

Mountain Man Education Trunk

Teacher Info: 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.

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Teacher Info: 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 t. 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.

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		