

Homesteading in Wyoming Tour (Grades 3 – 8)

Teacher Guide

Tour Description

Discover the challenges that homesteaders faced as they settled the Big Horn Basin between the late 1800s and the mid-1900s. Tour includes an interactive homesteading activity.

Objectives

- To describe the environment and physical features of the land that homesteaders found in the Big Horn Basin, Wyoming, just after the turn of the 19th century.
- To explain the requirement the government placed on homesteaders so that they could keep the land settled.

Standards

Wyoming

- SS.4.4.3 – Students describe the chronology of exploration, immigration and settlement of Wyoming.
- SS.4.5.4 – Students describe relationships among people and places, and the environmental context in which they take place.
- SS.8.4.1 – Students identify people, events, problems, conflicts, and ideas and explain their historical significance.
- SS.11.4.1 – Students analyze the interactions among individuals and groups and their impact on significant historical events.

Montana

- SS.4.3.3 – describe and illustrate ways in which people interact with their physical environment (e.g., land use, location of communities, methods of construction, design of shelters).
- SS.8.3.3 – analyze diverse land use and explain the historical and contemporary effects of this use on the environment, with an emphasis on Montana.
- SS.4.3.4 – describe how human movement and settlement patterns reflect the wants and needs of diverse cultures.
- SS.4.4.1 – identify and use various sources of information (e.g., artifacts, diaries, photographs, architecture, songs) to develop an understanding of the past.

Pre-Visit Activities

Brainstorm Museum Etiquette

Discuss your upcoming trip to the Buffalo Bill Center of the West. Engage students in a brainstorming session. Ask them to name rules they should follow when visiting the museum.

Introduce Vocabulary

Discuss the vocabulary terms below.

Homesteader – someone who came to Wyoming and other parts of the West to settle and build a home

Adobe homes – homes built from dried clay bricks

Claim – the land a homesteader registered with the land office; the claim was laid out or outlined by stakes or furrows

Environment - the conditions and surroundings of where a person lives

Climate – weather condition over a period time in a region

Dugout – one of the first homes homesteaders built on their land; typically, a room dug into the side of a hill

Irrigation – to supply dry land with water using canals, ditches, streams, and other methods

Homestead Act of 1862

Introduce students to the Homestead Act of 1862. Explain that through this act the United States government offered people free land to come out west to settle the area and make it more welcoming. Ask students to think about the hardships these homesteaders may have faced. Accept all reasonable answers, and encourage students to continue to think about these hardships prior to their museum visit.

The Experience of Settlers

Review the Homestead Act of 1862 with students, and introduce the Oregon Trail. Have students research the Oregon Trail and Homestead Act of 1862, asking them to compare the experiences of the settlers involved with both the Homestead Act and the Oregon Trail.

Post-Visit Activities

What Might It Have Been Like To Be Part of a Homesteading Family?

Materials: notebooks, pencils, drawing paper, crayons, marks, colored pencils

Ask students to imagine being a homesteader in the Big Horn Basin in the early 1900s. Engage them by asking them to pretend they are traveling back in time, and planning to settle in the Big Horn Basin with their families. Ask students:

- *How would you go about settling the land?*
- *What tasks would each of your family members perform?*
- *What hardships would you face?*
- *What would your land and home look like?*
- *Where would you have gotten your food, clothes, supplies, etc.?*

Have students write a story about their experiences as a homesteader based on the answers to the questions above. Have them complete this activity by drawing a family portrait of their imagined homesteading family.

What Was It Really Like To Be Part of a Homesteading Family?

Materials: research materials from the internet, local library, and other community resources

Explain to students that there are homesteading families from the Big Horn Basin and in the West. Help students research families on the internet, at their local libraries, museums, and other community resources to learn about homesteading life. If appropriate, encourage students to interview descendants of homesteaders. Have students share their findings and discuss the different reasons people homesteaded. Encourage students to use primary resources such as letters, journal entries, photographs, and newspaper articles when presenting their findings.

Your Family's Western Roots

Have students interview a family member about their family's genealogy with emphasis on the story of their family's journey to and life in the West. Ask students to present photographs and other primary resources to their class. Engage in a class discussion about how their families' roots are similar and different from those of the homesteaders.

Resources

Park County Historical Society Archives Center

1002 Sheridan Ave.

Cody, WY 82414

307-527-8530

<http://www.parkcounty.us/historicalarchives/genealogy.html>

Homesteader Museum

324 E. First Street

P.O. Box 54

Powell, WY 82435

307-754-9481

<http://homesteadermuseum.com/>

Shoshone Irrigation District

337 East 1st Street

Powell, Wyoming 82435

<http://www.shoshoneirrigation.com/>