



# Pioneer Poems

**Dorothy Mahoney**

**Grade** 3

**Subject:** Social Studies

**Topic:** Pioneers

## **Descriptive Sentence**

Think like a pioneer. Think like a poet. Personal involvement gives ownership to history. By using fail-proof formulas, students create a found poem and focus on word choice, summary, and personal expression. Forge forward!

## **Curricular Outcome or Expectation**

Please see the lesson plan preview for the expectations/outcomes for your province.

## **Materials**

Blackboard, Chalk, Chart Paper,  
Markers, Paper, Pencils, Pens, Coloured pencils,  
Copy of books about Pioneers  
E.g. Kindle Me a Riddle, A Pioneer Story by Roberta Karim,  
The Spirit of Canada, by Barbara Hehner. (This book includes an excerpt by Catherine Parr Trail about building a log cabin.)

## **Space Requirements**

Classroom

## **Complete Description of Lesson**

### **Getting Ready**

- Introduce or review aspects of pioneer life.
- Discuss topics such as:  
What is a pioneer? How did pioneers live? What hardships did pioneers have to endure? Discuss items that pioneers considered essential to their life? What items do we have today that make living easier?



## Development

**Please take a moment to review  
the "Think like a Poet" video**

- Read aloud a short excerpt from one of the selected books on Pioneer Life. (If at all possible, give the students a copy of the excerpt so that they read it also.) Discuss what was read.

**Please take a moment to review  
the "Finding a Poem" video**

- Create a 'Found Poem' with the entire class.
- Ask each student to choose a short phrase from the excerpt that impressed or stimulated them in some way then write the phrase on a strip of paper.
- Ask 5 or 6 students to display their phrases so that the rest of the class can read them.
- Discuss what order the phrases might best be placed to create an interesting and insightful 'poem' about pioneer life. Write the suggestions on the board or on an experience chart.
- Read the poem aloud and discuss how else the poem could be improved. Tell the students that no new words can be added, however words can be eliminated. If repetition of a phrase occurs, discuss how this could perhaps be an effective strategy using echoes.
- Ask the students to consider whether some phrases could be used at the beginning and again at the end of the poem. What else might be changed?
- When the class agrees on the format, copy onto chart paper and read aloud again. Now incorporate simple choral speaking strategies (soft, loud voices, faster, slower etc.) to read the poem more expressively.

## Application

- Arrange the students into groups, five or six to a group. Give each group a copy of a short excerpt from writings on pioneer life. You may wish to use the following text or choose from different topics such as: candle making, building a log cabin, harvest time, etc.
- Remind the students that poetry is actually hidden in much of the printed material we read.

*In the new land, magnificent trees of oak, maple, beech, birch, ash, spruce and pine touched the heavens, swirling the clouds by day and polishing the stars at night. With axes and aching muscles, the pioneers cleared trees to plant crops and to build log cabins. A branch became a broom or a fence post or part of a bed or chair. Smoke curled from the fireplace made of stones collected from the new fields. Life was made of simple pleasures with cider and cornbread.*



- Ask each group to create a “Found Poem” from the excerpt, following the steps covered earlier. (Select a phrase, arrange the phrases and edit the phrases.) Remind the students that the phrase or cluster should be less than six words.

**Please take a moment to review  
the “Reading a Found Poem” video**

- Challenge each group to think of a suitable title for their poem and have each group write their poem on chart paper.

E.g.

New Land

Swirling the clouds  
Polishing the stars  
Magnificent trees

With axes and aching muscles  
Pioneers cleared trees  
Smoke curled  
From the new fields

- Ask each group to practise their poem incorporating simple choral speaking strategies. Use soft/loud voices, fast/slow tempo, pauses, etc.

### **Closure**

- Ask each group to perform their poem for the rest of the class.
- Tape record the performances, play back, listen and make suggestions for improvement.
- Make a book of the “Found Poems” and put them on display for others to read.

**To give individual students opportunities to review or further develop their understanding of the concepts in the above lesson, please go to the *Student Zone*, *Brain Games* or [click here](#)**