1875-1899
Solomon Butcher Photographs, The Sod House Frontier

activities

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PHOTOGRAPH ANALYSIS
Solomon Butcher Photos

Resources

Nebraska Department of Education
Content Area Standards

grade level  page
8           2

nebraska studies.org
activity
Photograph Analysis

Teacher Preparation

For this activity, teachers will need a class set of Butcher photographs showing farm families in Nebraska. To find a minimum of 30 different photographs, so each student has a different photo, follow these instructions:

1. Go to the History Nebraska web page listed below to obtain photographs. https://history.nebraska.gov/collections/solomon-d-butcher-collection

2. You may continue the search for homestead photographs on the bottom of that page by clicking on: Revealing History: How digital technology helped shed new light. More photographs can be found in a search of Solomon Butcher’s homestead photographs. Look for pictures showing families, ranches, family farms, life in town, cowboys, etc.

3. Print the pictures you want to use. It’s helpful to mount them on construction paper, and then laminate them so you have a permanent set of Butcher photographs.

The Activity

1. Give each student a photograph and ask him/her to examine the photograph for 1-2 minutes without talking. Ask them to look at all areas of the photograph and examine every detail.

Note: More advanced students may want to use the National Archives Photograph Analysis Worksheet located in the Resources section at the end of this document.

2. Have students write down everything they see in the photograph: people, animals, objects, buildings, plants, machinery, etc.

3. Ask students to describe the scene in the picture in 1-2 complete sentences.

4. Next, have students get together with 2-3 students close to them. In small groups, students will:
   • present their photograph and explain what they see
   • compare photographs and see what they have in common

5. Finally, move the discussion to the entire class.

Discussion questions:
• What did they see in common in their photographs?
• What did they see that was unusual in some of the photographs?
• Why do they think these photographs were taken? (This is a great way to start discussion about Solomon Butcher.)
• From what you see in the photograph, what do you think this family values the most? Why?

Nebraska Department of Education Content Area Standards

Language Arts
LA 8.1.6 Comprehension; LA 8.4.1 Information Fluency
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resources

Photograph Analysis Worksheet

Nebraska Department of Education Academic Standards https://www.education.ne.gov/contentareastandards/
Nebraska Department of Education Social Studies and History Standards
National Archives http://www.archives.gov/index.html
Library of Congress Learning Page Lesson Plans
https://www.loc.gov/search/?in=&q=lesson+plans&new=true&st=
Analyze a Photograph

**Meet the photo.**
Quickly scan the photo. What do you notice first?

Type of photo (check all that apply):
- Portrait
- Landscape
- Aerial/Satellite
- Action
- Architectural
- Event
- Family
- Panoramic
- Posed
- Candid
- Documentary
- Selfie
- Other

Is there a caption?  yes  no

**Observe its parts.**
List the people, objects and activities you see.

PEOPLE | OBJECTS | ACTIVITIES
--- | --- | ---

Write one sentence summarizing this photo.

**Try to make sense of it.**
Answer as best you can. The caption, if available, may help.

Who took this photo?

Where is it from?

When is it from?

What was happening at the time in history this photo was taken?

Why was it taken? List evidence from the photo or your knowledge about the photographer that led you to your conclusion.

**Use it as historical evidence.**
What did you find out from this photo that you might not learn anywhere else?

What other documents, photos, or historical evidence are you going to use to help you understand this event or topic?
Nebraska Department of Education
Content Area Standards

Language Arts Standards

LA 8.1.6 Comprehension: Students will construct meaning by applying prior knowledge, using text information, and monitoring comprehension while reading increasingly complex grade-level literary and informational text.

LA 8.4.1 Information Fluency: Students will evaluate, create, and communicate information in a variety of media and formats (textual, visual, and digital).

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