

TITLE:

Lifestyles of the Early Americans

CONTRIBUTOR:

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TOPIC:

American History: Colonial

GRADE LEVEL:

K – 6*

**Can be adjusted for all age groups (young children through adults)*

TIME ALLOTMENT:

20 – 30 minutes

STANDARDS TO BE ADDRESSED:

(Texas) Title 19. Part 2. Chapter 113. Subchapter C. Rule 113.44 Throughout social studies in Kindergarten-Grade 12, students build a foundation in history; geography; economics; government; citizenship; culture; science, technology, and society; and social studies skills. The content, as appropriate for the grade level of course, enables students to understand importance of patriotism, function in a free enterprise society, and appreciate the basic democratic values of our state and nation... (TEC 28,002(h))

(Texas) 113.13 Social Studies, Grade 2, Adopted 2018. (15) Social studies skills. The student applies critical-thinking skills to organize and use information acquired from a variety of valid sources, including technology. The student is expected to: (A) gather information about a topic using a variety of valid oral and visual sources such as interviews, music, pictures, maps, and artifacts

STATEMENT OF OBJECTIVE AND LESSON OUTCOME:

Through listening, looking, and hands-on creation, the learner will:

- Investigate the differences between early American homes and home life and modern homes and home life.

Through storytelling, the learner will:

- Draw conclusions about pros and cons for early American home life vs modern-day home life.

MATERIALS, RESOURCES, AND TECHNOLOGY TO BE USED BY TEACHER / STUDENT:

- Copies of patriotic song lyrics* (approximately 1 copy for 1-3 participants)
- Large (at least 11" x 14") white construction paper or butcher paper (at least one page per participant)
- Colored pencils, crayons, glue sticks and scissors to share
- Device to play music from YouTube
- Photos of different types of early American homes

**These items will need to be constructed prior to setting up the activity. Instructions for the construction of these items can be found under the "Procedures" portion of the Lesson Plan.*

INTRODUCTION OF TOPIC:

Early American house styles (1640 – 1780) originated with Medieval architecture: massive hand-hewn frames, large central chimneys, small diamond pane windows, and thick hobnail studded doors. They built homes that they were familiar with back in Europe. Most of these homes had unpainted wood. (Plaster, paint, and masonry [stone and brick] did not arrive until the 1700s.) Some were simple: one room with a fireplace and chimney at the end. More frequently, they were two rooms with the front door centered and the chimney directly across from the door. These often had a loft sleeping area. Sometimes, they would add rooms across the back. The most commonly added back room would be a "kitchen," but often kitchens were built apart from the house (for fire safety purposes). These homes were built of logs hand cut with axes into 8 to 12 inches. They did not use nails but interlocked the wood logs with cut-outs. Walls were infilled with wattle (sticks and twigs) and daub (mud and clay). These homes were mostly

asymmetrical. Most were called “wattle and daub” homes. The roof was usually made thatched (made from dried local grasses.) Roofs would often leak. The floors were most often dirt. Windows were covered with paper. Inside would be a large fireplace for warmth and cooking. Early settlers did not have a lot of furniture: bench to sit on, a small table, some chests for a few clothes. The typical bed was a straw mattress on the floor. Often the barn was build bigger and better than the main house.

As the colonies grew, the wealthy landowners in the south build plantations (large farms with a centralized house). These homes often had separate living rooms and dining rooms. They had glass windows, multiple fireplaces, and plenty of furniture. Most were built to resemble the colonists homeland: German, Dutch, Spanish, and English.

During the 18th Century, the wealthy and city-dwellers switched to Georgian style (named after King George). These homes were very symmetrical. Interior paneling was introduced and plaster used on the walls and later on the ceilings. City homes were smaller than the plantation homes. They often did not have space for a garden. They usually had wooden floors and paneled walls. They had plenty of well-built furniture, often better than pieces built today. Their mattresses were mostly feather. Often they were two or three stories tall.

Some homes built in the New England area had a long slanting back roof. They were called “saltbox” homes because they had the same shape as the box where settlers kept their salt. Settlers on the frontier sometimes built log cabins because they could be built quickly and by just a few people. Richer homes were eventually build with brick.

Colonial homes did not have electricity, telephones, or running water. Because there was no electricity, they used candles or fire. However, most of the time when the sun went down, everyone went to bed (and everyone was up with the sunrise.) They had no restrooms. (People went to the restroom in the woods. In the case of the city, they had specialized chairs with a bucket under it and the bucket would be dumped out onto the street outside after usage.

Many one-room homes had a loft or attic which was used for storage or the older children for sleeping. Otherwise, it would not be uncommon for a family of 8-10 to live, eat, and sleep in the same room. (Most of the day was spent outdoors doing chores and exploring.)

Sources:

- Antique Homes (Historic Style Guide →Early American Colonial Homes): <https://antiquehomesmagazine.com>
- Dusters (History → Colonial America): <https://ducksters.com>
- History for Kids (Early Colonial Homes): <https://historyforkids.com>

PROCEDURE FOR INSTRUCTION:

Materials to Make before the Activity:

- Copies of patriotic song lyrics –

- Go to the website, Scout Songs, and search for Patriotic songs. (<https://www.scoutsongs.com/categories/patriotic-songs.html>) Select three-to-four songs. Good suggestions include: I'm a Yankee Doodle Dandy, This is My Country, This Land is Your Land, Yankee Doodle, You're a Grand Old Flag, or Hail to the Chief.
- Make sure the selected songs are easily found on YouTube for music play.
- Only worry about the first verse and chorus if there are multiple verses. Make sure the songs are appropriate for the ages in the group.
- Once the song has been chosen, do some research on the origin and / or meaning of the song for sharing during the lesson.
- Photos of different types of early American homes – Go to the website, The Spruce, and search for the American Colonial Style Architecture. Once there, print out some of the images of each of the homes with their general information. (<https://www.thespruce.com/american-colonial-style-architecture-5094947>)

Set-up Prior to the Activity:

- Prepare a large spread-out area. This activity can be done indoors (easier) or outdoors.
- Have either tables/chairs for participants to draw/color or some sort of hard surface (such as lapboards or magazines).

The Activity:

Participants will learn about the everyday life of early Americans by learning patriotic songs and creating a log cabin or a small colonial home and drawing items that an early American would possess. The participants will discuss their items and how they would be used. The participants could also compare items to what we use today. Finally, participants will write a story about who lives in the home they created, what part of the country they would live in and what life would be like during the late 1700's/early 1800's.

- Explain to participants that early Americans did not have many of the things we take for granted today: electricity, Internet, running water, and automobiles. Ask participants what they thought life was like for children around the time of the American Revolution. (Add or correct comments as needed.) Show pictures of the homes. Using what they have learned, have participants draw a home from early America. They can draw it looking to the outside of the home or they can draw it like design of the inside of a home, showing where things go. While they are drawing, ask participants to create a story about what the family would be like in that home and what those family members may do? Would they have pets? How many children? What part of the country would they live in? How would they handle things like weather, illness, food sources, or safety? Have them think about items that would be used for cooking, cleaning, sleeping, restroom, and entertainment. Ask the participants to share their stories. (Ideally, have each person at least show their picture and one line about the family.)
- Pass out lyrics and have the kids sing along to some of the patriotic songs. Before singing review the origin of the song.

After the Activity:

- Clean up the coloring items and papers.

- Let participants take their pictures with them.

LESSON CLOSURE:

Ask the following: “Now that we’ve participated in these activities what was your favorite patriotic song?”

Optional: Challenge learners to learn more about the children during early American Colonial times.

ASSESSMENT OF STUDENT UNDERSTANDING:

Review the objectives for possible assessment questions. Give a quick quiz to see how many of the objectives were achieved.

- Example: What is the difference between a home today and a home during the early American Colonial times?
- Example: What is a pro and con about early American homes?
- Example: What is a patriotic song that was sung during early America?

Optional: Ask some general questions may include:

- Example: What are two reasons why you would enjoy or not enjoy living in the home you created?