



Wyoming State Museum Mountain Man Trunk Teacher Guide

Photo by Jeroen Nieuwhuis

On behalf of the Wyoming State Museum, thank you for allowing us be a part of your classroom. We hope the items included in this trunk, and the corresponding activities, will help bring the story of the mountain men to life in your classroom. Thank you for all you do to impact the youth of Wyoming. Please let me know if the museum can be of any help in the future.

Sincerely,

Jeremy

Jeremy Thornbrugh
Curator of Education
Wyoming State Museum
307-286-8627



Mountain Man Education Trunk

Contents

This exciting curriculum will take your students from the very beginnings of the mountain man era, through the collapse of the fur trade. They will use reading, vocabulary, mathematics, small group work, critical thinking, and writing throughout these activities!

• Trunk Rules	Page 04
• Education Trunk Inventory	Page 05
• Curriculum Overview	Page 19
• Section 1: Louisiana Purchase & Lewis and Clark	Page 20
• Section 2: Exploring History through Artifacts	Page 21
• Section 3: How Mountain Men Trapped Beavers	Page 22
• Section 4: Creating a Mountain Man	Page 23
• Section 5: A Year in the Life of a Mountain Man	Page 24
• Section 6: Mountain Man Rendezvous	Page 26
• Section 7: Mountain Man Tall Tales	Page 27
• Student Worksheets	Page 28
• Supplemental Information: Trapping Beavers	Page 68
• Supplemental Information: Mountain Men Clothing	Page 73

Mountain Man Education Trunk

Rules of the Trunk

Here are a few rules pertaining to the museum items within your trunk that you must be aware of before starting the class activities.

Everything is Delicate

The museum spent more than \$2,000 during the summer of 2022 replacing broken and damaged items in our Education Trunks. Please treat them with kindness and respect, and teach students safe handling of all items.

Pet the Pelts with the Fur

Students are welcome to pet and feel any of the pelts (animal skins). But, please teach them to gently pet them in the direction the fur grew (head to tail). Petting roughly or petting in the opposite direction that the fur grew can damage the pelt.

Sharp Items Included

There are knives, arrow points, a tomahawk, and more (potentially) sharp items within this trunk. Each blade has been dulled, but can still be dangerous if handled carelessly. The teacher is responsible for deciding whether these items should be a “show only” item or if they can be handled by students.

Beadwork is Extremely Delicate

Some of these items are beaded or quilled. These artforms are incredibly delicate. Please instruct students on safe handling of these items before handing them out.

Do Not Try on the Clothes

The clothing in this trunk should be viewed (as with all the items) as educational artifacts, not as dress up toys. This means that under no circumstance, should the clothes be worn by students or adults.

Don't Lose or Break Anything

The inventory of this trunk has been verified before you picked it up or before it was shipped to you. If something is broken or missing, please call the Curator of Education at 307-286-8627. Please ensure every item is returned in the same condition that you received it. The cost of any broken or damaged items will be the responsibility of the teacher, school, and/or school district who reserved the trunk.

Mountain Man Education Trunk

Inventory List

Beaver Pelt

The American beaver was the main animal trapped during the era of the mountain man. This resource, more than any other, was the primary driver of the mountain man era.

The beaver is a water-dwelling animal that has brown fur, is approximately 4 feet long, and weighs around 40 pounds. It is the world's second largest rodent. A beaver's tail is notably flat, rounded in appearance and is made up of rough skin that resembles scales. The beaver uses its tail to signal to other beavers by slapping the water. Its tail is also used to navigate while it was in the water. A beaver can seal its ears, mouth and nose when it's underwater. It is also an agile swimmer using its webbed hind feet for propulsion.

Beavers have two layers of hair, the courser outer hair and the velvety soft inner layer. This inner layer was the most valuable commodity in the mountains. Mountain men trapped these rodents and then sold the pelts to their fur company employers. These companies then sold pelts to hatters who would turn the inner hairs into hats for wealthy Americans and Europeans.



Mountain Man Education Trunk

Inventory List

Muskrat Pelt

Musk rats are relatives to American beavers, and share their same ecosystem. Just like beavers, muskrats have a soft inner layer of fur. This fur was also used to make hats. While not as valuable as beaver skins, muskrats were also a target of mountain men trapping.



River Otter Pelt

Another important fur-bearing animal was the American river otter, another aquatic-dwelling mammal. Like the American beaver and muskrat, American river otters have thick fur that was prized by the mountain men and fur companies. During the era of the mountain men, it took about two river otter pelts to equal the value of one beaver pelt.



Red Fox Pelt

Foxes were also trapped by the mountain men, but to a lesser degree than the aquatic species listed above. Foxes live on dry land, but can grow warm (and sometimes very soft) fur during the winter.



Mountain Man Education Trunk

Inventory List

Raccoon Pelt

Raccoons were also trapped by the mountain men, but to a lesser degree than the aquatic species listed on the last page. Raccoons live on dry land, but can grow warm (and sometimes very soft) fur during the winter.



Cloth Caps (2)

Caps were worn by mountain men during the winter months. They wore a variety of caps, and rarely were two caps alike. For example, stocking caps were highly popular with the French-Canadians; most were personally decorated with furs, feathers and quilled or beaded designs. Scottish bonnets were worn by trappers from Scotland and were decorated with trade silver pieces.



Wool Hat

Wool hats were incredibly popular in the United States and Europe. Beaver hair was the most sought after material for these hats. Many historic paintings show the men wearing hats like the one in this trunk. However, they would have been unlikely to be made from precious beaver fur. A wide brimmed hat would keep the sun and rain off of the men's faces. Most photos of Jim Bridger show him wearing a hat similar to this one.



Mountain Man Education Trunk

Inventory List

Cloth Shirt

Shirts used by the mountain men would have been a simple pullover design with a large body and loose-fitting sleeves. Solid colors, including red, blue, green and yellow were favorites. Wide prints (like calico) were also worn. Shirts were a popular trade item at rendezvous and, in any year, hundreds might have been taken to the mountains.



Trousers

These 1820s (replica) men's trousers are made of cotton canvas and have pewter buttons with suspenders attached. Cloth pants like these were bought from the East. As they fell apart due to the wear and tear of the tough outdoor life, many men patched the trousers with deerskin or lined them with skins to extend their usefulness. Ultimately, the cotton trousers fell apart and were replaced with buckskin pants. Artwork from this time period shows high-waisted pants with narrow legs. Belts were not usually used to hold up pants during this era; suspenders would have been used. This artwork shows men wearing both buckskin pants and cloth trousers (frequently blue) in the mountains. Trousers were also a common trade item at rendezvous.



Please do not try on the clothes.

Mountain Man Education Trunk

Inventory List

Belt

This belt, made of heavy tanned leather with a hand-forged buckle, was worn outside of the shirt and held a knife, tobacco bag, and other personal items.



Moccasins

These were worn by virtually all the mountain men. As eastern-bought boots and brogans (ankle-high leather shoes) wore out, they were replaced with moccasins. Moccasins were comfortable, durable and well suited to the mountains. There were many different moccasins styles, depending on who the mountain man learned to create them from.



Possibles Bag

This bag served as the carrying pouch for items the mountain men might “possibly” have needed. This included tools for their firearms, tinder to start fires, bullets, trade items, and personal gear.



Mountain Man Education Trunk

Inventory List

Trade Cloth (2)

Since Native Americans (at this time) did not produce cloth, this item would have been an important trade item with the tribes. It, along with many of the following items, would have been transported to the mountains and used by the mountain men to trade for furs or other items they needed.



Trade Mirror

Like cloth, the people of the Great Plains did not produce metal objects during the era of the mountain men. Another popular trade item carried by mountain men was the trade mirror. These show up in the logs of items shipped to the mountains for the various rendezvous.



Trade Silver Pieces (2)

During the later years of the fur trade, mountain men traded silver to the people of the plains in exchange for furs. Native Americans used the silver as ornaments on their clothing and in their hair.



Mountain Man Education Trunk

Inventory List

Trade Beads (5)

There were numerous styles of glass beads that were used as trade items with the numerous Native American tribes. The trunk has pound beads (larger “pony” beads) and seed beads (smaller beads). Glass beads were popular because they were colorful, easy to use and easy to carry. The trade beads replaced beads made of bone, shell, copper, and stone.



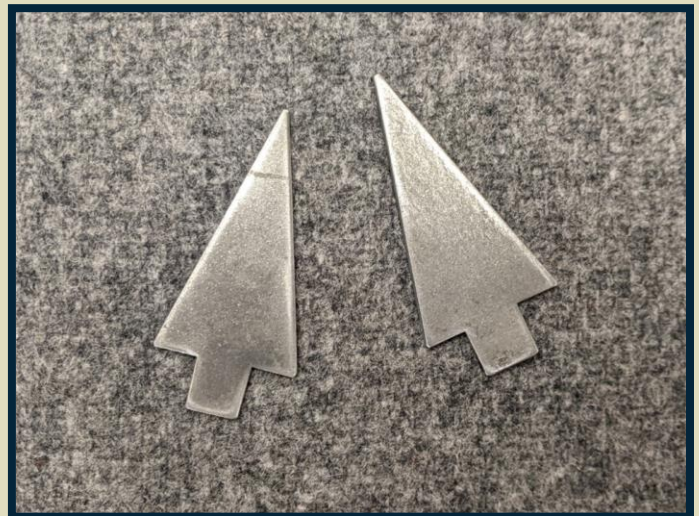
Hawk Bells (6)

Like many of the previous items, these bells would have been traded to Native Americans for decorating clothing and for use during ceremonies.



Steel Points (2)

While Native Americans (during this time period) made points (such as arrowheads) out of stone and bone, they did not make anything out of metal. Therefore, steel points were a widely sought-after trade item. The people of the plains substituted the more efficient steel points over the historically crafted points for their arrows. This allowed them more free time, instead of crafting their own points.



Mountain Man Education Trunk

Inventory List

Lead Bar

Bars similar to this were brought to the mountains and served as the raw material to make bullets. The lead would be heated until it was in liquid form and then poured into a bullet mold. As it cooled, the lead would become solid and formed into the desired size for bullets.



Bullet Mold

These came in various sizes, depending on the size or type of the bullet that was needed. The size of the bullet is based on the “caliber” of the weapon. Lead was held over a fire until melted and then poured into the mold and cooled to form the ball-shaped bullet. This item allowed mountain men to make bullets year-round.



Lead Balls (3)

Before modern ammunition, guns were loaded with gun powder and lead balls separately. These are examples of the round bullets that would have been used during the time of the mountain men.



Mountain Man Education Trunk

Inventory List

Powder Horn

Horns (unlike antlers) are naturally hollow. Mountain men used the horns of cows or bison to create these containers to store their black powder (gun powder). Black powder was a vital ingredient for firing all guns of the time.



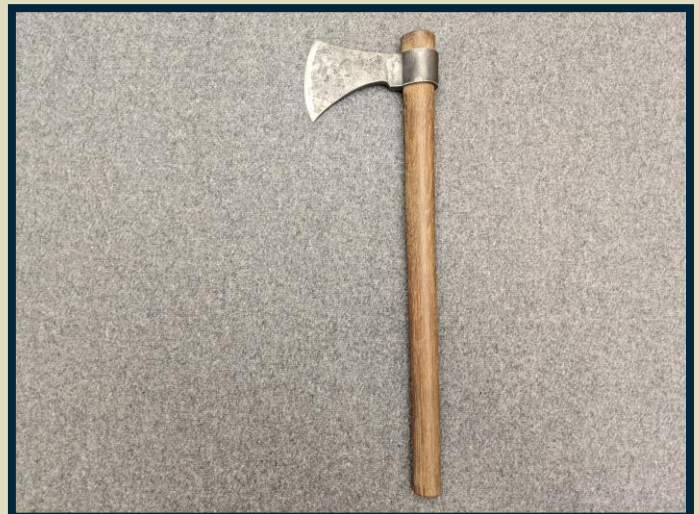
Beaver Trap

Beaver traps varied in size, style, and method of setting. The most commonly used beaver traps were double spring and weighed about four to five pounds. A mountain man carried six or seven traps in his leather trap sack. The supplemental information at the back of this book will give more information about how the traps were used.



Tomahawk

Tomahawks were important for both beaver trapping and for the survival of the mountain man. They were frequently traded to the Native People living in the Great Plains. They were also vitally important for cutting wood, building encampments, for setting beaver traps.



Mountain Man Education Trunk

Inventory List

Castor Bottle

A castor bottle contained castoreum, harvested from the glands of beavers. This was used to bait a mountain man's beaver traps. He would take a peeled willow stick and dip it into his castor bottle. He would then spread this yellowish substance on a limb poised above the trap. The castoreum produced a scent that attracted beavers to the location of the trap. Castor, or castoreum, comes from two glands at the base of the beaver's tail. Trappers mixed castor with cloves, nutmeg, cinnamon, alcohol, and other strong smelling items. Each trapper guarded his recipe and swore it was the best. Castoreum was also used in perfumes and in medicines for a variety of illnesses. It contains acetylsalicylic acid, the main component of aspirin.



Skinning Knife

Skinning knives were an important style of knife for the trappers. They were practical, light, and relatively inexpensive. They were used to skin beavers and other animals after trapping them. Due to heavy use the knives needed to be replaced often. The "Green River" knife is a type of skinning knife that became popular during the end of the mountain man era. They were named after a forge on the Green River in Massachusetts.



Mountain Man Education Trunk

Inventory List

Tinder Box and Tinder

This style of tinder box is similar to the ones issued by the Hudson Bay Company during the fur trade. Not only did it hold tinder (easily burned material) and keep it dry, but it also had a built-in magnifying glass that allowed fires to be started quickly and easily on sunny days.



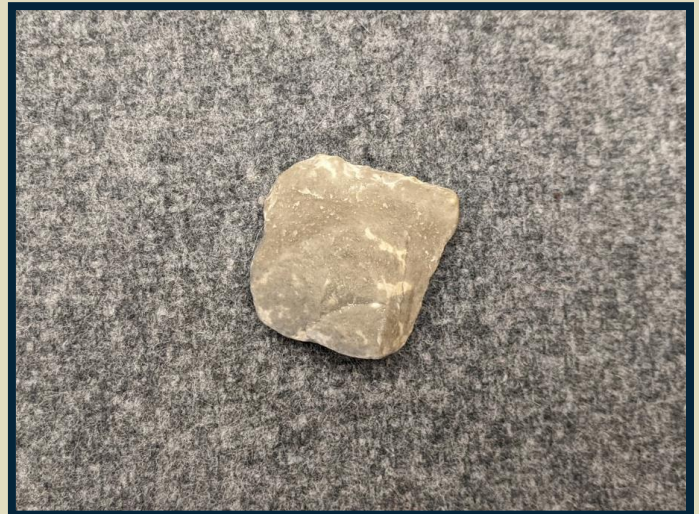
Steel Striker

The flintstone and steel striker were used to start fires much the same way that we use matches today. A piece of flintstone would be struck on the steel striker to produce a spark. The spark could be “captured” on char cloth placed into tinder in order to start a flame.



Flint

The flint (also known as flint stone) and steel striker were used to start fires much the same way that we use matches, today. A piece of flint would be struck on the steel striker to produce a spark. The spark could be “captured” on char cloth placed into tinder in order to start a flame.



Mountain Man Education Trunk

Inventory List

Wooden Water Canteen

This canteen is made from pinewood construction with nailed wooden hoops. It is lined with brewers pitch (tree resin) to make it waterproof. Canteens like these were common among fur trappers.



Leather Bag

A handy drawstring pouch like this one was ideal for carrying the mountain man's flint and steel, lead balls, or dice.



Horn Comb

Lice were a constant issue for all people in the 1800s. This cow horn comb is actually a lice comb. The larger "teeth" would be used to remove the adult lice from a mountain man's hair. The smaller "teeth" would be used to remove the nits, or eggs.



Mountain Man Education Trunk

Inventory List

Tobacco Canteen

This tobacco canteen is made from rawhide. First, it would have been sewn together while still wet. Then, sand would have been pounded into it to create its shape, and then it was allowed to dry. It was popular for storing tobacco, but could have also been used to store beads, percussion caps (ammunition parts), lead bullets, and other items.



Twist Tobacco

Twist tobacco was a form of tobacco used by mountain men. Tobacco was usually smoked in a pipe, but could also be chewed.

Please keep this in the plastic bag.



Clay Pipes (2)

The practice of smoking tobacco was common among most of the fur trappers and Native Americans; it was a popular pastime for both groups. Clay pipes were light and could be easily packed and carried anywhere. They were incredibly cheap to make, so they were also a common trade item.

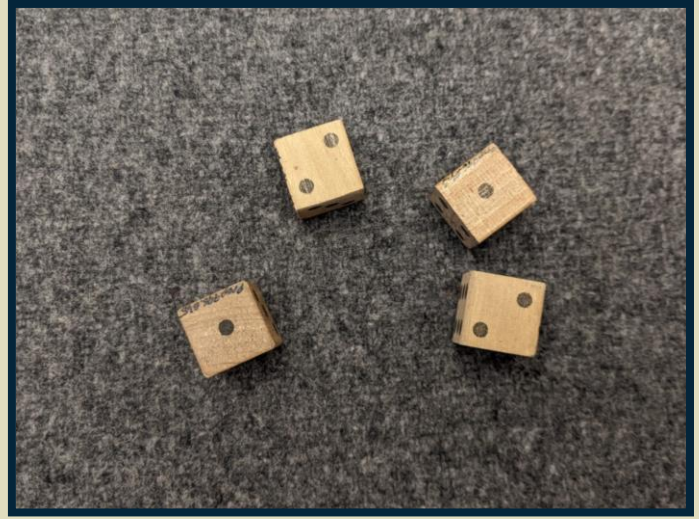


Mountain Man Education Trunk

Inventory List

Wooden Dice (4)

Many mountain men passed the long, cold winters (and the jubilant summer rendezvous), by gambling with wooden dice like these.



Jaw Harp

The jaw harp, also known as a mouth fiddle, was used as a musical instrument and was often accompanied by the jovial singing of mountain men. The first archeological evidence of a jaw harp dates back to more than 3,000 years ago! But, it was still very popular during the early 1800s.



Playing Cards

Like wooden dice, playing cards were very popular with mountain men. While springtime and autumn were extremely busy times of the year, playing cards helped occupy the men during the long, cold winters and during the summertime rendezvous.



Mountain Man Education Trunk

Curriculum Overview

The Wyoming State Museum is extremely excited for you to try out this new and improved curriculum. This overview will tell you what to expect within each section of the curriculum. The following pages will dive deeper into each activity. Some of these sections can even be completed before you receive the trunk or after you send it back.

- **Section 1: Louisiana Purchase and Lewis and Clark Expedition**
This introduction lesson teaches students how the Louisiana Purchase and the Lewis and Clark Expedition were instrumental to creating the mountain men. These activities focus on reading comprehension and vocabulary.
- **Section 2: Exploring History through Artifacts**
This activity allows students to get hands on with one mountain man artifact, analyze it, and determine what it would have been used for. This activity utilizes group work and critical thinking.
- **Section 3: How Mountain Men Trapped Beavers**
This activity is two parts worksheets and one part classroom discussion. Your students will use independent research to learn about the American beaver and figure out the steps that mountain men used to trap beavers. Then, you'll use a couple of the trunk's artifacts to teach your students more about this topic.
- **Section 4: Creating a Mountain Man**
In this fun activity, your students will create their own mountain man. They'll name him, choose his country of origin, give him abilities and skills, and dress him. You will also have a classroom discussion about mountain man clothes, showing the clothes from the trunk. This activity cannot be skipped if you're doing Section 5 or 6.
- **Section 5: A Year in the Life of a Mountain Man**
This is the main activity of the entire trunk. Students will go through 22 "encounters" with their mountain man, led by you. You will utilize cards (created by the museum) to easily walk your students through different good and bad things that happened to mountain men while trapping. Their mountain man abilities and skills will help them survive and thrive.
- **Section 6: Mountain Man Rendezvous**
After their first year in the mountains, your students will use mathematics to determine how many beavers they obtained, and how much money they're worth. Then, they'll go through the rendezvous store, purchasing items they'll need for their next year in the Rocky Mountains.
- **Section 7: Mountain Man Tall Tales**
Finally, your students will use writing skills to create tall tales about their mountain man's experience in the mountains, during their first year.

Mountain Man Education Trunk

Setting Up the Era of the Mountain Men

Section 1: Setting Up the Era of the Mountain Men

This section utilizes English Language Arts to allow your students to learn about what caused the mountain men to move into the Rockies in the first place. They will learn a bit about the Louisiana Purchase and the Lewis and Clark Expedition; both of these were the impetus for the era of the mountain men. **This activity can be completed before you receive the trunk in your classroom.**

- Activity 1: The Louisiana Purchase

- Part 1: “The Louisiana Purchase” Vocabulary Worksheet

Students will use computers, tablets, or dictionaries in the classroom to define vocabulary terms. You can print this document from the Mountain Man Trunk page of the Wyoming State Museum website or photocopy it from the “Student Worksheets” section of this book.

- Part 2: Reading Activity

Students will read a short synopsis about the Louisiana Purchase to learn about it. This reading activity is already printed and ready to go. It is combined with the Lewis and Clark Expedition reading activity in the trunk.

- Part 3: “The Louisiana Purchase” Test Your Knowledge Worksheet

Students will answer a few questions about what they just read. This document is on the back of the vocabulary sheet.

- Activity 2: The Lewis and Clark Expedition

- Part 1: “The Lewis and Clark Expedition” Vocabulary Worksheet

Students will use computers, tablets, or dictionaries in the classroom to define vocabulary terms. Like above, you can print this document or photocopy it.

- Part 2: Reading Activity

Students will read a short synopsis about the Lewis and Clark Expedition to learn about it. This reading activity is already printed and ready to go. It is combined with the Louisiana Purchase reading activity in the trunk.

- Part 3: “The Lewis and Clark Expedition” Test Your Knowledge Worksheet

Students will answer a few questions about what they just read. This document is on the back of the vocabulary sheet.

Mountain Man Education Trunk

Exploring History through Artifacts

Section 2: Exploring History through Artifacts

This section allows students to get hands on with one artifact from the education trunk. They will do small group work, handle artifacts, draw pictures, and use critical thinking to hypothesize about what one artifact from the mountain man time period was used for.

- Activity 1: Exploring History through Artifacts
 - Part 1: “Exploring History through Artifacts” Worksheet

Students should be placed in small groups, and each given a copy of the worksheet. You can print this document from the “Mountain Man Trunk” page of the Wyoming State Museum website or photocopy it from the “Student Worksheets” section of this book. Then, give each group one artifact from the trunk. Make sure you pick a fun, unusual, or interesting artifact. They will work through the worksheet, answering questions, discussing with their partners, drawing pictures, and thinking about this time period.

It is important to note, that you do not need to tell the students if their hypotheses are correct or not... at this point. It is also advised to NOT show the students the artifacts from the other groups’ tables. Every student will see every artifact (and learn what they were used for) as we go through the following activities.

Mountain Man Education Trunk

How the Mountain Men Trapped Beavers

Section 3: How Mountain Men Trapped Beavers

This section focuses on the American beaver and how the mountain men trapped them. It has three smaller activities. Your students will see the multiple items from the trunk during this activity, too.

- Activity 1: The American Beaver
 - Part 1: “Getting the American Beaver” Worksheet

Students will use computers, tablets, or encyclopedias in the classroom to learn about the adaptations of the American beaver. Then, they will match the descriptions to the pictures on the other side of the worksheet. You can print this document from the “Mountain Man Trunk” page of the Wyoming State Museum website or photocopy it from the “Student Worksheets” section of this book.

- Activity 2: How Mountain Men Trapped Beavers
 - Part 1: “How Mountain Men Trapped Beavers” Worksheet

Students will read about how the mountain men came to the Rockies. Then, they will learn how mountain men trapped, prepared, and sold beavers pelts by putting these steps in the correct order. You can print this document from the “Mountain Man Trunk” page of the Wyoming State Museum website or photocopy it from the “Student Worksheets” section of this book.

- Part 2: Classroom Discussion

After your students have learned a bit about how mountain men trapped beavers, you should lead a classroom discussion about the subject. This discussion should basically dive deeper into each step shown on the worksheet.

If you need more background knowledge on this subject, some supplemental information is included at the back of this packet (“Supplemental Teacher Information: Trapping Beaver.”)

Mountain Man Education Trunk

Creating a Mountain Man

Section 4: Creating a Mountain Man

This section allows your students to get creative, and make their own mountain man. They will choose the mountain man's name, nation of origin, abilities, and skills. They will also dress their mountain man. All of this will prepare them for Section 5.

- Activity 1: Making Your Mountain Man

- Part 1: "Making Your Mountain Man" Worksheet

Students will use reading skills to learn about why mountain men braved the Rockies. Then, they will answer questions on the worksheet to create their own mountain man. You can print this document from the "Mountain Man Trunk" page of the Wyoming State Museum website or photocopy it from the "Student Worksheets" section of this book.

- Activity 2: Dressing Your Mountain Man

- Part 1: Classroom Discussion

Like you did with the beaver trapping artifacts, you will now show the students the clothing from the education trunk. Show them each piece of clothing; discuss what it is, and what it would be used for. This conversation should focus on the store purchased goods that the mountain men would have brought with them for their first year in the wilderness.

For the artifacts in the trunk, this is basically all of the clothing EXCEPT the moccasins. It is also important to discuss other vital pieces of clothing that are not included in the trunk, like boots, coats, and socks.

Do not show them the moccasins yet, and do not talk about the leather clothes that mountain men would make during their time in the Rockies. During the next activity, that will be a talking point.

As with before, if you need more background knowledge on this subject, some supplemental information is included at the back of this packet ("Supplemental Teacher Information: Clothing.")

- Part 2: "Dressing Your Mountain Man" Worksheet

Included in the same worksheet that was used for activity 1, there is a section on dressing their mountain man. Now that they've learned all about the clothes that a mountain man would have worn into the Rockies their first year, they will pick what clothes their mountain man is bringing with him on his adventure. Have your students list the clothes that their mountain man is going to bring, then draw them on the picture of the man.

Mountain Man Education Trunk

A Year in the Life of a Mountain Man

Section 5: A Year in the Life of a Mountain Man Game

Now that your students have made their frontiersman, your class will be able to see what a year in the life of a mountain man might have looked like. This section walks your students through many of the good and bad things that could happen during a mountain man's time in the Rockies.

For this section, your students will need their mountain man (created and dressed) and their notes page. You (the teacher) will need the "Year in the Life of a Mountain Man" cards, the mountain man draw tokens, the beaver trapping die (singular dice), and a coin (any coin).

The activity is created in a way that you should not need much background knowledge to facilitate the game. The talking points for each card are written on it, for your convenience. The back of each card also has an actual quote from a real mountain man about the topic on the card. This is a great way to discuss primary sources with your students. The museum does recommend going through the cards before you present to your class, just to see what's coming up.

The way the activity/game is played is simple. It will be broken into a fall trapping season and a spring trapping season. Mountain men usually only trapped during the fall (after beavers grew their thicker fur coats) and in the spring (before beavers shed their thicker coats). Trapping was impossible in winter due to frozen rivers, ponds, and lakes.

For each trapping season (played on the same day or broken up), you will draw a total of 11 cards... one at a time. When you draw a card, you will tell your students what is happening to them, good or bad. The cards could discuss anything from trading with Native Americans, to going hunting, to getting smallpox. You can utilize the information and quote on the card to discuss this topic with your students.

Some of the cards (for instance the "Grizzly Attack" card) will tell you to draw a "token" to determine which mountain man was effected. To do this, randomly choose a token from the token bag. Before you play, you'll want to count your students, number them off, and only put those numbers in the bag.

At the bottom of each card, there is a "Result." This is basically what happens to the mountain men due to the impact of the card. Some of these will purely be story based. For example, the "Make a Capote" card tells you that if the mountain men chose "sewing" as a skill, they are able to make themselves a capote. The "Make New Clothes" card tells you that all students will be able to make themselves leather clothes. These are things that the students can add to their notes page. This way, when they create their written story of their first year in the mountains (Section 7), they can easily remember the things their frontiersman did.

Mountain Man Education Trunk

A Year in the Life of a Mountain Man

Section 5: A Year in the Life of a Mountain Man Game (Continued)

Some of the “Results” on other cards will have a stronger impact on the mountain men; a good example of this is the “Grizzly Attack” card. You will draw a token to determine which mountain man was attacked. The card tells you that this frontiersman is killed by the grizzly. But, if he is “Extra Tough” (one of the abilities that could be chosen when the students made their mountain man) or chose “Gun Shooting” as a skill, he has a 50% chance to survive. This is where you would utilize the coin to decide his fate.

When the first mountain man inevitably dies, the best way to explain this is that their character is now a ghost. They still get to play the game and do what the other students are doing, but their mountain man is a ghost now.

Some of the cards also say “Show” on them. This tells you what artifact(s) from the trunk you should pull out and discuss with your students. Besides the clothes and beaver trapping items (which are seen in previous sections), every item in the trunk will be discussed with these 22 cards. Information about every item in the trunk can be found in the inventory section, later in this guide.

Importantly, after finishing each card, you will roll the beaver trapping die. This will tell you how many beaver skins that every mountain man can add to their inventory (their notes page). They’ll be using these to determine how much money they made during their first year in the mountains. You’ll roll this die a total of 22 times, over both trapping season. This should end with your students having about 266-333 beaver pelts, each. This is roughly how many pelts a mountain man would have been able to accumulate during 1830.

- Activity 1: Fall Trapping Season

- Part 1: Activity

Follow the steps above to go through 11 of the cards with your class. Remember to roll the die to determine how many beavers the students can add to their “inventory” (notes page) after each card.

- Activity 2: Spring Trapping Season

- Part 1: Activity

This activity can easily be taught on a different day, if you wish to break it up. But, the activity is the same as the fall season. Follow the steps above to go through the last 11 cards with your class. Remember to roll the die to determine how many beavers the students can add to their “inventory” (notes page) after each card.

Mountain Man Education Trunk

Mountain Man Rendezvous

Section 6: Mountain Man Rendezvous

This section uses math, reading, and critical thinking to have students learn about mountain man rendezvous (French word – pronounced “ron-day-voo.”) They will begin by reading a one page synopsis of what a rendezvous was. Next, they will complete a small set of math problems to determine how much money they made in Section 5. Finally, they will go through a rendezvous trading list to see what items are available for them to buy... in order to be prepared for their mountain man’s second year in the Rockies!

- Activity 1: Rendezvous Trading Activity

- Part 1: “Rendezvous Trading Activity” Reading Activity

Students will use reading skills to learn about what a rendezvous was and why the fur companies created them. This is a one page reading. You can print this packet from the “Mountain Man Trunk” page of the Wyoming State Museum website or photocopy it from the “Student Worksheets” section of this book.

- Part 2: “Rendezvous Trading Activity” Worksheet

The next page in the packet will have students answer questions and complete some math problems to add up the total value of their beaver skins, from Section 5. They will compare the value in both 1830’s and today’s dollars.

- Part 3: “Rendezvous Trading Activity” Worksheet

Now that they know their total income from their year in the mountains, they are ready to shop at the rendezvous! Your students will use their money (1830’s value) to purchase all the supplies they will need for their next year in the Rockies. Remind them that many of their old items are worn or broken, and must be replaced.

The last two pages of their packet lists items that can be bought with their money. These items are taken directly from fur company ledgers from actual rendezvous. We started with the real price that the companies paid for these items in St. Louis. We don’t have the actual “mountain price” (price the mountain men paid), but we do have the prices that the fur companies paid. We then marked the prices up 900%, which is a good average of the 400%-1600% mark-up that the actual mountain men had to pay.

Your students should go through this shopping list, and get their mountain man prepared for his next year in the mountains. It is not necessary to repeat the activity from Section 5 for the second year.

Mountain Man Education Trunk

Mountain Man Tall Tales

Section 7: Telling the Story of Your Mountain Man

This allows students to use writing skills to create a “tall tale” of their mountain man’s first year as a trapper.

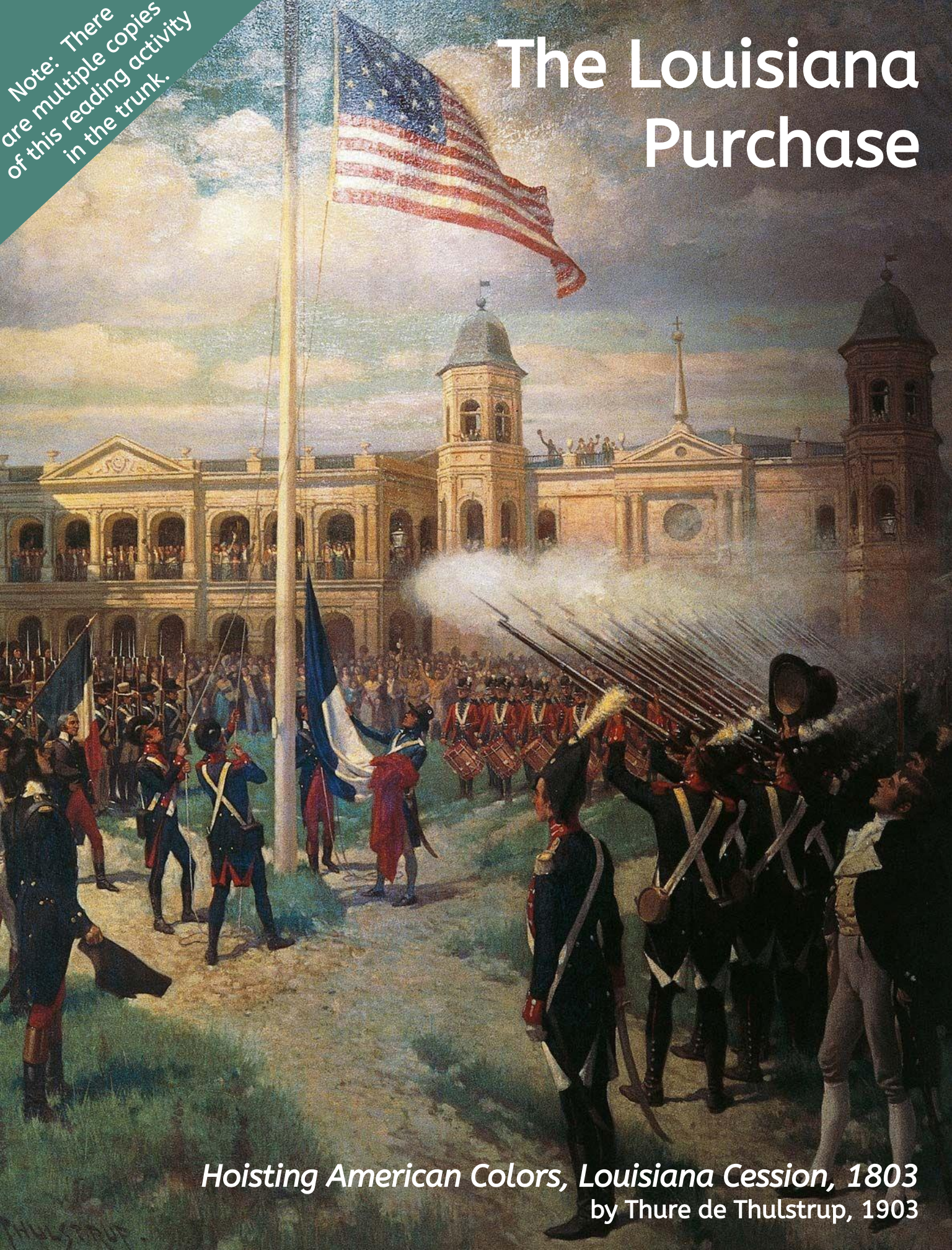
- Activity 1: Tall Tales
 - Part 1: “Telling the Story of Your Mountain Man” Writing Assignment

Students will use their notes from the “Year in the Life of a Mountain Man” activity (Section 5) to create an exaggerated tall tale of their mountain man’s first year in the mountains. This may be a tale that the man would tell around a campfire, or a tale that the other men of his group would tell (especially if the mountain man is a ghost). You can print this document from the “Mountain Man Trunk” page of the Wyoming State Museum website or photocopy it from the “Student Worksheets” section of this book.

If the students are unfamiliar with the concept of a tall tale, you might consider discussing this with them, first... or even reading a tall tale to them.

Note: There are multiple copies of this reading activity in the trunk.

The Louisiana Purchase



Hoisting American Colors, Louisiana Cession, 1803
by Thure de Thulstrup, 1903

The Louisiana Purchase

Learn about the Louisiana Purchase

European Conquest in the Future USA and the Louisiana Purchase

The land that would eventually become the United States of America had been home to Native American tribes for thousands of years. But, by the late 1700s, multiple colonial powers had claimed ownership over this land. Even though the land was already inhabited, Great Britain, Spain, France, and the newly independent United States now claimed it as their own.

The map below shows what you probably recognize as the United States. But, it took many years for the USA to acquire all of it! The colors tell you which countries claimed the different regions at the end of the 1700s. The map also shows the dates when these sections of land became part of our country.



The Louisiana Purchase

Learn about the Louisiana Purchase

United States

After winning the Revolutionary War (war for independence), the Treaty of Paris (1783) set the new boundaries of the USA. At this time, the United States spanned from the Atlantic Ocean to the Mississippi River. But, a few spots of land were still owned by other nations. Florida Territory was owned by Spain, and Great Britain owned two northern sections of land. This map was what the United States looked like before the Louisiana Purchase.

French Territory

France claimed ownership to all of the land labeled “Louisiana Purchase” on the map.

Spanish Territory

Spain claimed all of the land labeled “Texas Annexation,” “Florida Cession,” and “Mexican Cession.”

Oregon Territory

“Oregon Country” was claimed by two different countries, Great Britain and the United States. Both of these countries had reached the land from the Pacific Ocean and believed they had the right to the territory.

British Territory

Besides claiming “Oregon Country,” Great Britain also controlled a few small sections of land in what would eventually become the United States.

Wyoming

While Wyoming was not a state yet, you can see that the land that would one day become it! Parts of Wyoming were actually claimed by four different countries at the end of the 1700s.

The Louisiana Purchase

Learn about the Louisiana Purchase

Louisiana Purchase

After the United States' war for independence in 1776, the country was growing and looking for more land. In 1803, the leader of France – Napoleon Bonaparte – agreed to sell the Louisiana Territory to the United States. This was known as the Louisiana Purchase.

The Louisiana Purchase cost \$15 million and almost doubled the size of the United States! If you compare that to today's money, it would have been about \$368 million. That's more than enough to buy every single person in Wyoming two Xboxes! In total, the Louisiana Purchase only cost four cents per acre; it was a quite a bargain for the USA!

Additionally, the Louisiana Purchase gave the United States control of the Mississippi River and the incredibly important port city of New Orleans!

It is very important to note, that no Indigenous people were consulted during the negotiations for the Louisiana Purchase. France did insist that the United States honor all existing treaties with the Native people. Unfortunately, the United States would soon go back on their word and begin forcefully removing Native American people from their ancestral lands.



The Emperor Napoleon in His Study at the Tuileries
by Jacques-Louis David, 1812

The Lewis & Clark Expedition



Lewis and Clark at Three Forks
by Edgar S. Paxson, 1912

The Lewis and Clark Expedition

Learn about the Lewis and Clark Expedition

The Beginning of the Expedition

After the United States acquired the Louisiana Territory in 1803, they were eager to explore and map their new territory!

In order to learn more about this land, President Thomas Jefferson created the Lewis and Clark Expedition. This expedition was made up of a team of 45 people, including Meriwether Lewis, William Clark, Clark's slave York, 27 soldiers, a boat crew, a French-Indian interpreter, and Seaman the dog. Eventually, they would be joined by a Native American woman from the Shoshone tribe named Sacagawea and her French-Canadian trapper husband.



Lewis and Clark on the Lower Columbia
by Charles Marion Russell, 1905

The Lewis and Clark Expedition

Learn about the Lewis and Clark Expedition

The Lewis and Clark Expedition to the Pacific

Thomas Jefferson tasked the expedition with finding a river route from the Mississippi River to the Pacific Ocean. The journey began on May 14, 1804, from Camp Dubois near St. Louis, Missouri. Their journey would last two and a half years and they would travel 8,000 miles. That's the same distance as boating from the USA to Africa two and a half times!

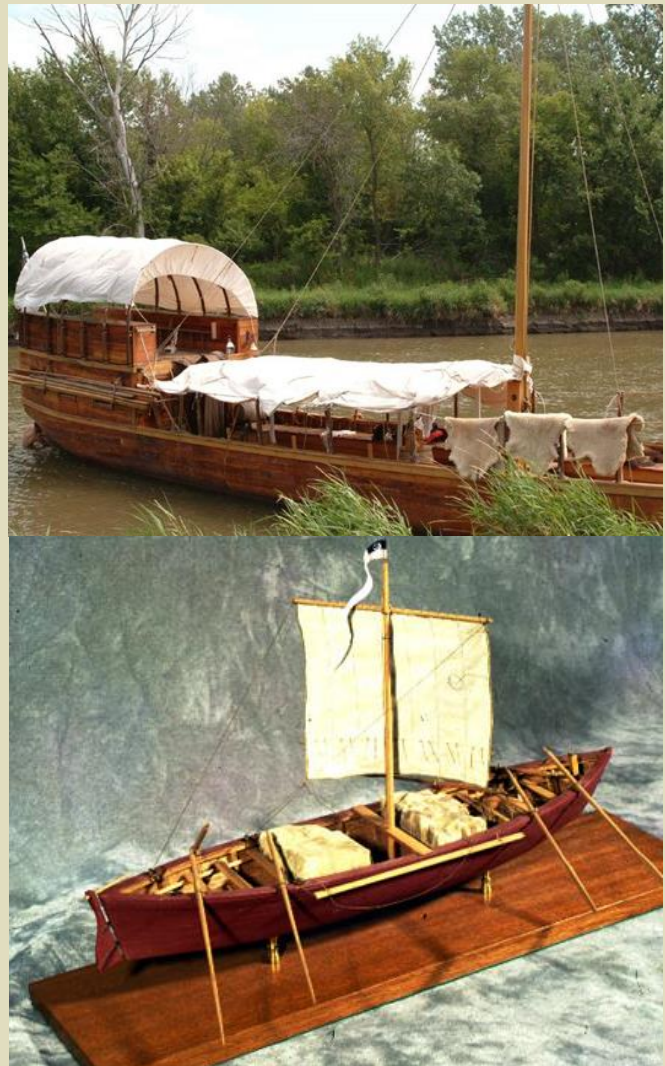
How They Traveled to the Pacific

The expedition left Missouri with one massive keelboat, which was 55 feet long, 32 feet tall, and weighed 20,000 pounds! This means it was the length of two and half elephants, the height of two giraffes, and the weight of two killer whales!

Keelboats could be moved through the rivers by paddling, sailing, pulling with ropes, or pushing off the riverbed with poles.

The group also brought two pirogues (rowboats with sails) and 13 dugout canoes. They would also make more canoes along the journey.

On their long journey to the Pacific Ocean, they would paddle, sail, and drag their boats through miles of rivers. To travel over the mountains and in between different rivers, they would either walk or trade with Indigenous people for horses.



Above:
Lewis and Clark Keelboat Replica
by National Park Service

Below:
The Red Pirogue Scale Model
By Richard Boss

The Lewis and Clark Expedition

Learn about the Lewis and Clark Expedition

Goals of the Expedition

President Jefferson had three main goals for the expedition: create an United States presence in the new territory, find a river route from the Mississippi River to the Pacific Ocean, and research and catalog the geography, plants, and animals of this region. The expedition was considered an overwhelming success by most people in the USA.

Facts About the Expedition

The expedition saw the Yellowstone area and crossed the continental divide. They were the first people from the United States to do either.

They created 140 maps and gathered samples of more than 200 plants and 120 animals. Many of these species were new to modern science.

They gathered numerous rocks, minerals, fossils, and other natural resource samples.

They ate many different items, including more than 200 dogs they obtained by trading with tribes.

Sacagawea, who was a vital member of the expedition, gave birth to a baby boy while on the journey.

York, William Clark's slave, was treated like an equal for much of the trip. But those freedoms were taken away after the journey, and he was quickly returned to the life of a slave.



York
by Ed Hamilton, 2003

The Lewis and Clark Expedition

Learn about the Lewis and Clark Expedition

Interactions with and Impact on Native American Peoples

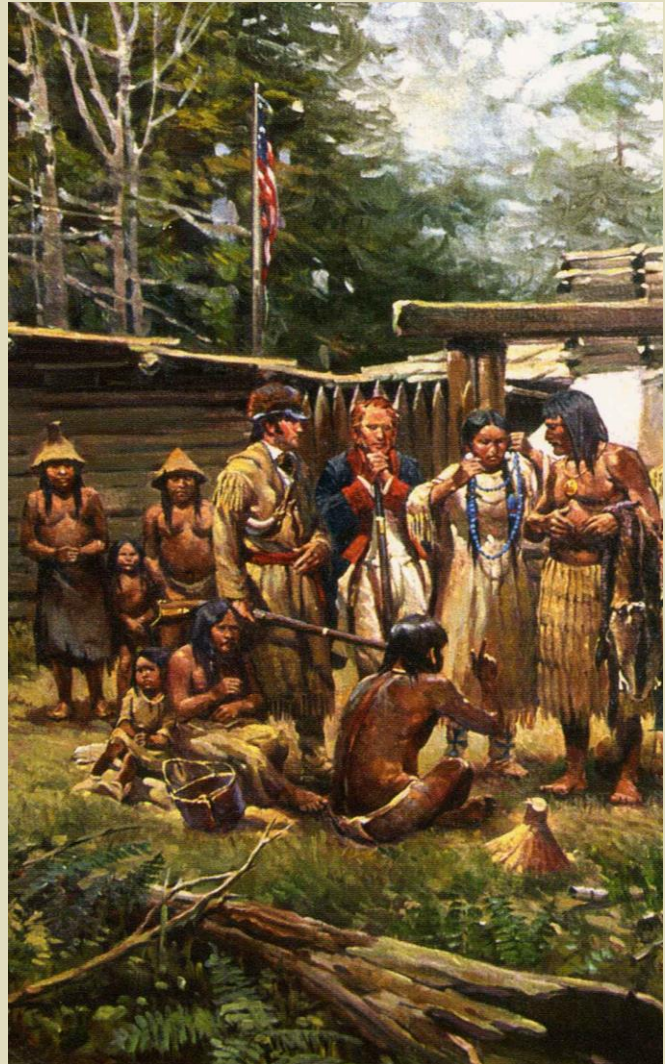
Through the Louisiana Purchase, the United States now claimed ownership over a vast amount of land. But remember, this land already had humans living on it for thousands of years. Lewis and Clark met over 50 different tribes on their way to the Pacific Ocean.

The incredible success of the expedition would have been impossible without the generosity, hospitality, knowledge, and patience of the tribes across the West.

The Shoshone people supplied them with horses to cross the Rocky Mountains. The Mandan and Clatsop people let them stay in their territories and build forts to survive two winters. Many tribes gave them food, information, and guides to help them find the Pacific Ocean.

Additionally, Sacagawea helped interpret, guided them through areas she was familiar with, showed them safe food to eat, and made the many tribes they met feel more comfortable with the expedition.

Unfortunately, the United States would not return the tribes' kindness over the next 100 years. Lewis and Clark marked the beginning of encroachment and settlement by the USA in the West. This had huge, disastrous consequences for generations of Indigenous people.



*Bartering Blue Beads for
Otter Robe*

by Newman Myrah

The Louisiana Purchase

Vocabulary

Before we begin, let's learn some new words! Use the resources in your classroom to look up and define the following terms.

Colonial Power:

Indigenous People:

Treaty:

Acre:

Port:

The Louisiana Purchase

Test Your Knowledge

In addition to the USA, what three European countries had claimed the land that would become Wyoming, before the Louisiana Purchase?

Who had called this land their home for thousands of years before Europeans laid claim to it?

Which nation sold the Louisiana Purchase to the United States?

How much did the Louisiana Purchase cost in 1803?

Which people were not included in the discussions to sell the land?

What city (included with the Louisiana Purchase) was very important?

The Lewis and Clark Expedition

Vocabulary

Before we begin, let's learn some new words! Use the resources in your classroom to look up and define the following terms.

Expedition:

Slave:

Keelboat:

Continental Divide:

Encroachment:

The Lewis and Clark Expedition

Test Your Knowledge

How many people made up the Lewis and Clark Expedition?

How many miles did the expedition travel during its journey?

What three types of boats did the expedition use?

They were the first from the USA to see what future national park?

They were trying to find a route from which river to the Pacific Ocean?

What is one way that Native people helped the expedition?

Mountain Man Education Trunk

Exploring History through Artifacts

Definition of *Artifact*:

An object that was made or used by humans, and is of cultural or historical interest.

Description of the Artifact:

1. What material(s) is the artifact made from?

- | | | |
|----------------------------------|----------------------------------|---|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Bone | <input type="checkbox"/> Stone | <input type="checkbox"/> Cardboard |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Pottery | <input type="checkbox"/> Leather | <input type="checkbox"/> Fabric |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Metal | <input type="checkbox"/> Glass | <input type="checkbox"/> Plastic |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Wood | <input type="checkbox"/> Paper | <input type="checkbox"/> Other Material |

2. Measure the artifact. What is its length, width, and height?

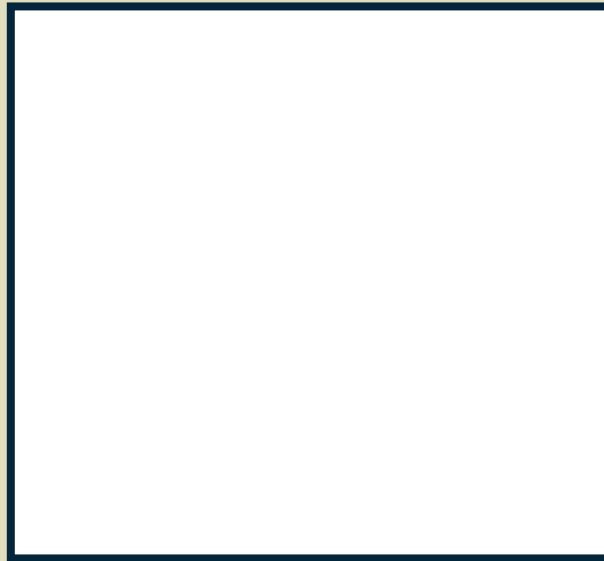
3. Describe how the artifact looks and feels. For example: What is its shape? What does its texture feel like? What color is it? What does it smell like? How heavy does it feel? Does it have any moving parts? What else is interesting about the artifact?

Mountain Man Education Trunk

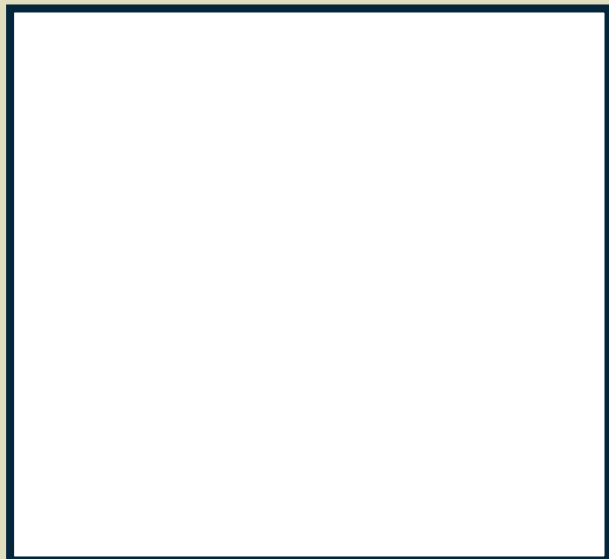
Exploring History through Artifacts

4. Is there anything written, printed, or stamped on the artifact?

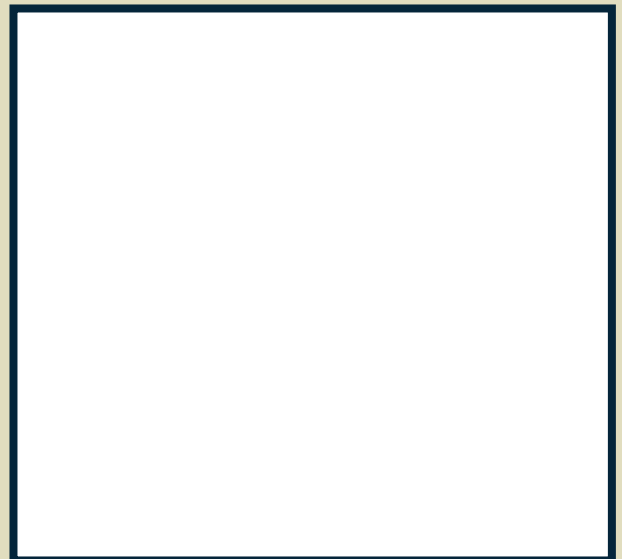
5. Draw and color three pictures of the artifact, one picture for the top, one for the bottom, and one for the side.



Picture from Top of Artifact



Picture from Bottom of Artifact



Picture from Side of Artifact

Mountain Man Education Trunk

Exploring History through Artifacts

Uses of the Artifact:

1. How do you think the artifact was used?

2. Who do you think might have used the artifact?

3. When do you think the artifact was used?

4. Can you name a similar item that is used today?

Mountain Man Education Trunk

Exploring History through Artifacts

5. What does the artifact tell you about technology at this point in time?

6. What does the artifact tell you about the lives of the people that made or used it?

7. What are some questions you have about the artifact or things you want to learn about it?

A Year in the Life of a Mountain Man

Getting to Know the American Beaver

The North American beaver is the largest rodent in North America, and the second largest rodent in the world! It is a fascinating animal with a ton of amazing adaptations to help it survive in its aquatic habitat!

Use the resources in your classroom to learn about the North American beaver. Afterwards, read the questions on the back of this page and then label the picture below with your answers.

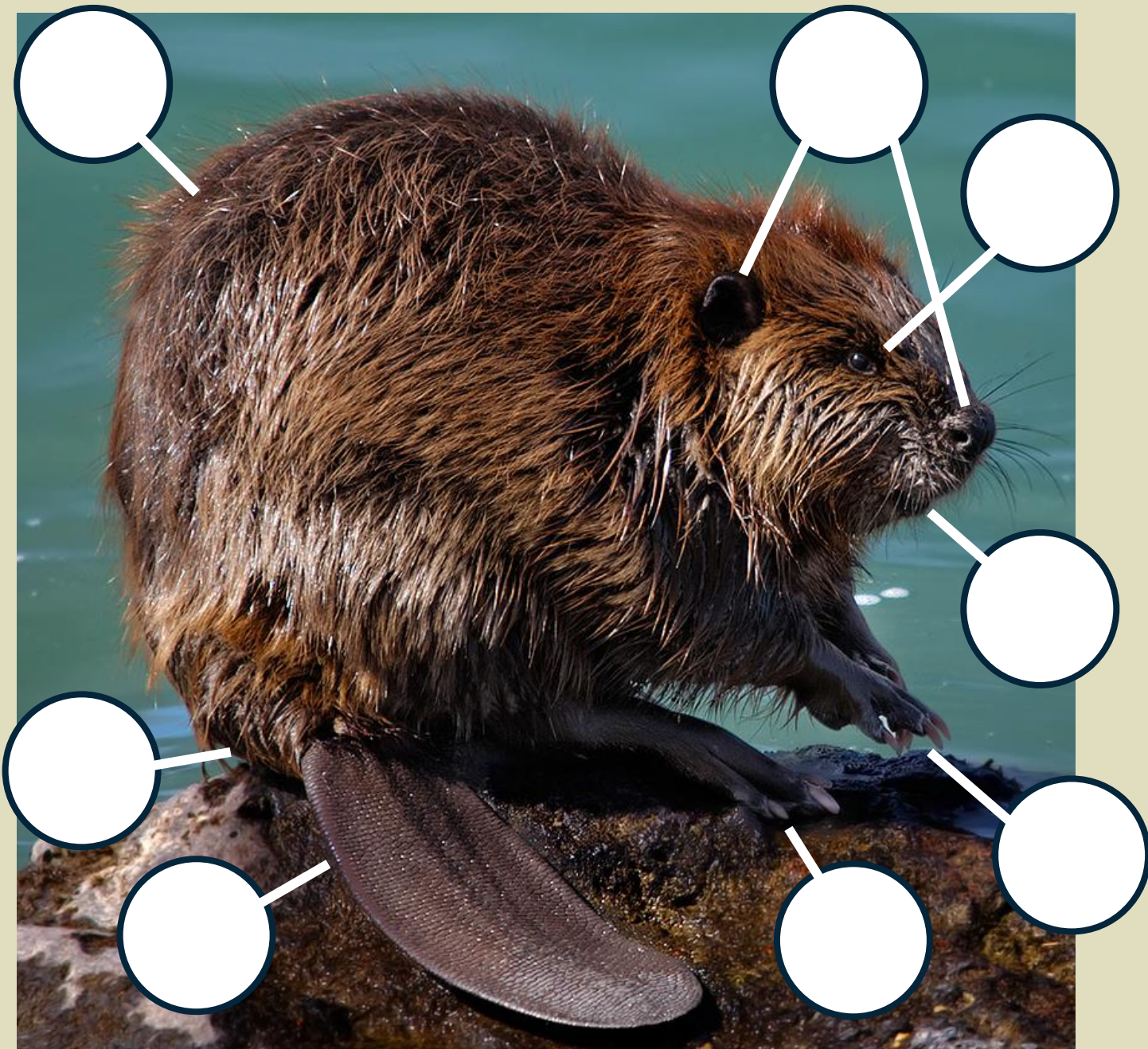


Photo by Keith Williams

A Year in the Life of a Mountain Man

Getting to Know the American Beaver

Read the description of each amazing adaptation of the North American beaver. Then, write the adaptation's number in the circle (on the beaver picture) where you can find that adaptation.

1. This adaptation is thick and oily. It keeps the beaver warm and dry, even when it's swimming in cold water.
2. This adaptation lets the beaver slap the water to warn other beavers of danger. It also acts as a rudder for the beaver when it's swimming, helping to steer them underwater.
3. This adaptation is webbed and it helps the beaver swim.
4. This adaptation is a special flap that closes off external holes when the beaver swims underwater.
5. This adaptation is iron. It grows on a part of their body, making it so strong that the beaver can use it to cut down trees.
6. This adaptation allows the beaver to hold sticks, letting them build dams and lodges.
7. This adaptation is a nictitating membrane, or special layer that lets the beaver see underwater.
8. This adaptation is called castoreum. It allows the beaver to mark their territory using scent.

A Year in the Life of a Mountain Man

How Mountain Men Trapped Beavers

The fur trade was operating in North America for more than 200 years before the era of the mountain men. During this time, most of the animals were trapped by tribes living in the eastern part of the continent. The Native Americans then traded the skins for items they needed from the European and American fur companies.

This all changed with the Louisiana Purchase and the Lewis and Clark Expedition. Lewis and Clark wrote about the millions of beavers that lived in the Louisiana Territory's rivers and lakes. So, in the early 1800s, fur companies began sending young men into the territory to trap beavers themselves. These were the mountain men.

These men lived in the mountains and trapped beavers during the Fall and Spring, when beavers had their thick winter coats. During the winter, when the rivers and lakes were frozen, mountain men would hunker down and wait for the thaw. The summer saw the men gather in large groups for the rendezvous. On the next couple pages, you'll learn about how mountain men trapped beavers.



Fur Traders and Native American in Canada, from
“A Map of the Inhabited Part of
Canada from the French Surveys;
with the Frontiers of New York
and New England,” 1777

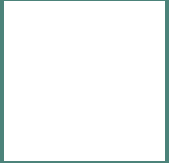


American Beaver Swimming
Photo by Todd Kulesza

A Year in the Life of a Mountain Man

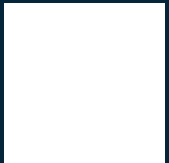
How Mountain Men Trapped Beavers

These steps tell you how mountain men trapped beavers, but they're all mixed up! Write the correct step number (1 - 7) for each one. Use the pictures on the next page as clues!



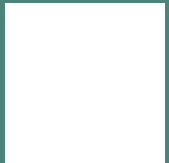
Skin the Beaver

Mountain men would have to skin the dead beaver using their green river knife. They would then scrape all the meat, fat, and other tissue off the skin.



Sell the Skins

Mountain men would meet, once a year, with their company at a rendezvous to sell their beaver skins and buy their supplies for the next year.



Retrieve the Beaver Trap

Mountain men would come back to the ponds and streams to collect the trap and dead beaver.



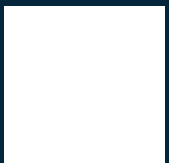
Set the Beaver Trap

Mountain men would set traps in the water and bait them with castoreum to attract beavers. Beavers would get their leg trapped in the trap, and then drown.



Press the Skins into Packs

Mountain men would use a beaver press to press about 66 beaver skins into one pack. These packs weighed about 100 pounds! Mountain men would then bury these packs.



Stretch the Skin

Mountain men would use branches to create a beaver stretcher. Then, they would sew the beaver skin into it so it could dry and later be treated.



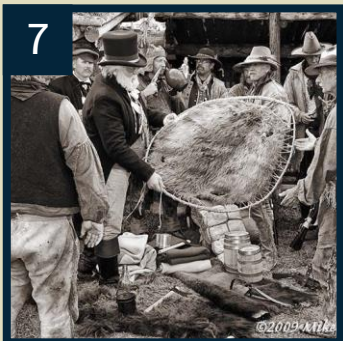
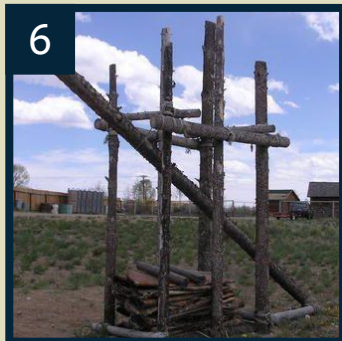
Treat the Skin

Mountain men would take the dried beaver skin, and spread a mixture of beaver brains and water onto the skin. After it dried again, it would be soft and supple.

A Year in the Life of a Mountain Man

How Mountain Men Trapped Beavers

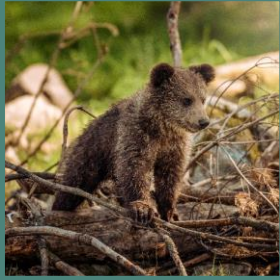
Being a mountain man was a lot of work! These men had to follow many steps to get beavers ready to be sold at the rendezvous, each summer.



A Year in the Life of a Mountain Man

How Mountain Men Trapped Beavers

The beaver was the most important animal of the fur trade, but not the only animal trapped. During the height of the fur trade, each of the items listed below was worth the same as one beaver pelt.



1 Bear Cub Pelt



1 Pound of
Castoreum
(Beaver Glands)



10 Pounds of
Goose Feathers



1 Fox Pelt



3 American
Marten Pelts



2 River Otter
Pelts



1 Moose Pelt



2 Deer Pelts



8 Pairs of Moose
Hooves



2 Wolverine
Pelts

Fun Fact: 1 Adult Black Bear Pelt was Worth 2 Beaver Pelts

A Year in the Life of a Mountain Man

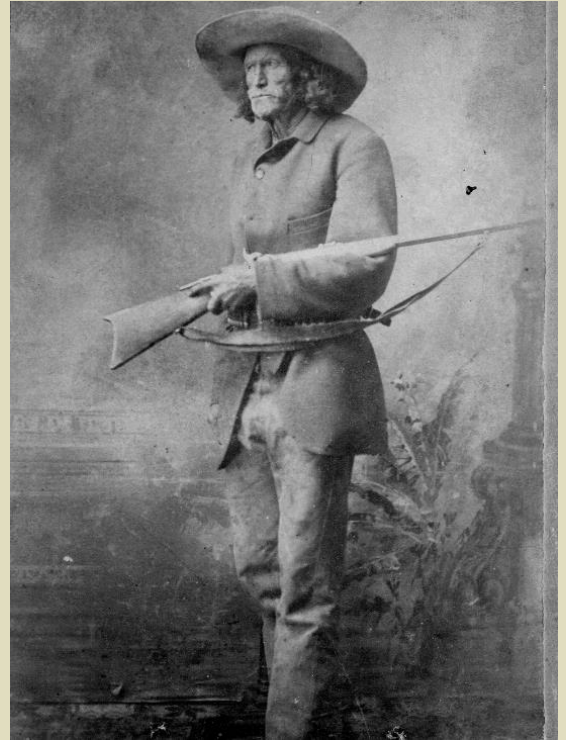
Making Your Mountain Man

Mountain men were drawn to the wilderness of the Rocky Mountains, for many different reasons. Some were focused on making money from trapping and selling beaver pelts. Others were young men looking for adventure, and had read “tall tales” and exaggerated stories about what life was like in the mountains. Still others came for the freedom and independence the mountain man life could offer.

Despite all the opportunities the Rocky Mountains could offer, mountain men led lives that were dangerous, difficult, and (at times) down-right miserable. The lives of many mountain men ended violently. These men died by drowning, freezing, starving, wild animal attacks, being buried alive, being murdered, or from many other dangers.

You will be creating your own mountain man, in order to survive in the Rocky Mountains and successfully trap beavers! Your mountain man will be joining his first beaver trapping season in the fall of 1830!

On the following pages, answer the questions to create your own fictional mountain man!



Jim Baker



James Beckwourth

A Year in the Life of a Mountain Man

Making Your Mountain Man

1. Due to the culture and laws of the United States at the time, all of the trappers coming from the East were men.

What is your mountain man's name?

2. While some mountain men were more than 60 years old, the vast majority of them were teenagers or in their 20s and 30s. For example, Jim Bridger was 17 when he first ventured into the mountains, while Kit Carson was 16! Both of these men became famous Wyoming frontiersmen.

How old is your mountain man?

3. Mountain men were a diverse group of men, coming from many different nations and areas. Some of the men came from the young United States – including both white and black men. Others were French trappers who lived in the Louisiana Territory before France sold it to the United States. There were also trappers from Spain, Great Britain, Ireland, Germany, Mexico, and the French territory of Canada. Additionally, there were a number of Native American mountain men, mainly from the Iroquois and Delaware Nations. These eastern tribes had been involved with the fur trade since the 1600s, and some Native men ended up working for the fur companies.

What nation does your mountain man come from?

A Year in the Life of a Mountain Man

Making Your Mountain Man

4. Mountain men had many attributes that helped make them successful during their time in the mountains.

Choose one attribute that your trapper is great at.

- | | |
|---------------------------------------|---|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Extra Strong | <input type="checkbox"/> Extra Smart |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Extra Tough | <input type="checkbox"/> Extra Friendly |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Extra Fast | |

5. Mountain men needed many skills to survive in the mountains. From languages, to survival skills, to hunting, to the ability to fight... they were a skilled group of men.



John Colter

Choose eight skills that your mountain man will be best at.

- | | | |
|---|--|--|
| <input type="checkbox"/> French Language | <input type="checkbox"/> Swimming | <input type="checkbox"/> Trapping |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Spanish Language | <input type="checkbox"/> Mountain Climbing | <input type="checkbox"/> Hunting |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Native Languages | <input type="checkbox"/> Canoeing | <input type="checkbox"/> Fishing |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Sign Language | <input type="checkbox"/> Horse Riding | <input type="checkbox"/> Plant Identifying |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Bullet Making | <input type="checkbox"/> Map Reading | <input type="checkbox"/> Cooking |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Gun Shooting | <input type="checkbox"/> Shelter Building | <input type="checkbox"/> Sewing |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Knife Fighting | <input type="checkbox"/> Fire Building | <input type="checkbox"/> Reading |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Fist Fighting | <input type="checkbox"/> Tool Making | <input type="checkbox"/> Trading |

A Year in the Life of a Mountain Man

Dressing Your Mountain Man

Mountain men needed many different tools and supplies to survive life in the mountains. They would make some of these items on their own, while others would be traded for at the mountain man rendezvous each summer! A rendezvous was a place to meet up with your company, sell your beaver pelts, buy supplies for the next year, and party with your friends!

Of all the items a mountain man carried with him, clothing was especially important. Mountain men needed good clothes to keep them safe and warm! When mountain men first came to the Rockies, they would be wearing clothes that were purchased in the Eastern United States.

These clothes would include wool, flannel, and cotton shirts, which could come in various bright colors and even calico print... like the shirt in your education trunk! These shirts would have been pulled over the men's heads, been loose around their body, and had large, loose sleeves.

The men would also bring with them trousers, usually designed to fit very tight around their ankles, like a pair of skinny jeans. Their pants would be held up with suspenders, not a belt.

Mountain men needed heavy coats, too. These would have been made from leather, heavy wool, or even from bison hides. Even though they didn't use belts to hold up their pants, the men would wrap belts around their coats to hold their weapons.

They also brought mittens, hats, caps, wool socks, and boots. With all these items, a mountain man would be prepared for his first year in the Rockies! But even though he was ready now, his clothes would end up drastically changing throughout the year!

A Year in the Life of a Mountain Man

Dressing Your Mountain Man

Draw and color the picture below, showing what clothing your mountain man is bringing with him into the mountains for his first year. Use the boxes below to list up to ten pieces of clothing that he is bringing.

☐

☐

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A Year in the Life of a Mountain Man

Notes Page

For the mountain men, a year in the Rocky Mountains was filled with excitement, danger, hard-work, and friendship. Use these pages to keep track of the experiences your mountain man has.

This image shows a single sheet of white paper with horizontal blue ruling lines. The lines are evenly spaced and run across the width of the page. There are no margins, text, or other markings on the paper.

A Year in the Life of a Mountain Man

Notes Page

[illegible]

A Year in the Life of a Mountain Man

Notes Page

[illegible]

A Year in the Life of a Mountain Man

Rendezvous Trading Activity

At the beginning of the mountain man era, the men brought their skins back to St. Louis (or sometimes another American city) to sell them and buy the supplies they would need for the next year. That changed with the creation of the rendezvous.

The first rendezvous was held in 1825, and it completely changed the way mountain men got their supplies. Before the rendezvous began, the fur companies would buy products and bring them out to the mountains. All of a company's mountain men would meet at one location so the men could sell their beaver skins and buy the supplies they would need for the next year.

This meant that the mountain men no longer needed to make the long journey back to St. Louis, and were able to remain in the mountains year-round. The companies would therefore need to sell all the items the mountain men would need for their next year, but also the items that Native Americans were interested in.

The area that would become Wyoming was a popular spot for the yearly rendezvous; 65% of these events happened here. They could be huge parties, too. Some years, more than 2,000 people showed up to these events.

The rendezvous would bring in all of the company's mountain men, but also free trappers, local Native Americans, the mountain men's Native wives and children, other frontiersmen, and sometimes even tourists. The trading was usually completed within a day or two, but the party could rage on for eight weeks!

James Beckwourth, famous mountain man, described the festivities as a scene of, *"mirth, songs, dancing, shouting, trading, running, jumping, singing, racing, target-shooting, yarns, frolic, with all sorts of extravagances that white men or Indians could invent."*

A Year in the Life of a Mountain Man

Rendezvous Trading Activity

What is your name?

What is your mountain man's name?

At the time of the rendezvous, was your mountain man alive or was he a ghost?

How many beavers did your mountain man trap?

Each beaver pelt weighed about 1.5 pounds. How many pounds of pelts did your mountain man trap?

Between 1830 and 1832, beaver pelts were at their highest value! During these years, each pound of beaver pelts would fetch between \$4 and \$6. Using \$5 a pound, how much money would your mountain man's beaver pelts be worth?

A dollar back then could buy a lot more than a dollar does today! \$1 in 1830 was worth the same as \$30 today. How much money would your mountain man have made in today's money?

A Year in the Life of a Mountain Man

Rendezvous Trading Activity

The fur companies provided all of the supplies the mountain men needed, but took extreme advantage of them, too. The companies would buy supplies in St. Louis, MO at a normal price. Then they would charge the mountain men 400%-1,600% more, once they reached the rendezvous. So to explain this better, let's look at a modern day example. A new Xbox or PlayStation costs \$500, today. If that game system was marked up 1,600%, it would cost \$8,000... or the price of used car! This meant that the mountain men paid way more for each item than they would have paid in St. Louis. The men called this paying "mountain prices".

The next two pages show a list of items that were sold at the yearly mountain man rendezvous. Each item shows the real price these items cost in St. Louis, taken from historic records. But, the item does have a 900% mark up to account for "mountain prices".

Using the money you calculated on the last page (use the 1830's price), go through the next two pages and decide what your mountain man will spend his money on. What supplies would help him survive and thrive during the next year of trapping beavers in the Rocky Mountains?

How much money does your mountain man have to spend?
(1830's dollar value)

Once you have added up the total cost of your items, answer the next question.

How much money did your mountain man spend on supplies and other items at the rendezvous?

Category	Item Description	Cost (1830)	Cost (Today)	Cost Per	Quantity	Total Cost
Blankets	1 ½ Point Blanket (Thinnest)	\$10.44	\$313.20	Pair		
Blankets	2 Point Blanket (Thicker)	\$27.00	\$810.00	Pair		
Blankets	3 Point Blanket (Thickest)	\$72.00	\$2,160.00	Pair		
Clothing	Bandana	\$4.14	\$124.20	Each		
Clothing	Capote	\$72.00	\$2,160.00	Each		
Clothing	Fancy Calico Shirt	\$10.17	\$305.10	Each		
Clothing	Fancy Shawl	\$2.70	\$81.00	Each		
Clothing	Red Caps	\$5.67	\$170.10	Each		
Clothing	Red Flannel Shirt	\$13.50	\$405.00	Each		
Clothing	Silk Handkerchiefs	\$5.58	\$167.40	Each		
Clothing	Trousers	\$22.50	\$675.00	Each		
Clothing	Wool Hat	\$5.67	\$170.10	Each		
Cookware	Assorted Tin Pans	\$22.50	\$675.00	Each		
Cookware	Iron Kettles	\$2.52	\$75.60	Each		
Cookware	Tin Cups	\$5.04	\$151.20	Each		
Cookware	Tin Kettles	\$20.25	\$607.50	Each		
Food / Tobacco	Black Pepper	\$1.08	\$32.40	Pound		
Food / Tobacco	Bottles of Mustard	\$1.17	\$35.10	Bottle		
Food / Tobacco	Clay Pipe	\$0.06	\$1.80	Each		
Food / Tobacco	Coffee	\$1.44	\$43.20	Pound		
Food / Tobacco	Dried Apples	\$40.50	\$1,215.00	Barrel		
Food / Tobacco	Dried Peaches	\$27.00	\$810.00	Barrel		
Food / Tobacco	Flour	\$0.36	\$10.80	Pound		
Food / Tobacco	Havana Sugar	\$1.08	\$32.40	Pound		
Food / Tobacco	Raisins	\$36.00	\$1,080.00	Box		
Food / Tobacco	Rice	\$0.54	\$16.20	Pound		
Food / Tobacco	Rum	\$21.60	\$648.00	Gallon		
Food / Tobacco	Twist Tobacco	\$1.17	\$35.10	Pound		
Food / Tobacco	Whiskey	\$11.25	\$337.50	Gallon		
Guns	Gun Flints	\$22.50	\$675.00	500 Flints		
Guns	Gun Powder	\$2.61	\$78.30	Pound		
Guns	Hawkins Flintlock Pistol	\$135.00	\$4,050.00	Each		
Guns	Hawkins Flintlock Rifle	\$171.00	\$5,130.00	Each		
Guns	Leather Powder Bag	\$27.00	\$810.00	Each		
Guns	Powder Horns	\$0.45	\$13.50	Each		
Guns	Small Lead Bar (1 LBS. - 31 Balls)	\$0.63	\$18.90	Each		

Category	Item Description	Cost (1830)	Cost (Today)	Cost Per	Quantity	Total Cost
Horse Gear	Horse Carts Complete	\$218.70	\$6,561.00	Each		
Horse Gear	Horse or Mule Shoes	\$6.30	\$189.00	Pair		
Horse Gear	Horseshoe Nails	\$3.15	\$94.50	Box		
Horse Gear	Pack Saddles	\$18.00	\$540.00	Each		
Horse Gear	Saddles	\$54.00	\$1,620.00	Each		
Hygiene	Horn Combs	\$5.04	\$151.20	Dozen		
Hygiene	Pocket Size Mirror	\$3.24	\$97.20	Dozen		
Hygiene	Razors in Cases	\$3.33	\$99.90	Each		
Hygiene	Windsor Soap	\$0.27	\$8.10	Each		
Other Gear	Cloth Tent	\$175.00	\$5,250.00	Each		
Other Gear	Deck of Playing Cards	\$1.35	\$40.50	Each		
Other Gear	Iron Bound Canteens	\$15.25	\$457.50	Each		
Other Gear	Lucifer Matches	\$7.20	\$216.00	Box		
Other Gear	Pocket Compasses	\$22.50	\$675.00	Each		
Sewing	All Colored Threads	\$1.35	\$40.50	Pound		
Sewing	Assorted Colored Cloth	\$14.85	\$445.50	Yard		
Sewing	Cotton Check Cloth	\$1.35	\$40.50	Yard		
Sewing	Fancy Calico	\$1.80	\$54.00	Yard		
Sewing	Needles	\$0.18	\$5.40	Each		
Sewing	Red Flannel	\$3.15	\$94.50	Yard		
Tools	9" Butcher Knives	\$15.12	\$453.60	Dozen		
Tools	American Tomahawks	\$6.75	\$202.50	Each		
Tools	Beaver Traps	\$29.25	\$877.50	Each		
Tools	Fish-hooks	\$4.50	\$135.00	Box		
Tools	Fishing Line	\$2.25	\$67.50	Bundle		
Tools	Scissors	\$18.00	\$540.00	Dozen		
Tools	Skinning Knife	\$14.22	\$426.60	Dozen		
Tools	Steel Striker	\$0.27	\$8.10	Each		
Trade Items	Brass Finger Rings	\$0.36	\$10.80	Dozen		
Trade Items	Colorful Pony Beads (Large Beads)	\$3.15	\$94.50	Pound		
Trade Items	Colorful Seed Beads (Tiny Beads)	\$2.25	\$67.50	Pound		
Trade Items	Fancy Rings	\$0.99	\$29.70	Dozen		
Trade Items	Hawk Bells	\$3.42	\$102.60	Pack		
Trade Items	Polished Horse Bells	\$6.75	\$202.50	Pack		
Writing	Black Ink Powder & Writing Quills	\$0.27	\$8.10	Bottle		
Writing	Blank Book	\$3.42	\$102.60	Each		

A Year in the Life of a Mountain Man

Telling the Story of Your Mountain Man

Mountain men frequently told exaggerated stories about their time in the mountains. Create a “tall tale” about your mountain man’s first year in the Rocky Mountains. It can be a tale that he would tell around the campfire, or one that his friends would tell about him!

This image shows a single sheet of white paper with horizontal blue ruling lines. The lines are evenly spaced and run across the width of the page. There are no margins, text, or other markings on the paper.

A Year in the Life of a Mountain Man

Telling the Story of Your Mountain Man

[illegible]

A Year in the Life of a Mountain Man

Telling the Story of Your Mountain Man

[illegible]

A Year in the Life of a Mountain Man

Telling the Story of Your Mountain Man

[illegible]

Note: This supplemental information comes from the “Mountain Men and Life in the American West” website. The Wyoming State Museum has found the information on this site helpful for developing this curriculum. We have provided the information below, directly from that website – only formatting it, correcting grammar and typos, and adding notes. If you want to learn more, you can find this site at: www.mman.us.

The Fur Trade

The fur trade in North America was driven by European demand for skins and furs of all types. Increasing wealth and higher living standards in Europe starting in the 14th and 15th centuries brought a desire for clothing which was both comfortable and fashionable. Textiles at the time were both coarse and rough, and colors were few. Furs, by comparison, were soft and warm, and leather clothing was comfortable, sturdy, and durable. So great was the demand in Europe, that by the fifteenth century, the harvest of wild, native fur-bearing animals was no longer sufficient to meet demand for leather and furs. At this time, exploration and colonization of North America opened up the vast fur and skin resources of that continent. For two hundred years, Native Americans provided the labor to harvest the furs and skins, in trade for iron and steel weapons and tools, brass, silver and glass ornaments, and textiles. This changed with the beginning of the mountain man era.

All types of skins and furs were in demand, but the most sought-after included deer, muskrat, bison, raccoon, otter and bear. However, the fur of the beaver was especially desired and premium prices were paid for its skin. Beaver fur has long been known for its superior felting qualities. Pressed together with steam or hot water, the fine fur (wool) became felted cloth, valued especially for fashionable hats. Beaver headpieces become so valuable that they were willed by fathers to eldest sons. In France, beaver hats gained such status that generous trade-ins were allowed for worn models on new purchases. The used hats were sold in Spain, then trimmed of the most worn parts for resale in Portugal, and finally they were traded for ivory in Africa. The fur of the beaver was so precious for hat making that the sand from the floor in the warehouses where the pelts were stored was sifted to salvage every last hair.

By the 1500's the European beaver was essentially extinct throughout Europe. Less than 1,200 survived in small populations in northernmost Siberia and very remote parts of Europe and China. On the arrival of Europeans to the new world, the American beaver became the soft gold of the French, English, Dutch and later the Americans. It is estimated that, before the invasion of the Europeans, there were 150 million North American beavers.

Note: Your students will learn about the beaver hat and fur trade during their mountain man field trip – whether at the museum or through a Virtual Field Trip.

Mountain Man Education Trunk

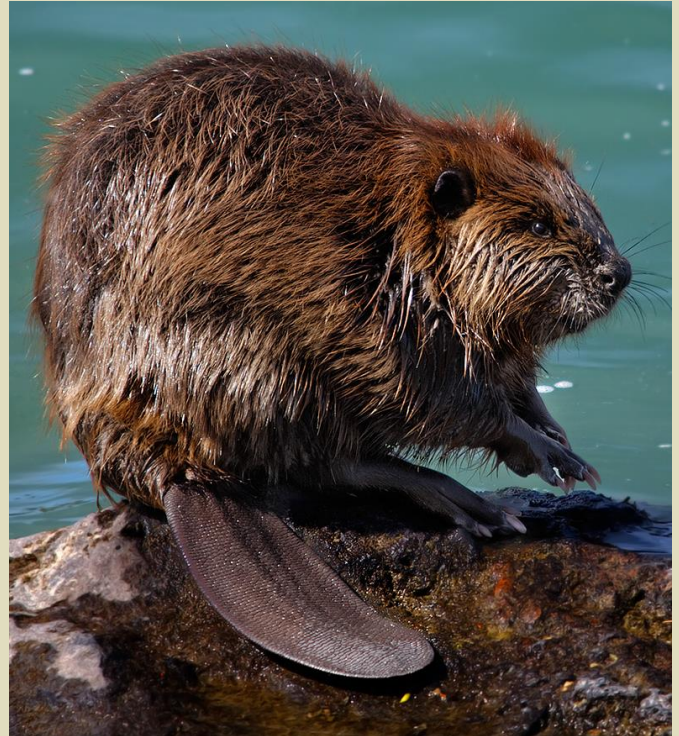
Supplemental Teacher Information: Trapping Beavers

The American Beaver

Beavers live in and near streams, rivers and ponds. They are excellent swimmers and can swim underwater for one-half mile and go without breathing for up to fifteen minutes. Adult beavers range in size from three to four feet, including the tail. On average beavers weigh 50 to 60 pounds, but may be as large as 110 pounds. Beaver live in family groups, generally consisting of six individuals, but may number as many as twelve.

Beavers are relatively slow and awkward on land, but can easily evade predators in the water. They build dams and canals so that additional areas are accessible to them within easy reach of water. Dams may be up to 8 feet high and dams of more than 1,000 feet in length are not uncommon. Canals are dug to move logs to dams or lodges easily and quickly. Canals are 12 to 18 inches deep and 18 to 24 inches wide, and may run for 700 feet.

Beavers live in dome-shaped lodges constructed of mud and branches. The lodges generally are constructed in the middle of the beaver pond behind the dam, although some may be constructed on the bank. The lodge generally has multiple underwater entrances, leading into an inner living chamber four to six inches above the water.



American Beaver
Photo by Keith Williams



American Beaver
Photo by Todd Kulesza



American Beaver
Photo by Niklas Hamann

Trapping Beaver

The presence of beaver could always be determined from well-maintained dams and lodges along a stream or river. The trapper, having found fresh beaver signs, would concentrate his trap setting along waters that the animals frequented. When a likely spot was found for a “set,” a bed for the trap was prepared underwater in such a manner as to assure that the pan and spread of jaws of the trap would be about four inches below the surface of the water.

After the trap had been adjusted on the underwater bed, the trap chain was extended its full length outward to deeper water, and a trap stake was driven deep into the bottom sediments and a “float stick” was passed through the ring at the end of the chain. Usually the chain ring was tied to the stake with a strong cord to ensure that should the stake be pulled loose by the captured beaver, the stake would remain tied to the trap.

The final step was the placement of the “bait.” A pliable stick was cut to a length that would permit the stick to extend from the stream bank to directly over the pan of the trap. Castoreum was smeared on the end of the stick by the trapper from a bait bottle which he carried. Then the other end of the bait stick was jammed into the soil of the stream bank, and adjusted so its end was suspended six inches above the water at the set. The trapper then waded from the water some distance from where the set was made.

Beaver are very territorial animals, and each has a uniquely scented castoreum. The scent of an intruder's castoreum is irresistible to the beaver, and it would attract beavers in the area to investigate the baited stick. The cautious beaver would approach from deep water, and would lift it's nose to investigate the bait, setting one or both front feet on the pan of the trap, triggering it. The frightened animal would then dive to deep water for safety, taking along the heavy trap with it. Eventually the weight of the trap drowned the beaver at the bottom of the pond where it's carcass would await the trapper when he made the next round of his sets.



Beaver Trap & Replica Castoreum Bottle
Wyoming State Museum Collections

Mountain Man Education Trunk

Supplemental Teacher Information: Trapping Beavers

Skinning the Beaver

Skinning was always done in the vicinity where the animal was trapped. Generally only the pelt, and perhaps the castoreum glands, were carried back to camp. If the trapper was working out of a large camp, he might be able to turn over his freshly skinned pelts to a camp keeper for stretching and drying. If the party was small, the task of fleshing and stretching the pelt would be done by the trapper himself.

Stretching the Skin

After the pelt had been removed from the carcass, it was scraped with a sharp knife or ax blade to free it from fat and shreds of flesh. In order to dry it quickly and uniformly, it was stretched in a hoop made by bending a supple willow branch of the appropriate size into a circular form and then tying the ends together. The skin was then sewn with sinew around the edges and attached to the hoop. When dry, the pelt resisted attacks by insects and spoilage.

Tanning the Skin

Note: Sources differ on whether mountain men tanned the beaver hides, or simply dried them and left them untreated. Below is a quote by Rufus Sage, from 1840.

"The usual mode of dressing skins, prevalent in this country among both Indians and whites, is very simple in its details and is easily practised. It consists in removing all the fleshy particles from the pelt, and divesting it of a thin viscid substance upon the exterior, known as the "grain;" then, after permitting it to dry, it is thoroughly soaked in a liquid decoction formed from the brains of the animal and water, when it is stoutly rubbed with the hands in order to open its pores and admit the mollient properties of the fluid, - this done, the task, is completed by alternate rubbings and distensions until it is completely dry and soft."



Photo by Jeroen Nieuwhuis



Photo by Jim Hannon



Photo by David Canterbury

Mountain Man Reenactors
Skinning, Stretching, and
Treating Beaver Skins

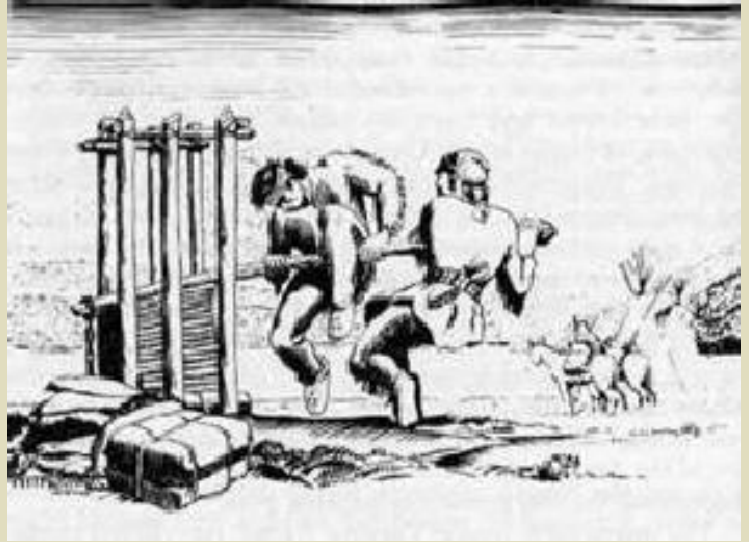
Mountain Man Education Trunk

Supplemental Teacher Information: Trapping Beavers

Making a Pack

As the dried beaver pelts accumulated in camp, they were pressed in to compact bundles, called a pack, to ease handling. Dried pelts generally weighed about 1.5 pounds each. The pelts were folded in the center, fur side in, and pressed into a pack encased in a wrapper of deer skin or other less valuable material. The drawing below shows how trappers in the field would have compressed pelts into a pack.

About 60 pelts went into each pack, with a total weight of about 100 pounds. Each pack was valued at \$300 to \$600 dollars, depending on the market conditions. (Consider that gold was worth \$20 an ounce, and that a working farm could be purchased for around \$1,500 at this time). A pack animal could carry two packs.



Making a Beaver Pack
Picture by Mulcay
Jefferson National Expansion Memorial

Mountain Man Education Trunk

Supplemental Teacher Information: Clothing

Note: This supplemental information comes from the “Mountain Men and Life in the American West” website. The Wyoming State Museum has found the information on this site helpful for developing this curriculum. We have provided the information below, directly from that website – only formatting it, correcting grammar and typos, and adding notes. If you want to learn more, you can find this site at: www.mman.us.

Introduction

The Mountain Man was a product of his environment; His society and his clothing would have reflected this. His clothing would have been some combination of the styles and materials of the white settlers and citizens, and those of the Native Americans amongst whom he lived.

The writer of this section relied heavily on the paintings, drawings and sketches of two artists. Alfred Jacob Miller was an artist, hired to accompany Sir William Drummond Stewart to the 1837 Rendezvous to record the event. Miller's paintings often have misty and surreal backgrounds but show mountain men, their clothing, and accoutrements in wonderful detail. Rudolph Friederich Kurz was a Swiss artist who had traveled to the west and kept a detailed journal and sketchbook. Kurz made a large number of sketches of whites associated with the fur trade and Native Americans in 1851 and 1852 mostly in the vicinity of Fort Union. Although the Rendezvous period had been over for more than ten years, Kurz does provide a good glimpse of mountain fashions associated with the trading posts at that time.



Some of Alfred Jacob Miller's paintings

Mountain Man Education Trunk

Supplemental Teacher Information: Clothing

Mountain Man Clothing

A newcomer to the mountains might be clothed in shirt and trousers of cotton or linen. But probably most often wool, in solid, natural colors – off-white, blue, or red. Large prints and striped calico were also available. The newcomer might also have worn boots or brogans (ankle high leather shoes.) Clothing made of fabric was popular amongst the experienced mountain men, and showed up in moderate quantities on the supply lists of goods taken to rendezvous. Fabrics, although comfortable, were not durable under the hard usage in the mountains, and replacement was not possible except at rendezvous or the widely scattered trading posts.

Clothing made of buckskin replaced fabric clothing as those wore out. Buckskin clothing, although heavily fringed, was generally patterned after white styles, rather than Native American styles. Buckskin, although cold in the winter and hot in the summer, had advantages. It was extremely durable and wore like iron, provided protection from mosquitoes and other biting insects, as well as from thorns and brambles. Buckskin also had the advantage in that the raw materials were available in the wilderness, or finished leather clothing could easily be obtained by trading with Native Americans.

Note: European American-made clothing should be discussed during Section 4 – Activity 2, during the “Dress Your Mountain Man” classroom discussion. Leather / buckskin clothing will be discussed with one of the cards during the activity in Section 5.

Note: The next few pages will contain descriptions of different clothing worn by mountain men in the Rocky Mountains.

Buckskin Clothing

Buckskin clothing was often completed with fringe along the seams. The purpose of fringe appears to be mainly decorative, although it may have softened the wearer’s profile while in the woods, making a less distinct target for enemies.

Trousers

Trousers of the 1820s and 1830s were high-waisted, and full in the hips and seat. There were three basic kinds of legs: the stove pipe cut, tapered cut to a small ankle, or cut to fit closely to the leg. Belts were not used to secure trousers at this time, but rather suspenders, ties or cinches. Alfred Jacob Miller shows trouser styles which include both the fall-front and fly-type closure. Mountain men depicted by Miller mostly wear buckskin trousers or pants, although a few are clearly wearing pants made of fabric, mostly blue in color.

Leggings and Breechcloths

Instead of trousers, a mountain man may have chosen to wear leggings and a breechclout (breechcloth). Leggings were held up using either ties or garters. Leggings and breechclout had the advantage in that they were simple to make, very comfortable and functional. Also, when setting traps, leggings were very easy to remove and put back on.

Belts

Belts were used to carry weapons such as sheathed knives, tomahawks, and perhaps a pistol. Belts were generally not wider than 2 inches, and were left simple, without tacks, or rivets. Large woven sashes might be similarly used. Belts were not used during this period for suspending pants. Buckles, when visible, are generally worn to the side.

Knife Sheaths

Knives were kept in simple sheaths at the back. Quilling or beading is not seen in any of Miller's pictures. At most, decoration is limited to a single row of tacks along the blade edge of the sheath. Most sheaths do not have a belt slot, but are simply thrust through the belt. Miller does show at least one sheath with a belt slot, and others that have a thong or loop to secure them to the belt.

Shirts

Shirts used by the mountain man would have been a simple pullover design with a large body and loose-fitting sleeves. Solid colors, especially red, but including blue, green and yellow were favorites. Miller also shows light-colored, widely-spaced prints. Shirts were a popular trade item at rendezvous and, in any year, hundreds might have been taken to the mountains.

Hunting Coats

Many of the mountain men shown by Miller are wearing a leather, open-front, hunting coat. These coats are elaborately fringed along the shoulders, sleeves, fronts and bottoms. They range in length from mid-thigh to knee, and are generally shown with well-fitted sleeves and collars. The coats do not have buttons, but close using ties.

War Shirt

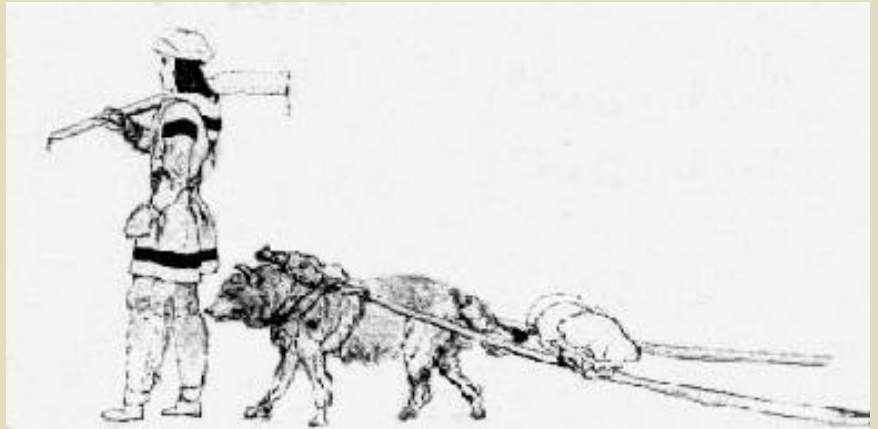
It is unlikely that mountain men would have worn the war shirt of the plains tribes unless they had been adopted into a tribe and had integrated themselves fully into the Native American way of living. Mountain men who might have been in a position to wear the war shirt include Edward Rose and Jim Beckwourth. The war shirt is one of the most distinctive articles of clothing developed by the people of the plains. It was not just an item of clothing, but a mark of honor which could only be worn by one who had earned great respect. The decorations on the war shirt often had special meanings.

Mountain Man Education Trunk

Supplemental Teacher Information: Clothing

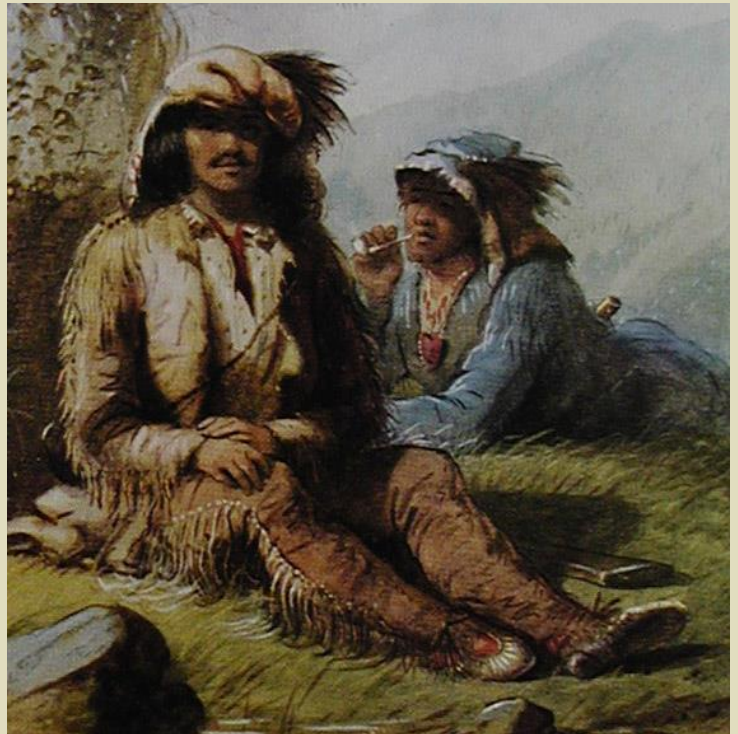
Capote

For cool and cold weather, the mountain man would wear a capote. A capote is a long coat of simple design often with a hood. It was made from wool blankets, or wool blanket material, which could be cut and assembled in the mountains. Capotes were also available for trade at rendezvous and at the posts. The capote dates back to at least the early 1700s and was popular to at least the 1870s. Although designed as a coat, the capote could also be used as an extra blanket for sleeping during cold weather. The capote alone is warm and comfortable, however, was large and loose enough that it could be worn over multiple layers of winter clothing. Blanket coats shown by Miller are commonly blue, blue-grey or green in color. The drawing to the right was made by Rudolph Kurz, probably in February 1852 at Fort Union. The hunter is wearing a capote, mittens and a hat.



Moccasins

As boots or brogans wore out, they were replaced by moccasins. Some men of the period, while outfitting in St. Louis, are reported to have traded their boots for moccasins without waiting for them to wear out. The truth of this is questionable, unless they had toughened the soles of their feet prior to trading out for moccasins. Shoes, both men's and women's styles, were not an uncommon item on trade inventories. The women's shoes were obviously intended as trade items for the Native American wives of men stationed in the mountains. There are nearly as many moccasin styles as there are Native American tribes. Moccasins drawn by Miller are all of a soft-soled, pucker-vamp style as shown in the painting "Trappers."



Trappers by Alfred Jacob Miller

Mountain Man Education Trunk

Supplemental Teacher Information: Clothing

Hats

Hats worn by the mountain men were wide, flat-brimmed felt styles with a low crown. Most hats shown by Miller are twisted and bent from hard use. Felt hats are mostly light-colored, off-white, tan, or grey. Hat bands are simple cord, strap or ribbon. Quill or beadwork on hats or hat bands is not shown on any of Miller's paintings. Hats are often decorated with feathers or tails and a clay pipe is often held in the hatband. Miller described a kind of hunter's hood made by the men themselves to replace felt hats lost or worn out. These hoods appear to be made from blanket material or leather. Many are constructed with "ears" and a flap reaching down to the shoulders, while others are of a shape defying description. "Trappers Bride" (note: picture is included on the first page of this supplemental information) shows one of these hoods with "ears." Fur hats, especially those with face, legs and tail, which are so popular at modern rendezvous and Hollywood movies, are not shown by Miller who was only in the mountains during the spring through late summer 1837. However, Kurz does not show this style of fur hat either and he did spend several winters in the mountains at Fort Union.

Mittens

Kurz shows a hunter wearing mittens (see the drawing included with capote). From the drawing it is not possible to tell if the mittens are constructed of blanket material, or leather and fur.

Bead and Quillwork: Alfred Jacob Miller only rarely shows beadwork or quillwork decorations on clothing. These decorations, when shown are simple narrow bands of color, or bands of alternating colors.



Antoine
by Alfred Jacob Miller

Bison Robes

Bison robes (also called buffalo robes) are made of the tanned and softened whole hide of the bison. Robes which include both the head and tail were exceptionally valuable to the Native Americans because they believed that the skin would inherit the spirit of the bison in its completeness. Robes were prized both by the Native people and mountain men as a type of overcoat worn during the coldest times. Robes were simply draped over the shoulders, and held closed with the hands, or they might be belted in the middle. Robes are shown by Kurz as being worn fur side in. Robes could also be used as a carpet within lodges, or as a bedroll when sleeping under the stars.

Bison robes replaced beaver in importance in the fur trade starting in the 1840s. Bison robes were a trade item from the inception of the fur trade in the prairies and Rocky Mountains. However, due to the relatively much higher price of beaver, the size and bulk of robes, and the added effort of tanning robes, robes were generally less desirable than beaver. The mountain price paid for bison robes ranged from about \$3-\$5 per robe. A combination of factors changed the demand for bison robes starting in the 1830s: prodigious numbers of bison skins were used for making belts to transfer power to machinery in the industrial age; a precipitous decline in the price paid for beaver; and a fad for bison robes in the Eastern United States as sleigh blankets, and bed, wall and floor coverings. Attempts to popularize robes in Europe were generally unsuccessful due to the bulk and relatively high shipping charges.

Because of their bulk, bison robes would not have become an important trade item had it been necessary to ship them east by pack trains. The bison robe trade was more or less limited to forts and posts along the Missouri River and its tributaries and to Bent's Fort and its competitors along the Santa Fe Trail... at least until the coming of the railroads. Because of their bulkiness, bison robes (at ten robes to the pack) required a form of transportation capable of accepting very large volumes. The earliest transportation of robes back to St. Louis was by mackinaw boats and keelboats. Steamboats, starting in the early 1830s (and then the railroads in the 1860s) drastically reduced transportation costs and made the bulk and weight of bison robes a relatively minor consideration. As a result, bison, like the beaver before them, were driven to the brink of extinction.