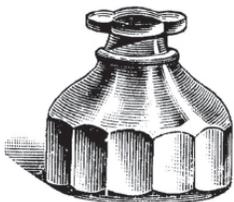
## Was Miss Minnie May Freeman a heroine?

*The following is taken from "In All Its Fury, the Great Blizzard of 1888". It was compiled by members of the Blizzard Club in 1947 and reprinted in paperback form in 1973 to commemorate the one hundredth anniversary of the blizzard.*

"If many heroic deeds failed to receive proper recognition, there were others which were widely and loudly acclaimed. These stories

have become classics in the history of the Middle West and any account of the January 12, 1888, blizzard would be incomplete without a reference to some of them. Best known, perhaps, is the Minnie May Freeman incident. There are localities in Nebraska where that storm is still referred to by survivors as "the Minnie Freeman blizzard."

## Enrichment Activities



Select another hero or heroine from our country's history, research the person and present a PowerPoint covering the following points to the class:

- Who is the person?
- What did they do to become a hero or heroine?
- When did this happen?
- Where did this happen?
- Why do you think this person is considered a hero or heroine?
- How did the media report on the incident?
- What impact do you believe the media coverage had on our perception of this person as a hero or heroine?

*'...by ten o'clock everyone realized that the country was in the grip of a terrible blizzard, the wind blowing a gale and the snow coming in a blinding rush. By morning, nothing could be seen, and in order to care for the stock in the barns, it was necessary to draw a rope from house to barn. The cold was so intense that fires had to be kept going in the house day and night, and many people suffered from a lack of provisions and fuel. This continued for four days. Cattle on the range could not be cared for and it was not possible to search for them until after the fourth day of the storm. Losses were extremely heavy and searchers would find them frozen to death, some with their mouths frozen shut, some with their feet frozen.'*

Ary Johnson, Pioneer Women, page 92

Miss Freeman was teaching in a rural school called "the Midvale school" in Mira Valley, near Ord, Valley county, Nebraska. There were sixteen pupils present that day, several of them being nearly as old as the teacher, who was still in her teens. The schoolhouse was made of sod, and there was enough coal on hand to keep the group warm if it were found advisable to remain all night in the building. Before time for dismissal in the afternoon, the wind broke the leather hinges of the door and blew it in. The boys repaired the hinges and put the door in place. When it was blown in again they nailed it shut.

Soon a sudden gust of wind caught the corner of the tarpaper-and-sod roof and ripped it off, leaving a large hole through which the snow began to drift. Both teacher and pupils knew that they must now prepare to

leave the building for it would be impossible to keep warm with that hole in the roof. They expected the whole roof to be torn off at any moment.

The sturdy, half-grown boys and girls were mostly Nebraska-born and were undismayed by the fury of the storm. They agreed to the teacher's plan to take the whole group to her boarding place, half a mile north of the schoolhouse, and assisted in getting the smaller pupils through a south window and in lining them up for their march against the storm. Cheeks and fingers were frosted and it was hard going, but they struggled on and eventually reached their destination safely.

Telling the story very simply, many years afterward, the teacher recalled how she and the housewife labored that evening to prepare a meal sufficient for the hungry crowd. This casual

comment shows very plainly that the incident was not thought of in terms of heroism by either teacher, parents or pupils.

A few days after the storm the newspapers got the story of the trek and a highly colored version of it was broadcast across the country. Miss Freeman found herself a heroine, the recipient of many gifts and congratulatory notes from unknown admirers from East to West. She modestly insisted that no credit was due her for what she did, telling one reporter that she had no ambition to become a "second Grace Darling."

But the public continued to honor her for her prompt action in leading her pupils to a place of safety when their lives were endangered by the storm. Her story will be told as long as the blizzard of January 12, 1888, is remembered.

## Class Activity



### Student Rules in 1860

Boys and girls shall file into the classroom in separate lines and be seated quietly on opposite sides of the room.

Boys shall remove their caps when entering.

Children must sit up straight at all times.

Children must not squirem, fidget or whine.

There will be a daily inspection of neck, ears and fingernails prior to class to ensure cleanliness of person.

Young ladies must never show a bare ankle; girls' and boys' clothing should cover arms and legs completely.

# LET'S HAVE A PICNIC



Many one-room schools ended the school year with a school picnic. This picture was taken at Freeman School in 1911. The students are around a Maypole. Have students bring a box lunch with simple food pioneer children might have brought in their lunches, such as bread and butter sandwiches and apples. Follow the lunch with games.

### Suggestions for Pioneer Lunches

- Corn muffins, cold pancakes, homemade bread
- Cheese
- Jelly or jam sandwiches
- Meat sandwiches
- Dried meat, jerky
- Hard boiled egg
- Fresh fruits
- Fresh vegetable
- Cookies
- Wrap lunch items in a box or pail

## Other Activities



Children often had to entertain themselves with simple toys and games. Learn about their toys and games by completing the School Children's Games crossword puzzle located in the Additional Resources Section.

# LET'S HAVE A PICNIC

## Class Activity

### Suggestions for Pioneer Games

#### *Blindman's Bluff-Outdoor*

A blindfolded player is led into the center of the circle. As the player turns around three or four times, the people in the circle chant:

“How many horses has your father got?”

“Three.”

“What colors are they?”

“Black, blue and gray.”

“Turn about, and turn about, and catch whom you can.”

The blindfolded player then tries to capture someone and guess their name. If the player does not guess the right name, they must try again with a new person. When successful the person captured and named correctly, must in turn be blindfolded.

#### *Cat and Rat-Outdoor*

Two players are selected, one as the Cat and one as the Rat. The other players stand in a circle holding hands, with arms outstretched and held high. The Cat and the Rat start on opposite sides of the circle. The following exchange precedes the game:

Cat: I am the Cat

Rat: I am the Rat

Cat: I will catch you

Rat: You can't

Rat: Ready

The chase begins. The Rat runs in and out of the circle of players, underneath their arms. The Cat must follow the exact course of the Rat or he is “crowned” and another Cat is chosen. If the Rat is caught, the Cat becomes the Rat and chooses another Cat.

#### *Follow the Leader-Outdoor*

One player is the leader and runs at the head of the line. He runs in and out, hopping and clapping his hands. Any player who fails to follow the leader and do as he does must drop out of the game. The game continues until all have been eliminated.

#### *Red Lion -Outdoor*

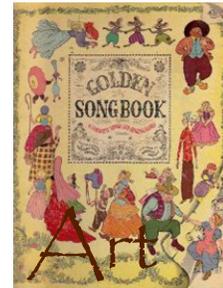
Select a Lion and a Lion's Keeper. The Lion stands in the 'den' with the Lion's Keeper nearby. The rest of the players walk slowly towards the den and chant, “Red Lion, Red Lion, come out of your den. Whoever you catch will be one of your friends.” When the players get close, the Lion Keeper shouts, “Loose!” and the Lion runs out to chase everyone except the Lion Keeper. If the Lion catches someone, they must say “Red Lion” three times while holding the tagged player and then the tagged player becomes a Lion. They both return to the den and start chasing the others until everyone is caught.

#### *Egg-in-the-spoon-Indoor*

Divide the group into two, three or four teams. Have the first player on each team place an egg on a spoon. When “Go!” is shouted the first person on the team goes up and comes back with their egg on the spoon and then gives the spoon to the next person in line. The first team to have all their players go down and back wins.

#### *I Spy-Indoor*

I Spy is a searching game. To play, one person looks around the room and selects an object. They whisper the answer to the teacher or another person and then give a clue to the other students by saying something like “I Spy with my little eye something that is red”. The other students take turns guessing what the mystery object is.



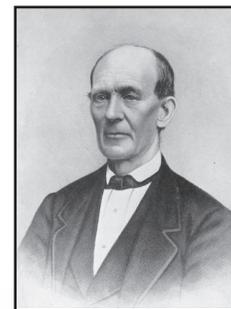
A thaumatrope was a favorite settler toy. Each side of the thaumatrope had a picture. When the strings on either side of the pictures were twisted and released, the thaumatrope spun around, making the two pictures appear to be a single image. Follow the directions to make your own version of this pioneer game or use the designs in the Homestead Handout and make your own.

1. Cut a circle from cardboard.
  2. Color or draw your own design on each side.
  3. Glue the circles together if need be.
  4. Punch one hole on both sides of the circle.
  5. Secure a loop of string through each hole. The loops should be short enough so that you can easily hold the device while it is stretched out.
  6. Hold the string ends one in each hand and “wind” the thaumatrope by flipping the disk, which will cause the string loops to twist. Once the loops are good and twisted, gently pull them, and the disc will spin.
- See complete instructions in station folder.*

## Station Activity

# MCGUFFEY'S READERS

McGuffey's Readers have been hailed not only as major influences on American education but on American morals and culture as well. The first two volumes of McGuffey's Eclectic Readers were first published in 1836 and the third and fourth volumes followed in 1837. Alexander McGuffey, William's brother, assisted with the McGuffey Speller in 1838 and was the author of the Fifth and Sixth Eclectic Readers, published in 1844 and 1857. The Readers were an immediate success and were used in American schools for almost a century. It is estimated that 122 million copies were sold between 1836 and 1920.



*William Holmes McGuffey*

“One thing the McGuffey Readers shared with schoolbooks everywhere, and indeed with most literature and art of their day—the notion that education itself was primarily moral, and only secondarily intellectual,” said American historian Henry Steele Commager in the foreword to a reprint of McGuffey's Sixth Eclectic Reader published in 1963. Three major points to discuss when talking about McGuffey's Readers:

- **No conscious concession to immaturity** – “There was no nonsense about limiting the vocabulary of familiar words, for example. There was no effort always to be entertaining, and no policy of easy familiarity between young and old. There was no drawing back from many of the harsher experiences of the grown-up world.
- **They were cosmopolitan** – “The temptation to use the Readers to inculcate patriotism and nationalism must well have been well-nigh irresistible. Insofar as the Readers drew on the classics The McGuffeys, perhaps realized—that so many of our professional patriots do not realize—that in a sound and fortunate society patriotism can be trusted to take care of itself...But it was not a narrow patriotism; the effect of the Readers was cosmopolitan rather than parochial—something those infatuated extremists who seek to exploit them for chauvinistic purposes might ponder.”
- **Provided school children with a common denominator** – “It lay in providing the schoolchildren of the mid-nineteenth century with a common body of allusion and a common frame of reference...They gave to the American child of the nineteenth century what he so conspicuously lacks today—a common body of allusions, a sense of the common experience and of common possession. That, no doubt, was what made the Readers so cherished in retrospect: they were always there to be remembered and quoted, and you could be reasonably sure that your audience would share your recollection and recognize your quotation.”

In conclusion, “The McGuffey Readers, then, are far more than a historical curiosity. They played an important role in American education, and in American culture, and helped shape that elusive thing we call the American character. If they did not themselves provide the stuff of culture and morality, they were one of the chief instruments for weaving this stuff into the fabric of American life.”



*Henry Steele Commager*

These quotes come from the Foreword in the 1962 edition of the McGuffey's Sixth Eclectic Reader and were written by historian Henry Steele Commager.

# MCGUFFEY'S READERS

## Station Activity

### McGuffey's Readers

#### Materials

A copy of one or more McGuffey readers  
McGuffey Reader Graphic Organizer  
Notebook paper

#### Procedure

Have students discuss in their group what school would be like if they did not have textbooks. How would you learn? How could your homework be completed at home?

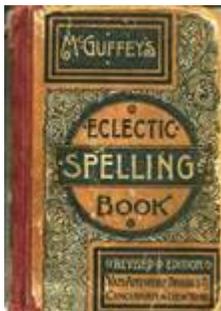
Next have the students read through the history of McGuffey's Readers.

In their groups, students will compare the McGuffey reader to one or more of the books they currently use in reading. How are they the same? How are they different?

Next each student will copy down a poem, paragraph or other reading from the McGuffey reader. Give each student time to memorize their selection.

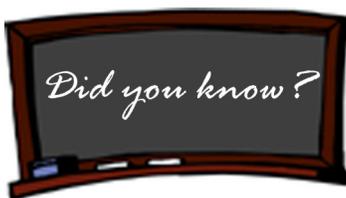
At the conclusion of all station activities have students, in their groups, go to the front of the room and recite their selection.

### McGuffey's Eclectic Spelling Book Procedures



Using the McGuffey's Eclectic Spelling Book choose words and have a 'spell down' in your class. Line students up along the board (or wall). Ask the first student in line to spell a word. If the student spells it correctly, move on to the next student. If the student misses the word, give the word to the next student in line. If they spell the word correctly, then they move in front of the first speller. If they also miss the word, keep proceeding down the line until a student spells it correctly.

The student who spells it correctly moves in front of the student who first spelled it incorrectly.



The most interesting idea which best explains much of the education which occurred in one room schoolhouse is the idea that students were in school, most importantly, to become better people and secondly, to learn. Developing children with solid morals was most important during the 1800's. This morality was based on Protestant Christianity. There was little diversity as most immigrants came from Europe. This is illustrated in both the McGuffey's Readers and in the Spencerian Penmanship Books, as well as in the rules which surrounded the conduct of teachers.

# ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

---

*A Child's Day* by Bobbie Kalman and Tammy Everts, Crabtree Publishing Company, 1994

*Classroom Games* by Bobbie Kalman and Heather Levigne, Crabtree Publishing Company, 2001

*Heading West: Life with the Pioneers* by Pat McCarthy, Chicago Review Press, 2009

*In All Its Fury* Stories and Reminiscences collected and compiled by W.H. O'Gara, J & L Lee Books, 1988

*McGuffey's Eclectic Spelling Book* by William Holmes McGuffey, John Wiley and Sons, 1879

*McGuffey's Readers Series* by William Holmes McGuffey, John Wiley and Sons, 1879

*My Antonia* by Willa Cather: Mariner Books, 1913

*Pioneer Women* by Linda Peavy and Ursula Smith, University of Oklahoma Press, 1998

*Schoolyard Games* by Bobbie Kalman and Heather Levigne, Crabtree Publishing Company, 2001

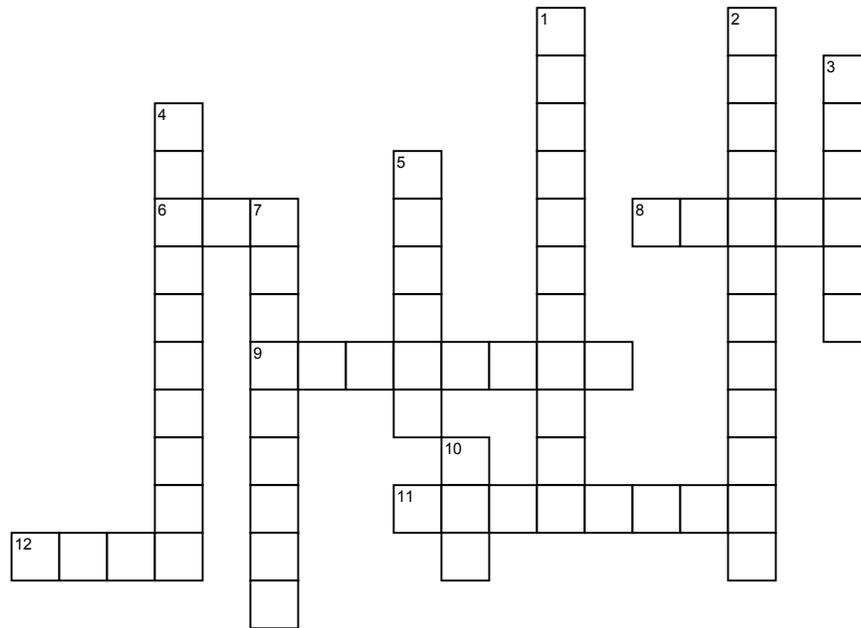
*The Schoolchildren's Blizzard* by Marty Rhodes Figley, Millbrook Press, 2004

*The Schoolhouse at Prairie View* by Marshall Barber, University of Kanas Press, 1953

*The Sod House Frontier* by Everett Dick, Johnsen Publishing Company, 1975



# School Children's Games



This puzzle was made by Homestead National Monument of America using Crossword Weaver(TM)

## ACROSS

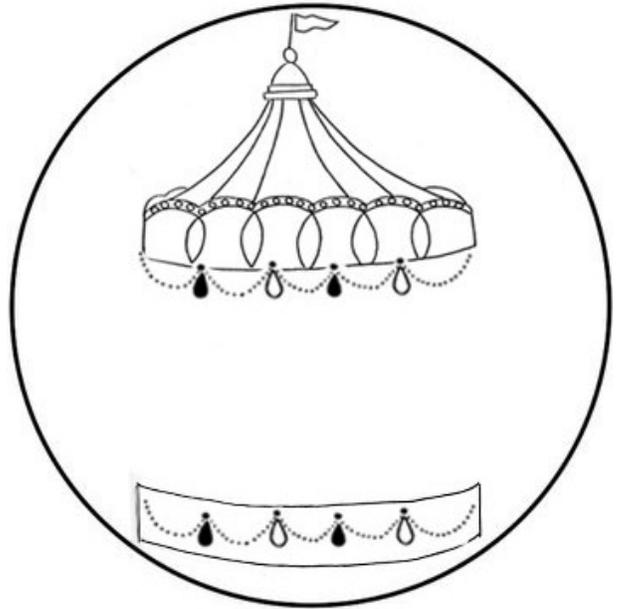
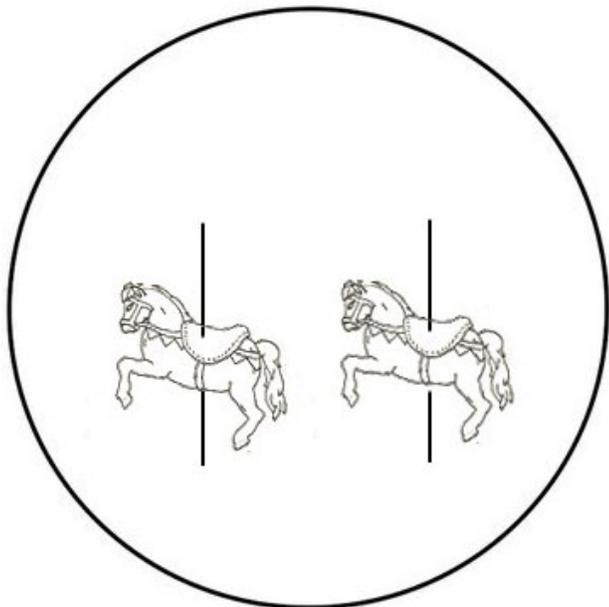
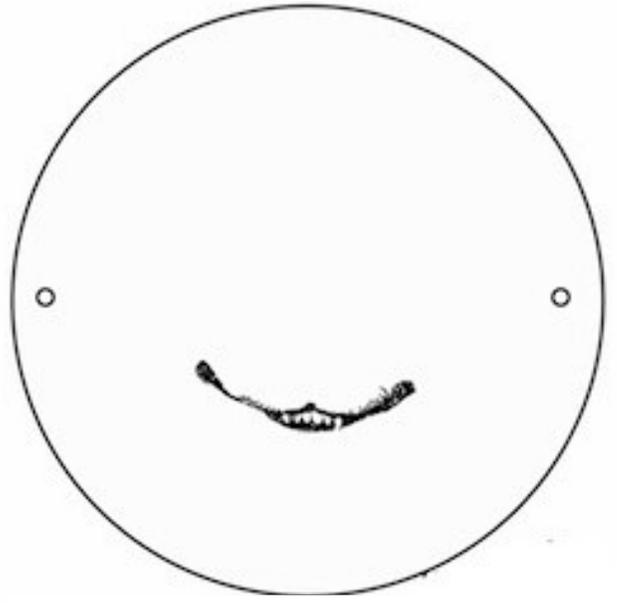
- 6 a player's favorite marble that they use to shoot at the other marbles in a game
- 8 a puzzle in which pictures are used to represent words or parts of words
- 9 an old-fashioned game that was similar to baseball, in which players hit a stick with a rock and ran around posts
- 11 a place from which a game begins; a game's goal or endpoint.
- 12 a hand-held musical instrument with metal keys that are played with the thumbs.

## DOWN

- 1 a two-sided toy, each side having pictures that, when the toy is spun, appear together as a single picture
- 2 a toy made of several flat blocks of wood connected with ribbon, which appear to tumble down when held in the air
- 3 an object, such as a small stone or pine cone, that is used as a marker in hopscotch
- 4 a game played with a long piece of string in which two or more players use a series of hand movements to create string designs.
- 5 in this game, originally played by American Indians, players use long sticks to hit a ball between two goal posts. Can be played on ice or in a field
- 7 a spinning toy made from a length of string threaded through a hole in a round piece of wood
- 10 a small wooden toy, narrow at one end and wide at the other, which spins when it is thrown on the ground

**WORD BANK:** Catscradle, homebase, jacobsladder, potsie, rebus, rounders, shinny, taw, thaumatrope, top, whirligig, zeze.





# McGuffey's Reader Graphic Organizer

	<b>McGuffey's Reader</b>	<b>Other Reading Book</b>
Differences		
Similarities		

## What happened to the weather?

Name \_\_\_\_\_

Visit <http://www.islandnet.com/~see/weather/events/childrensblizzard.htm> and answer the following questions.

1. Why is it called The Children's Blizzard?
2. Where did the cold air mass sit the second week of January?
3. What organization provided weather services for the nation?
4. Where did a small storm system develop on January 5?
5. What direction did the cold air mass continue to slip?
6. What did the author of the article liken the proximity of the two very different air masses to?
7. What was the morning temperature in Denver, Colorado?
8. How many degrees warmer was North Platte, Nebraska than the previous day?
9. When did the storm cross into the Dakota Territory?
10. When did it reach eastern Nebraska?
11. How many minutes did it take for the temperature to fall 18 degrees in Crete, Nebraska, according to Signal Corps Private C.D. Burnley, an observer?
12. Using today's equation what was the windchill temperature in Dakota territory? How long does it take for frostbite to occur with this temperature?

13. State the three factors which caused the Blizzard to be so disastrous.

a.

b.

c.

14. Describe the actions of one of the teachers on January 12, 1888.

15. What descended on the region in the wake of the Children's Blizzard?