

One Room School House Introduction

One-room schools were commonplace throughout rural portions of various countries including the United States, Canada, Australia, New Zealand, United Kingdom, Ireland and Spain in the late 19th and early 20th centuries. In most rural (country) and small town schools, all of the students met in a single room. There, a single teacher taught academic basics to several grade levels of elementary-age boys and girls. While in many areas one-room schools are no longer used, it is not uncommon for them to remain in developing nations and rural areas, such as much of the Falklands and Shetland.



The quality of facilities at one-room schools varied with local economic conditions, but generally, the number of children at each grade level would vary with local populations. Most buildings were of simple frame construction, some with the school bell on a cupola. In the Midwest, sod construction was also used, as well as stone in areas such as portions of the southwest where trees were scarce. In some locations, the schoolhouse was painted red, but most seem to have been white.

A typical school day was 9 a.m. to 4 p.m., with morning and afternoon recesses of 15 minutes each and an hour period for lunch. "The older students were given the responsibility of bringing in water, carrying in coal or wood for the stove. The younger students would be given responsibilities according to their size and gender such as cleaning the black board (chalkboard), taking the erasers outside for dusting plus other duties that they were capable of doing."

Transportation for children who lived too far to walk was often provided by horse-drawn kid hack or sulky, which could only travel a limited distance in a reasonable amount of time each morning and evening, or students might ride a horse, these being put out to pasture in an adjoining paddock during the day. In more recent times, students rode bicycles.

The school house was the center and focus for thousands of rural communities, hamlets and small towns. Often, town meetings and picnics were also held there.

The vast majority of one-room schools in the United States are no longer used as schools



and have either been torn down or converted for other purposes. However, in some rural communities, including among the Amish, one-room or two-room schools are still used, primarily for elementary education, with students graduating to local or regional middle and high schools.

We invite your students to immerse themselves in the One Room Schoolhouse by dressing in pioneer clothing for their visit to Smith McDowell House or if the program is at your school.

Pre Visit Lesson
One Room Schoolhouse

Goal:

- To prepare students for their field trip visit to Smith McDowell House.
- To introduce students to basic knowledge about one room schoolhouse history

Lesson:

1. Begin class discussion with the following questions:
 - a. Why do we go to school?
 - b. What activities do we do in school?
 - c. How is our classroom equipped to help us learn?
2. Explain to the class that early schools in America were very different from schools today. In rural areas, children were sometimes taught at home. As areas of the country were settled and farmers prospered, one-room schoolhouses were built. Let students know they will look at pictures to see what school was like for children their age a hundred years ago. It may be helpful to explain to students that their grandparents' mothers and fathers might have attended a one-room schoolhouse.
3. Group the students into 5 heterogeneous groups. Give each group one of the activity pages and have them discuss and answer the questions suggested.
4. When each group is ready, have them present their photograph to the rest of the class and relate what they learned from answering the questions.
5. (optional) Have the students write an essay with the prompt: "In school today, I..." . Have them write it from the perspective of a student in a one room schoolhouse.
6. (optional) Read selections from Laura Ingles Wilder's *Little House on The Prairie* book that describes her experience in the one room schoolhouse

GROUP ONE:



This is a photograph of a one-room schoolhouse in Bristol Notch, Vermont that was taken around 1930.

What type of building materials are used in the building of the school?

How would you describe this school to someone who isn't looking at the picture?

What do you think the inside of the school looks like?

How many children do you see outside?

Do you see the teacher standing in the doorway?

Why is the boy riding a bicycle? How do you think the other children got to school that day?

GROUP TWO



Are all the children in the classroom the same age?

What are some of the items in the classroom you see that helped the students learn?

What is object in the front of the picture?

Describe the desks the students are sitting in.

Describe the classroom decorations.

GROUP THREE:



How many students can you count in this group?

Can you find the teacher?

Are all these students the same age?

Describe the clothing on the students.

What can you tell from the wall behind the group about the subjects that were taught in this classroom?

GROUP FOUR



Do you suppose this is how these students got to class?

Is this school located in a town or out in the country?

Describe the school house itself.

Why do you think the boy is standing on the roof of the school house? How did he get up there?

GROUP FIVE

What are the games you see these students playing?
Is the boy ducking under the circle a clue to tell you what the game is?

Do the children seem to be having fun?

Describe how the boys and girls are dressed.

Do you see the teacher in the doorway of the school?



One Room Schoolhouse
On Site and Outreach Lesson Plan

Goal:

On Site: To utilize Smith McDowell House Museum’s dependency building to facilitate a re-creation of a 19th century one-room schoolhouse where students can be immersed in a learning situation of the past.

Outreach: To facilitate a re-creation of a 19th century one-room schoolhouse where students can be immersed in a learning situation of the past

Objectives:

- ❖ The students will recite the Pledge of Allegiance and participate in the morning ritual of the one-room schoolhouse using proper respect and decorum.
- ❖ The students will participate in an old fashioned spelling bee and other examples of one-room schoolhouse teaching methods.
- ❖ The students will compare and contrast the modern school setting with the one-room school setting.
- ❖ The students will draw conclusions as to the logic behind one-room schoolhouse rules, teaching methods and practices.

NC Standard Course of Study: Social Studies

1 st grade	2 nd grade	3 rd grade	4 th grade	5 th grade
2.01	1.02	1.01	1.-3	1.06
2.02	1.03	2.02	2.03	2.06
2.04	1.04	2.03	3.01	
2.04	8.02	3.01	3.04	
2.063.02		3.02	4.01	
3.04		6.06	7.01	
5.01			7.02	
6.01				
7.01				

Lesson:

1. On site, students will be welcomed into the dependency building at Smith McDowell House Museum with the ringing of the school bell.
 - a. The dependency building was never an actual school, but originally a salt curing house and later a laundry.
 - b. Point out the public school sign in the back of the room. This came from the old Newton Academy School that was originally located on the other side of the hospital.
 - c. Begin with Pledge to the Flag and ‘good mornings’
2. Outreach – introduce yourself to students, marveling at the huge school that they attend and that all the students in the room are all the same age.
3. On site – If this were really a one room school – and most schools were not much more than a building like this – what do you have at your school that you do not see at this?

- a. Use these answers to take a moment or two to comment on those differences.
4. One room
5. Benches instead of desks
6. No TV
7. No bathroom, running water, etc.
8. No buses
9. No cafeteria
10. Bookshelves and books
11. Classroom Rules
12. Writing on Slates – pass out slates and pencils
 - a. Assignment: One group write their ABCs, another write the spelling words that are on the board, another write their 2 pluses.
13. Spelling bee – boys vs. girls
 - a. Choose spelling words from one of the McGuffey readers.
14. Would you have liked to have gone to a one room school or do you prefer today's schools?

Post Visit Lesson/Activity
One Room Schoolhouse

Goal:

To demonstrate the use of practice strokes for good handwriting by making a craft project.

Objective:

The students will make copybooks on which to practice their lines and forming of letters.

The students will practice loops and other shapes to improve their handwriting (the way it was done in the past).

Materials

Paper
Rulers
Pencils
Hole punch
String/yarn

Directions:

1. Make copies of the copybook (on the next 2 pages). Make enough copies for each student.
 - a. Cut across the dotted lines.
2. Distribute the copies to the students.
 - a. Students will compile their pages (6).
3. Use the hole puncher to punch 3 or 4 holes in the left hand side.
4. Use string or yarn to thread through the holes to hold the copybook together.
5. Once the books are made, students can use the first three pages to practice the writing strokes illustrated. The other 3 pages can be used for more practice or for having the students write their spelling words.

Handwritten cursive 'M' tracing practice on a four-line grid. The word 'MMMM' is written in a consistent cursive style, with each letter connected to the next. The letters are positioned between the top and bottom solid lines, with a dashed midline.

1



2



4

5