

Pioneer Schools



photo courtesy NPS

Mini Fact:

This schoolhouse in Fruita, Utah, was built in the early 1900s.

Depending on where you live, school may look very different this year than it has in the past. You may be doing remote learning, using a computer to keep up with schoolwork and your classmates. Or you may be sitting in a spread-out classroom, wearing a mask and learning new safe habits.

No matter what, school in the 1800s was nothing like what you're used to. Let's take a look at pioneer schools.

Of course, there were no computers. Even paper and books were scarce on the frontier. There were no sports teams. Instead, school activities included chores.

One-room schools

Few places had kindergarten. Kids started first grade at about 5 or 6 years old. Students usually stopped going to school after the eighth grade.

On the frontier, children from ages 6 to 14 would all go to class together in the same room. As they got older, they probably heard every grade's lessons year after year. By graduation, they'd know the subjects backward and forward.



Younger children sat close to the stove, with the oldest kids sitting the farthest away. This school was built in the 1870s in Nebraska.

Morning chores

Before school even started, students put in hours of work. They began each day by doing chores at home. Some would help prepare breakfast and clean up. Others might help feed the animals or chop wood.

The walk to school might be three to five miles long. Sometimes kids would get to ride a pony to school.

In warm weather, they would usually walk barefoot. Although they had shoes, most kids wore them only in the winter. Going barefoot was more comfortable. Back then, there were no left and right shoes. New shoes would form to the feet over time, but breaking in new shoes was painful.

Once at school, students had more chores. Kids as young as third graders might help chop wood for the stove, pump water for the washbasin or sweep the floor.

Lessons

Paper was expensive, so kids did most of their lessons on chalkboards. Books cost a lot too. Schools did not provide textbooks. Kids had to buy their own books or use ones passed down from older students.

Pupils followed a strict formula to answer questions. For example, Mary would sit straight at her desk with her hand up. When the teacher called on her, she would move her legs to the aisle at the side of her seat. She'd stand up, then she'd turn to face the teacher. Only then would she answer!

School lunches

Students brought their own lunches to school. Usually, they'd bring leftovers from breakfast or supper the night before.

Students might spread bread with homemade butter or jelly. Sometimes, they would bring a can of milk or leftover soup. If they were lucky, they might have boiled eggs or cold fried chicken.



Kids who could afford them ordered fancy lunch boxes from catalogs.

The school day

Teachers might write the day's schedule on the blackboard each day. Subjects might include "Spelling," "Geography" or "Penmanship" (handwriting).

Many teachers spent part of each day inspecting children's **hygiene**: checking for clean hands and fingernails, making sure they had washed their faces and behind their ears, and giving a sniff to make sure they had bathed. Can you imagine your teacher doing that today?

Resources



On the Web:

- bit.ly/MPpioneer

At the library:

- "My Face to the Wind: The Diary of Sarah Jane Price, a Prairie Teacher, Broken Bow, Nebraska 1881" by Jim Murphy

Try 'n' Find

Words that remind us of pioneer schools are hidden in this puzzle. Some words are hidden backward or diagonally, and some letters are used twice. See if you can find:

BOOKS, CHALKBOARD, CHORES, COMPUTER, FRONTIER, GRADE, HYGIENE, KINDERGARTEN, LESSONS, LUNCH, PAPER, PIONEER, ROOM, SCHOOL, SHOES, STOVE, STUDENTS, TEACHER, WALK.

I A B O O K S T U D E N T S Q
C O P P K L O Z L E S S O N S
H L A I B L M L O O H C S Z I
O U P O C H A L K B O A R D T
R N E N H B G W Z D S T O V E
E C R E X M X I T E A C H E R
S H R E I T N O R F S H O E S
E D A R G W R E T U P M O C G
F K I N D E R G A R T E N W S
S E A E N E I G Y H Q M O O R


Cook's Corner

Havana Black Bean Chili With Chicken

You'll need:

- 1 pound boneless, skinless chicken breasts, cut into 1-inch pieces
- 2 (14-ounce) cans diced tomatoes with green pepper, celery and onion, undrained

- 1 tablespoon chili powder
- 1 teaspoon ground cumin
- 2 (15-ounce) cans black beans, rinsed and drained



What to do:

- In the bottom of a slow cooker, combine chicken, tomatoes, chili powder and cumin. Mix well. Cover and cook on low for 6 to 8 hours.
- Stir in black beans, cover, and cook for 5 minutes or until beans are hot. Serves 4.

Adapted from "The Robin Takes 5 Cookbook for Busy Families" with permission from Andrews McMeel Publishing (andrewsmcmeel.com).

* You'll need an adult's help with this recipe.

7 Little Words for Kids

Use the letters in the boxes to make a word with the same meaning as the clue. The numbers in parentheses represent the number of letters in the solution. Each letter combination can be used only once, but all letter combinations will be necessary to complete the puzzle.

1. pastry with a hole in it (5) _____

2. window coverings (6) _____

3. well-liked (7) _____


4. cold-blooded animals (8) _____

5. plant that grows on rocks (4) _____

6. very large (8) _____

7. ancient tombs in Egypt (8) _____

AM	TIL	NDS	GIGA
DO	ULAR	NTIC	MO
SS	POP	PYR	IDS
ES	BLI	REP	NUT



Answers: donut, blinds, popular, reptiles, moss, gigantic, pyramids.

Mini Jokes




Alan: How do scarecrows greet each other?

Ann: "Hay, friend!"

Arnie: How does a scarecrow drink milk?

Addison: Through a straw!

Eco Note



New research reveals that sharks are disappearing at an alarming rate, a trend that is upsetting the balance across many marine ecosystems. Scientists say that habitat destruction and overfishing have caused shark numbers to crash in many of the world's coral reefs.

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For later:

Look in your newspaper for articles about back-to-school plans in your city.

Teachers:

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