

Life on the Tennessee Frontier Lesson Plan

Introduction:

Life on the Tennessee frontier presented many challenges and rewards to the brave individuals who journeyed west. Tennessee's frontier period began in the 1750s with the early settlements in East Tennessee and continued into the 1820s with the Jackson Purchase of West Tennessee land from the Chickasaw in 1818.

Guiding Questions:

Why did people continue to move west?

How did life on the frontier affect what people ate, how they dressed, how they were educated, how they traveled, what work they did and how they were entertained?

Learning Objectives:

The learner will analyze primary and secondary sources to determine why Tennesseans continued to move west.

The learner will analyze primary and secondary sources to learn how people on the frontier worked, traveled, ate, learned and entertained themselves.

The learner will demonstrate knowledge of frontier life by responding to the writing prompt with a narrative of two to three paragraphs.



Materials Needed:

Artifact Activity Card: Betsy" David Crockett's First Rifle. (Set 1)

Artifact Activity Card : Virginia Road Wagon (Set 1)

Artifact Activity Card: Little Greenbriar School (Set 2)

Artifact Activity Cards can be downloaded from teachtnhistory.org

Informational Text and map: [Natchez Trace and Jackson Purchase](#)

Timeline: Early Tennessee Timeline (included at end of lesson)

Informational Chart: Gender Roles on the Tennessee Frontier (included at end of lesson)

Background:

Informational Text: [Daniel Boone, Wilderness Road and the First Settlers of Tennessee](#)



Writing Prompt:

Write a narrative paragraph that uses examples from the sources to describe life on the Tennessee frontier and why pioneers moved west.

Lesson Activities:

Activity 1- Review and Discuss prompt and prior knowledge

Whole Class Activity

Begin the lesson by showing the students the prompt and discussing the elements that should be included in the writing. Clarify with students that they will be writing a narrative or descriptive passage about life on the frontier.

Activity 2 - Photograph- Artifact Activity Card: Virginia Road Wagon

Whole Class Activity

Have students look at the card and discuss the design of the wagon and the kinds of terrain that it needed to navigate. Introduce the topic of Cumberland Gap while viewing and discussing the wagon.

Activity 3- Informational Text and Map - [Natchez Trace and the Jackson Purchase](#)

Partner Activity

Have students read the informational text with a partner. As they read they should highlight locations with one color and people with another color. After students have read and highlighted the passage pass out the 1818 Maps of Tennessee and have students find the Natchez Trace, Cumberland Gap and Jackson Purchase. Remind them that the Jackson Purchase is not identified on the map so they will need to locate it using the informational text. Discuss the connections between the wagon, Natchez Trace, Cumberland Gap and Jackson Purchase. Ask students to think about why Tennessee needed more land and why people continually wanted to move west.

Activity 4 Illustration- Artifact Activity Card: Betsy" David Crockett's First Rifle. Illustration/Primary Source- Artifact Activity Card: Little Greenbriar School.



Small Group or Partner Activity

Give students the David Crockett card and ask them to describe his clothing. Discuss the importance of hunting both as a source of food and for skins for trade and clothing. Give students the Little Greenbriar School card. Have them read the informational text and the primary source quote on the back. Discuss the differences between frontier schools and modern schools.

Activity 5 Informational Chart - Gender Roles on the Tennessee Frontier*Small Group or Partner Activity*

Give students the informational chart and ask them to read and discuss the chart.

Activity 7 Timeline- Early Tennessee Timeline*Small Group or Partner Activity*

Give the students a copy of the timeline. Ask them to organize the other sources they have analyzed for the lesson chronologically based on the timeline. Discuss their results.

Activity 8- Prompt Review*Whole Class*

Before students write, be sure to review the prompt. Students may need to complete a pre-writing activity to help them organize their thoughts.

Assessment:

Students will be instructed to write a paragraph in response to the prompt. Because of the extensive preparation provided in the analysis activities, students should be complete the writing quickly. Using either the rubric created by the state or a modified version of it will streamline the grading process.

Extending the Lesson:

Have students write a short narrative from the perspective of “Betsy,” David Crockett’s gun.



Gender Roles on the Tennessee Frontier

	Men	Women
Work	Men on the frontier cleared fields, cut trees, built cabins, hunted and planted and harvested crops especially corn.	Women milked cows, gathered eggs, cooked meals, made cloth, cared for children and preserved food for winter.
Education	Boys were more likely than girls to attend school. Some boys were taught at home by their mothers. Many had no education at all.	Girls were less likely than boys to attend school. While some girls were taught to read by their mothers, many had no formal education at all. They learned the skills they needed at home.
Entertainment	Men attended horse races and dances. Many sang or played instruments like the fiddle. Some told tall tales.	Women attended dances, sang and played instruments. Women also told stories especially to their children.



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