Early Learning:
The One Room Schoolhouse
School Resource Kit

Central Michigan University
Museum of Cultural and Natural History
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The Care of School Resource Kits

Each School Resource Kit is comprised of authentic artifacts and modern reproductions.

Handling these particular objects is encouraged. Touching the objects and passing them around is allowed, but please remember that some items are delicate and should be treated with care.

Objects in plastic should remain in plastic though they may still be passed around for closer inspection.

Why do we ask you not to touch certain objects? The oils, dirt and moisture from your fingertips can stain textiles and etch metals, permanently changing them. One touch may not seem like much, but hundreds of touches in a year can wear a hole in a cotton dress or a notch in a wooden axe handle.

There are some items in certain kits that may be considered weapons in your school; be aware of your school’s policy regarding weapons and take appropriate action (i.e. inform the principal).

These items have been specially chosen for “hands on” learning and educational programs. In any museum, items on display and in the collection should never be touched unless a museum staff member has invited you to do so.

If an item is damaged, please gather all the pieces into a plastic bag and return it with the kit. When you return the kit, please let a staff member know that there is a damaged object.

If you find an item is missing or already damaged, please inform the museum’s student staff when you return the kit.

There are numerous benefits to the school resource kits. The “hands-on” aspect is one. Look closely at the materials used to make these historic objects. Look at their colors and decorations. Feel how light or heavy they are. Look at how they were manufactured. Consider who would have used these objects. Then, compare these historical artifacts to objects we use today. How are these items made today? Do we even use these objects today? What is different? What has remained the same?
Michigan Grade Level Content Expectations

**History**

**Living and Working Together**

*Use historical thinking to understand the past.*

K- H2.0.4 Describe ways people learn about the past (e.g., photos, artifacts, diaries, stories, videos).

**Living and Working Together in Families and Schools**

1- H2.0.1 Demonstrate chronological thinking by distinguishing among past, present, and future using family or school events.
1- H2.0.5 Use historical records and artifacts (e.g., photos, diaries, oral histories, and videos) to draw possible conclusions about family or school life in the past.
1- H2.0.6 Compare life today with life in the past using the criteria of family, school, jobs or communication.

**History of Michigan (Beyond Statehood)**

4- H3.0.4 Draw upon stories, photos, artifacts, and other primary sources to compare the life of people in towns and cities in Michigan and in the Great Lakes region during a variety of time periods from 1837 to the present (e.g., 1837-1900, 1900-1950, 1950-2000).

**Civics and Government**

**C2 Values and Principles of American Democracy**

*Understand values and principles of American constitutional democracy*

2-C2.0.2 Describe how the Pledge of Allegiance reflects the core democratic value of patriotism.
Introduction

Education is an important part of American society. Over the past two hundred years, it has moved from being an option for only privileged children to an option for every child and today, it is now a requirement. Education ideologies have also evolved, from the curriculum to the classroom.

This kit focuses on a typical school day in a one-room schoolhouse. With morning bells, lunches and lessons, students can experience a day in the life of an early twentieth century child. While some things may still seem the same, the students will notice the great differences that have resulted from years of educational reform.

Included in this kit are: artifacts, images and descriptions, lesson plan supplements, Michigan educational standards as they pertain to this kit, and an evaluation form to be completed and returned with the kit. Artifacts include: lunch pail and napkin, class photograph, textbooks, slate board and slate pencil, stereoscope and stereograph, teacher’s bell and a projector.
One Room Schoolhouses in Michigan

In the era of the one room schoolhouse, schooling was very different from what we experience today. This is mostly because children of all ages learned together in one room. The teacher had the responsibility of adjusting the lesson plans for each grade level present. This gave the students the ability to learn together which was a good thing, but very difficult.

One room schoolhouses primarily existed in rural areas. Most of the children whom attended the school were from local farming families. Before school, children were expected to wake up very early and complete their chores on the farm.

Teachers of one room schoolhouses were young women, no more than a few years older than their students. Many teachers only taught for a few years before they got married and left the job. There was a lot of turnover because of the low pay teachers received.

One room schools were common from the early 1800s until the 1950s, but began to drop in the 1920s. The education system saw a shift to modern schools, which had a more comfortable format. Although many former pupils of one room schoolhouses speak of the wonderful experiences they had, a more practical format for schooling was needed to accommodate the growing number of students in suburban and urban areas.
Artifacts

**Pail (H72.114):** This is an older version of today’s lunchbox/brown bag. Students carried their lunches to school in this. Many families lived on orchards or farms, so lunches would reflect that. If a student lived on an apple orchard, they would bring apples to school for lunch. They would try to trade with someone to get something different for the sake of variety. (Example: an apple for a chunk of cheese.)

**Napkin (H72.115):** This was usually a bit of fabric from home. The napkin was used to cover the food in the lunch pail. Remember—they didn’t have plastic baggies to keep their food fresh!

**QUESTIONS FOR DISCUSSION**

1. What do you carry your lunch in?
2. What would you eat every day if you didn’t have a hot lunch option?
3. What sort of things do you trade from your lunch?
Artifacts

**Class Photograph (H76.134):** This is a class photograph. These are useful because they show the differences in the ages of the students and clothing of the period.

The teacher is holding a slate board with their school’s name on it. Today, schools have their class name and year imposed digitally on the photo.

Photography was invented in the 1800s and common place by 1900.

**QUESTIONS FOR DISCUSSION**

1. How does this classroom differ from our classroom?
2. What is different about the students? (Example: clothing, hairstyles, glasses, ages, etc.)
3. What do they have in their classroom that we have?
4. How is the whole class picture different from your class picture?
Artifacts

McGuffey’s Reader: The curriculum of the one room schoolhouse was not much different from that of today. It included: history, writing, mathematics, geography and reading. Just like today, each subject had its own text book. Readers, like the one pictured here, often included moralistic stories as well as explanations of articulation, pronunciations and spelling exercises among various other lessons.

Introduction to World Geography: This is an elementary geography book from 1927. It includes lessons as well as questions about the geography of the United States and foreign countries. This book includes an activity for country children to visit a city and asks them to note some of the differences to farm life city life. Some of the questions in this activity include: Where does the water supply comes from in the city? Why are yards for city homes are so small and close together?

QUESTIONS FOR DISCUSSION

1. How are these books similar to ours? How are they different?
Artifacts

The Girl’s Own Book: First published in 1834 and written by Mrs. L. Maria Child, this book contains directions for various games, tips on sewing and knitting, and recommendations for active exercises. The purpose of the book, according to the author, was to help teach “every girl how to be useful” and would help “every mind improve itself to the utmost.” Ultimately, this book, along with schoolwork, was used to produce educated daughter that could “fulfill the duties of a humble station, or to dignify and adorn the highest.” This book contains many games that would have been played on the playgrounds by girls.

The Boy’s Own Book: Published in 1824, this book was a predecessor to the girl’s book. Just as the books share similar titles, they contain similar things as well. The boy’s book also had directions and rules for numerous games, some of the games in the books are the same only they are called by different names.

Overall this book served as entertainment before radio, television, or video games; it even tells boys how to create their own peashooter and strategies for winning at checkers.

QUESTIONS FOR DISCUSSION

1. What is in the Boys and Girls Books that you still do today? What is outdated?
2. What did the authors think was acceptable for boys and not for girls and vice-versa in the 19th century?
3. Do you have anything like this book today? Would you want one?
Artifacts

**Slate Board:** Slate boards were small, so each student could practice spelling and cursive writing.

Slate boards were often used instead of paper, which was more expensive.

**Slate Pencil (H73.274):** Slate pencils were made out of soft slate, soapstone or pressed clay. They were used for writing on slate boards.

They were cost effective as they were less expensive than chalk.

Slate pencils were often accompanied by rough fabric to wipe off the board.

QUESTIONS FOR DISCUSSION

1. What types of materials do you use for writing?
2. How difficult do you think it would have been to write with these materials daily?
3. Would you prefer this set over a notebook and pencil?
Artifacts

**Stereoscope (H72.54a-b):** A stereoscope allowed the viewer to see a two-dimensional image as a three-dimensional image.

A stereograph card was placed in the holder, which could move back and forth to focus on the images.

**Stereograph (H72.6418):** This is an example of a picture viewed through the stereoscope. Two slides of slightly different pictures were able to be viewed at once through the stereograph. This allowed the viewer to see an illusion of the third dimension. This particular image shows a car driving through a hole cut in a large tree located in Mariposa Grove, Yosemite Valley, California.

**QUESTIONS FOR DISCUSSION**

1. What artifacts or toys have you had that resemble this artifact?

2. How do we see 3D now? Did you realize that the concept of 3D has been around so long?
Artifacts

**Teacher’s Bell (H74.349):** The teacher’s bell was used to call children to school and in from recess. It was also used to signal the end of the school day.

The bell was also a symbol of the teacher’s authority.

The bell was operated by grasping the handle close to the bell and ringing in a wide arc.

QUESTIONS FOR DISCUSSION

1. How is this bell different from your school bell?
2. How often does your school bell ring?
3. Which bell sound do you prefer?
Suggested Classroom Activities

A Day in the Life...

Plan a whole part of class day where you can “pretend” to be attending class in a one-room school. Have the students dress accordingly (girls wear dresses, boys wear pants), bring sack lunches, etc. Segregate the class between boys and girls, and assign them age groups (grades 1 through 8—maybe by reading level).

To begin the day, call them to class using the bell. Start out by reciting the Pledge of Allegiance and then have them sit in rows by gender and by “grade level.” Follow a typical lesson plan (spelling, grammar, math, history, geography) using activities from the era. Feel free to use the books from the kit as resources.

For lunch, have an extended lunch period in the classroom. Have the students trade items from their lunches like the students would in a one-room schoolhouse (be careful of food allergies!)

For afternoon lessons, continue on from the morning. Be sure to include activities for different “grade levels.” Lessons can be pulled from the included books, including grammar and even geography lessons (the questions from the Introduction to World Geography can prove to be quite interesting!).

Before sending the class home for the day, assemble for a class photograph in the classroom setting, using the slate board or your classroom chalkboard to indicate the date, school, and class. As a homework assignment, ask them to write a journal entry or a one page paper on how their experience was for them. Ask them to point out similarities and differences, and what they liked and didn’t like about their experience.

Most importantly, have fun! This is a chance to take a break from the ordinary and experience living history.
Credits

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www.chestnutsquare.org/events/prairieadventurecamp/index.htm
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School Resource Kit Evaluation Form: The One Room Schoolhouse

Kit Use:  ___ Mid Tier Lesson
___ Student Teaching
___ College Classroom Presentation (Class Number __________)
___ Elementary Classroom (Grade Level __________)
___ High School Classroom (Subject Area __________)
___ Other (___________________________________)

1. Did the kit meet your needs?  Yes ________  No ________

2. Was the kit easy to use and understand?  Yes ________   No ________

3. Is there anything not included in this kit that would be useful?  Yes ________  No ________
   If yes, please include your suggestions: __________________________________________________

4. Was the printed guide easy to use and understand?  Yes ________   No ________

5. Was the kit in good condition?  Yes ________  No ________

6. Would you use this kit again?  Yes ________  No ________

7. Would you recommend this kit to a colleague?  Yes ________  No ________

8. Is there a topic that you would suggest we develop a loan kit for?
   If yes, please include your suggestions: __________________________________________________

Additional Comments: ____________________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________________________________

Thank you for your feedback!
-The Museum of Cultural and Natural History