

Pioneer Country

Pioneer Country

Objectives:

1. To provide an historical recreation of pioneer and settler life.
2. To provide students with a sample of the difficulties the settlers faced.
3. To provide an opportunity for the discussion of bullying and methods of intervention.

Before the Game:

1. Find the box labeled “Pioneer Country” and bring it to the Pavilion.
2. Designate one side of the Pavilion to be the “Bank”. On the Bank side, set out the money in neat, orderly piles. (This will help you keep things organized as the game goes on.)
3. Designate the other side of the Pavilion to be the “Store”. On the Store side, sort out the various cards (e.g. wagon, plow, salt, etc.) and stack them neatly in piles. (Again, this will help in the chaos of the game.)
4. Determine the boundaries you will use to play the game. Send people out in different directions with an assortment of gold, furs, and skins cards. They are to scatter them at random through the forests and field areas.

Game Spiel:

“Welcome to Pioneer Country. What is going to happen is that the crew leaders are going to move among you and divide you up into families. I’m sorry, but you don’t get your choice as to who is in your family. (Try to average about 4-5 students per family.)

“You are pioneers. Your goal is to go out in this game and find cards that are labeled “Gold”, “Furs” and “Skins”. You will take these cards to the Bank and exchange them for the money you will need to survive. Once you have money from the Bank, you are to go to the Store and purchase the items listed on the poster. When you have purchased everything on the poster and you have \$250.00 in cash left over, you will trade everything you have to the Store in exchange for a “You Have Survived for One Year” card. After your family has that card, you have won the game. Just sit back and enjoy watching everyone else struggle!



“When you hear the staff blowing whistles, the game is over. If you haven’t exchanged your “Gold”, “Furs” and “Skins” for money and bought the things you need to survive, you have lost. In other words, visit the Bank and Store often! When the bell rings, it is too late!

“The boundaries for the game are _____. You are required to stay in bounds at all times. If you are ever found to be out-of-bounds during the game by any adult-type person, you will be charged an “out-of-bounds tax” or the adult may confiscate everything from you and make you start over! Since there is nothing hidden out of bounds, you have no reason to go there!

“During the game, there will be Indians (Adult-type people) wandering around and offering deals. The Indians may help you out, or they may rip you off. If they do rip you off, you CANNOT touch them. If you do, you will automatically lose all that you have! You are

allowed to deal with the Indians and some of them will actually help you. HINT: you will probably have to deal with the Indians to win. They are the ones who hid the treasure...

“You cannot rob from the Bank, the Store, the Indians or each other. If you do, you are disqualified. You are not allowed to enter the Pavilion. If you do, you lose all that you have. If your family is spaced out more than 20 feet apart, an Indian will immediately pounce upon you and take all of your supplies! You must stay together! In other words, go as fast as the slowest member of your group. Final Hint: I wouldn’t trade with other families. If they don’t want you to win, do you really think they are going to help you out? Probably not!



“Any questions? Okay, straight even lines. Staff members, divide the crews! Students, huddle together with your families when you are divided and wait for my command to begin.” (Once everyone is divided up, shout “go”.)

At the Beginning of the Game:

1. Assign one adult to run the Bank and one to run the Store. Both the Bank and the Store should endeavor to rip off groups as much as possible. This can be done by:
 - a. Charging tax on transactions or purchases.
 - b. Not counting out change accurately. (I never count at all, in fact. Strangely enough, the children never count, either. They just take the money I give them and run off happily.)
 - c. Giving different items than requested.
2. Disperse the remaining staff to begin interacting as “Indians”.
3. Gather the adults together and explain their role in the game. The job of the Indian is to:
 - a. Maintain the boundaries of the game.
 - b. Ensure that families are traveling closely together.
 - c. Be available in case of disputes.
 - d. Rip the children off and prevent any group from winning the game. There is a significant lesson we are trying to teach about history. We are going to explain how some of the settlers treated the Indians by “showing” the group how it felt. We are not being disrespectful to the Indians and, in fact, the students will come to a deeper understanding of what life was like in early America. (It happens rarely, but occasionally you will have an adult who is offended by this concept. After the other adults have left with their instructions, talk one-on-one with that person and try to reassure them.)
 - i. The Indians are the “equalizers”. If they find a group with little, they can feel free to “trade” with the settlers and give them encouragement so that they stay involved in the game.
 1. You can quiz them about pioneer life, a class they have had at camp, etc. for money or other cards.
 2. Offer them a chance to “swap” what they have for what you have.

- ii. If they find a group that has a lot of cards, their goal will be to rip them off and take as much of their supplies as they can. This can be done by:



1. Asking to see what a group has, counting it out (nodding impressively), and then only return a portion of what they gave you. Just tell them it is a tax.
 2. Selling information to secret, buried treasure. (You can promise a money-back guarantee if they don't find it. I always do, but I never actually give the money back when they fail...)
 3. Sell other "vital" necessities. These can include oxen, weapons (they do need a "rifle" for hunting, but they don't need "weapons"), magic rocks, diving rods, sacred feathers, etc.
 4. Forcing a group to separate by more than 20 feet. This can usually be best accomplished by throwing a card they need and telling only one person to go get the card, by having races, etc.
- e. I usually recommend having them travel in groups of two. It tends to be more successful for both of them.

At the Middle of the Game:

1. Whoever leads the game should spend a great deal of their time floating around, making sure that groups are still encouraged and wanting to play while making sure that no one is close to winning.
2. If you are feeling particularly brave and adventurous:
 - a. Bring out a "You Have Survived For One Year" card. Offer a group a chance to swap all that they have for a secret treasure. Do NOT explain what the treasure is, they have to trust you. If they agree, as a group, make the swap.
 - b. Now that they have this card, technically they have won the game. Since they spoils our wrap up, now you have to get it back. As you walk away from the group, start laughing.
 - c. Have another person (usually the Lead Teacher enjoys this role) go up to the group and ask what just happened. When they show the card, tell them they were ripped off! The best way to convince them is to stress that in the directions, the only place they could get that particular card was from the Store. Clearly this was another case of an Indian ripping them off. Offer them whatever cards you have in your hand in exchange for their card. Then, tell them to continue playing as there is still plenty of time left!

At the End of the Game:

1. When the game is over, have all of the staff blow their whistles. When the groups returns, count the children first to make sure everyone made it back safely! As soon as you are sure that everyone is accounted for, begin the wrap-up.

Wrap-Up

“Welcome back, Pioneers! The staff are going to be coming around and collecting all of your cards. Please have them out and ready to turn in. Remember: the game is over. As we are wrapping up the game, I have a few questions for you. This is going to be by “show of hands”, not “show of mouths”, so please raise your hands, not your voices.”

1. So, did any group win the game? Did any group come close?
2. Did any of you ever have a card saying, “You Survived For One Year”? If so, you won the game! If you remember, at the start of the game I said you needed to have this card to win. Did any of you have it and trade it away thinking it was worthless?
3. Okay, more importantly, show of hands, not show of mouth, how many of you were ripped off? You know what, if you dealt with an Indian, you were probably ripped off. Also, if you visited the Bank, you got ripped off. And, fun fact, if you visited the Store, you got ripped off!

“Okay, now we have to talk about why you got ripped off. Let me ask you a question: if you were living in 1800’s, building your own homestead, and there is only one bank within 300 miles. Which bank did you go to? (That one.) Why? (There was no where else to go.) Could they charge you anything they wanted? (Yep.) Did you pay it? (Yep.) Why? (There was no where else to go.)

“Also, if you were settling in an area and you needed a horse, where did you need to go? (The store.) If they wanted to charge you \$10,000 for a horse did you pay it? (Either that or you did without.) Again, if you don’t have a choice of where to go, you have to pay what the people are asking for or you have to find a way to live without it. That’s the way life was for the pioneers and settlers as they moved across America.



“Random Fun Fact: the people who made the fortunes during the California Gold Rush weren’t the miners; it was the people who ran the banks and stores. If I charged you \$500.00 for a cheeseburger, did you pay it? (You had no choice! Gold is not very tasty or nutritious.)”

“Now, I want you to think long and hard about this next question. DO NOT say something which is going to offend someone! Why were the staff and/or adults “Indians” in this game? Is it because Indians lie, cheat and steal from people? Think CAREFULLY before answering this one!!! (No.) Then why? (Because, a long time ago, the white settlers lied, cheated and stole from the Indians.)

“What happened was this: when the first white settlers came to America, the Indians invited them to come and live with them. We celebrate this every year. What holiday celebrates Indians helping out settlers? (Thanksgiving.) After a while, though, we wanted to buy the land.

The Indians didn't understand this idea. Own the land? How do you own land? That belongs to everybody! However, they sold it to us because that's what we wanted.

"When we decided we didn't want to buy the land anymore (it was getting too expensive), we began to rip them off. We bought the most expensive piece of land in the world today for \$26.00 worth of beads. We went up to the Indians and told them that these beads were what we used for money in our home lands. If they took this chest of beads, they would be rich. Did the Indians believe us? (Yes. They didn't have any reason to doubt us.) We lied to them and ripped them off. (By the way, that chunk of land is the island of Manhattan.)

"Finally, when we got tired of ripping them off, we rounded them up like cattle and drove them onto reservations. When we got tired of that, we killed them off. It wasn't the Indians who stole from the pioneers and settlers. We stole from them... Tonight, this game provided us with a chance for the Indians to "get back" at the settlers.



"Now, how many of you liked being ripped off. (Yeah, right. Put your hands down!) Let me ask you a question: if you didn't like being ripped off in a GAME, would you like it if it happened to you in real life? If you don't like being picked on, ripped off or bullied, do you suppose other people like it? At this point, I need to ask a favor: I want you to promise me that you will help other people out if you see them being picked on."

(At this point, have them raise their right hands and make a pledge to get involved. I realize it may seem silly and, in fact, the vow we have them take is usually something done as part of the fun. However, in today's society, we have all heard about the aftermath of people who have been ostracized because of some sort of difference, real or perceived. Maybe this isn't such a silly thing after all...)

Trade Values

One Gold = \$50.00

One Fur = \$20.00

One Skin = \$15.00

Needed To Survive For One Year

Item	Quantity	Cost
Bible	1	\$2.00 each
Corn Seed	3	\$3.00 each
Salt	3	\$3.00 each
Tools / Axe	1	\$5.00 each
Supplies*	6	\$6.00 each
Chickens	3	\$7.00 each
Blankets	3	\$7.00 each
Clothing	3	\$7.00 each
Water Barrel	2	\$8.00 each
Camp Stove	1	\$10.00 each
Feather Beds	3	\$11.00 each
Tent	1	\$20.00 each
Hunting Rifle	1	\$25.00 each
Plow	1	\$45.00 each
Cow	2	\$50.00 each
Mule	2	\$55.00 each
Horse	3	\$75.00 each
Wagon	1	\$100.00 each

*Coffee, flour, bacon, etc.

These items are actually excerpted from a settler's diary and represent the supplies taken along to establish a homestead in 1882.