



HISTORY *Colorado*

An Educator's Guide to Bent's Fort: International Trade during the Fur Trade Era

Bent's Fort Unit of Study: Grades 3-8

This multi-disciplinary unit of study is designed to complement the online exhibit by the Colorado History Center. Students will utilize their reading, writing, geography, economic, and critical thinking skills to deepen their understanding of the fur trade era in Colorado, the role Bent's Fort played as a hub of international trade, and the United States's relations with Mexico and certain Native American tribes prior to the Mexican-American war.

Bent's Fort in Southeastern Colorado, constructed in 1833 by trader and rancher William Bent, was an important trading settlement during the 1830s. Located on the border of Mexico and US territory and situated in the heart of Native American country, Bent's Fort was a hub of globalism, international trade, and international relations. Although destroyed under mysterious circumstances by Bent in 1852, the fort was reconstructed in 1976 and is now a National Historic Landmark.

Essential Understandings:

If we fail to learn from history, we are destined to repeat it.

Certain conditions, beliefs and prejudice result in some people being treated differently from others and/or prevent people from fighting back.

Writers provide insights about the human experience through literature.

Kindness, in the face of adversity, exists.

Considering multiple accounts and perspectives is essential to developing a deep understanding.

Skills:

Identify main ideas in non-fiction text.

Respond to and infer details.

Use internet resources as research tools.

Use informational text and literature as research tools.

Compare information from a variety of sources about the same topic.

Formulate questions about a topic.

Summarize non-fiction text.

Create multi-media presentations showcasing information.

Present information to classmates orally and visually.

Lesson Plans:

Activity/Day 1: Introduction to the Fur Trade Era and Bent's Fort (Computers Needed)

Students will learn about Colorado's fur trade era and Bent's Fort. Then, they will be given the class period to explore the Bent's Fort online exhibit.

****Before introducing your class to the Bent's Fort exhibit, we recommend acquainting your students with the historical background of the fur trade era, including the Louisiana Purchase, Lewis and Clark, Manifest Destiny, and Mexico's war for independence.**

Materials:

- a. Computer with internet access (ideally 1-2 per student)
 - b. Note taking materials
 - c. Headphones/earbuds for computer
- 1) Briefly introduce the fur trade era and Bent's Fort to your class. Provide/remind students about the historical background leading up to Bent's Fort's construction. Ask students what they know about Bent's Fort.
 - 2) Show your class this short video about Bent's Fort to introduce the purpose, location, and timeframe of Bent's Fort. <http://video.rmpbs.org/video/2365021102/>
 - 3) Pull up the Bent's Fort exhibit on your computer, starting on the first button, Mountain Men. Explain how students can reach the website. Briefly walk them through the website, encouraging them to click on glowing/clickable information in each section.
 - 4) Let your students explore the website in its entirety. Let them have free rein (as long as they are on the exhibit website of course); guide them through the website if they have questions. Today will be a site exploration day so they can get acquainted with the material. Give them time warnings.
 - 5) With 5-10 minutes left for the activity, bring the class back together. As a class, discuss why Bent's Fort was an important part of Colorado history. How did its location help it be successful?
 - 6) Wrap up Day 1.

Activity/Day 2: Digital Badge Day

Students will spend the class period completing the Bent's Fort digital badge activity at their assigned level.

Materials:

- a. Computer with internet access (ideally 1-2 per student)

- b. Note taking materials
 - c. Headphones/earbuds for computer
 - d. Badge login information
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- 1) Quickly discuss/reorient students about Bent's Fort's significance in Colorado history.
 - 2) Provide students with their login information for their digital badges.
 - 3) Pull up the Digital Badge activity on your computer and let your students follow along on their computer. Show your students how to navigate through the first couple digital badge activities. Encourage them to write down their answers in a book/take notes on the material found on the website to help them through the activities.
 - 4) Let students complete their digital badge for Bent's Fort. Some students may get through the digital badge activity quicker than others. Encourage students that have gone through the badge activity to try the higher level badge activity for Bent's Fort.
 - 5) Depending on how quickly your class completes the badge activity, consider taking 5 or 10 minutes at the end of the class period to discuss Bent's Fort again. Ask students what facts they found interesting about the Fort. What did they learn?

Activity/Day 3: Mountain Man Journals

Students will compose a journal from the perspective of a mountain man assigned by the teacher from the Bent's Fort online exhibit.

Materials:

- a. Computer with internet access (ideally 1-2 per student)
 - b. Printer
 - c. Computer paper
 - d. Note taking materials
 - e. Approved list of websites
 - f. Art supplies
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- 1) Each student should be assigned a mountain man mentioned in the first section of the Bent's Fort online exhibit. This could also be a partner project if you so choose.
 - 2) Begin class reviewing the mountain man of Colorado (from days before) and their influence on Colorado history.
 - 3) Discuss what the mountain men had to do to survive in the vast wilderness of the West. Where and how did they obtain food? Who were their enemies? Who and what would they have encountered throughout their journeys?
 - 4) Introduce the journal activity; explain what a journal is if the students do not already know. What features does this type of writing have? Tell students that they will be writing a journal in the perspective of their assigned mountain man.
 - 5) Encourage students to use the Bent's Fort website and other approved websites to research their person. Use library books if you have these available as well.
 - 6) Once students have completed an allotted time/amount of research, they will compose their journals on the computer or in a notebook.

- 7) After composing their journals, have students decorate their journals with pictures of what the mountain men would have seen on their journeys. Make sure they have completed the textual part of the journal before moving on to the art section.
- 8) After finishing, consider having your students present their journals/mountain men to the class.

*This lesson was adapted from: <http://centerofthewest.org/wp-content/uploads/2013/04/Trappers-Traders-and-Trailblazers-Skype-Lesson-Teacher-Guide.pdf>

Activity/Day 4: Multimedia Project on the Santa Fe Trail and Trade Routes

Students will create a multimedia project documenting the journey a person or “good” had to endure while heading west. Students will focus on the geography of the Santa Fe trail (landmarks, geographical obstacles etc). This multimedia project can be in the form of anything that the teacher feels comfortable using in the classroom (Powerpoint, Prezi, GoogleDocs etc.)

Materials:

- a. Computer with internet access (ideally 1-2 per student)
 - b. Note taking materials
 - c. Flash drive (optional)
 - d. Headphones/earbuds for the computer
1. Prior to class, the teacher may want to create an example of the multimedia project so that students know the expectations for this assignment.
 2. Review what the Santa Fe Trail was with students. What was its purpose? Where did it start and end? Which groups of people did it help and how did it help them? How did it serve Colorado? Discuss how the geography of the Santa Fe trail made the journey difficult.
 3. Tell students to explore the Trade Routes button again on the Bent’s Fort online exhibit prior to starting their multimedia projects.
 4. Let students work on their project. Provide them with an approved website list and with library books for research.
 5. Have students share their creations with each other or on the class website.

*History Colorado has a document with Santa Fe trail images, found here:.

Day/Activity 5: “Let’s Make a Deal” - The Creation of a Mini-Economy

Students will learn about the concept of bartering and trading by creating a classroom mini-economy. Ideally, this activity will cover two class periods. The first class period, students will gather information online and through book research. The second class period, students will help establish a classroom economy.

Materials:

- a. Computer with internet access (ideally 1-2 per student)
- b. Note taking materials

- c. Items students can barter (ex: legos, paper money, plastic coins, feathers etc)
 1. Introduce/remind students to how life in Bent's Fort worked, particularly trading.
 2. Let students look through the "Explore the Fort" and "Trade Routes" buttons on the Bent's Fort website. Have them write down what was traded at the fort and who were the people that traded them. What was valuable? Was it valuable between all the cultures that interacted at Bent's Fort?
 3. Talk about the barter and trade system. Trade something with one of your students: your pencil for his large eraser, for example. Explain how bartering and trade works.
 4. Establish an economy within the classroom using everyday materials such as markers, building blocks, feathers, and plastic coins. Give students certain materials (don't distribute one kind of material evenly. For example, give four students all of the coins and another four all of the feathers, forcing them to trade if they want diverse resources). Allow the students to barter and trade.
 5. After the barter/trade activity, allow students to write and/or discuss their experience bartering and trading with one another. Talk about why it is important to have an economy that works and how it benefits people that are involved in it.

*Provided is an overview of a lesson involving bartering and trading. Teachers should adapt the activity to meet the needs of students. <http://www.scholastic.com/teachers/lesson-plan/bartering-early-form-interdependence>

Day/Activity 6: Modern Day Bent's Fort

Students will create a business proposal for their own modern day Bent's Fort. They will decide have to decide its location (ex: online or an actual place in the world), whether or not it is an actual store (ex: a fictional store, a historical store, or a real store like King Soopers), and what type of goods their Bent's Fort sells/distributes. Students can work individually or in groups on this project.

Materials:

- a. Computer with internet access (ideally 1-2 per student)
 - b. Printer
 - c. Computer paper
 - d. Art supplies
 - e. Poster board
 - f. Flash drives
1. The teacher and the class should discuss what a modern day Bent's Fort would like in our society. Does it already exist? (think Amazon, a mall etc.)
 2. Each student or group will create a business proposal. They need to take location, the product they will be seeing, their customer base, and other factors into consideration. They will need to justify their proposal to the teacher/to the class by comparing specific people, purposes, and tasks from Bent's Fort to their modern example.

3. Students will research using computers. Teachers can provide a list of suggested websites. In addition, students should be saving their findings and images to a flash drive.
4. Students will type an expository paragraph about their business. This paragraph should include all relevant information (location, product, customers, prices etc).
5. Students will create a visual for the business. This can be done via a poster or a web-based program/activity.
6. Students should create a business proposal presentation for the class. The students should attempt to memorize all relevant information; them that they should be “experts” about their business.
7. Have students take turns going through their business proposal projects. The class should then have a discussion/vote on what they believe would be the most successful business.

Colorado Academic Standards Addressed

Economics

- 3.1 People respond to positive and negative incentives
- 3.2 The relationship between choice and opportunity cost (PFL)

Geography

1. Use several types of geographic tools to answer questions about the geography of Colorado
2. Connections within and across human and physical systems are developed

History

- 1.1 Organize a sequence of events to understand the concepts of chronology and cause and effect in the history of Colorado
- 1.2 The historical eras, individuals, groups, ideas, and themes in Colorado history and their relationships to key events in the United States

Oral Expression and Listening

- 1.1 A clear communication plan is necessary to effectively deliver and receive information

Writing and Composition

- 3.1 The recursive writing process is used to create a variety of literary genres for an intended audience

Common Core English Language Arts

Reading Standards

Grade 4: Informational Text

6. Compare and contrast a firsthand and second hand account of the same event or topic; describe the differences in focus and the information provided.
9. Integrate information from two texts on the same topic in order to write or speak about the subject knowledgeably.

Writing Standards

Grade 4

1. Write opinion pieces on topics or texts; supporting a point of view with reasons and information.
 - a. Introduce a topic or text clearly, state an opinion, and create an organizational structure in which related ideas are grouped to support the writer's purpose.
 - b. Provide reasons that are supported by facts and details.
 - c. Link opinion and reasons using words and phrases(e.g. for instance, in order to, in addition to)
 - d. Provide a concluding statement or section related to the opinion presented.
2. Write information/explanatory texts to examine a topic and convey ideas and information clearly.
 - a. Introduce a topic clearly and group related information in paragraphs and sections; include formatting(e.g) headings), illustrations, and multimedia when useful to aid comprehension.
 - b. Develop the topic with facts, definitions, concrete details, quotations, or other information and examples related to the topic.
 - c. Link ideas within categories of information using words and phrases (e.g. another, for example, also, because)
 - d. Use precise language and domain specific vocabulary to inform about or explain the topic.
 - e. Provide a concluding statement or section related to the information or explanation presented.

Speaking and Listening

Grade 4

Report on a topic or text, tell a story, or recount an experience in an organized manner, using appropriate facts and relevant, descriptive details to support main ideas or themes; speak clearly at an understandable pace.