

# In Pioneer Days

**Grades 2-4**

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## Who Were The Early Pioneers?

Many years ago, North America was first visited by explorers from France, England and Spain. They were searching for a better route to the Indies and Asia. They were also seeking gold. The only valuable items found were fur-bearing animals, plenty of fish and very knowledgeable Native People.

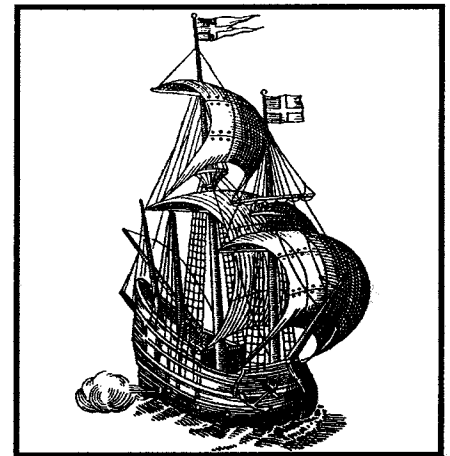


Tales of this new, unsettled land soon reached the ears of many people who were longing to have their own home, or their own farm, or their own business. During the 1800s, Europe and the British Isles had become very overcrowded; land for farming was disappearing and jobs were difficult to find.

At the same time, there was a potato famine in Ireland. Many Irish people were starving and became so ill from diseases that they died. Many Irish peasants were being forced from their homes by wealthy landlords. Their homes were completely destroyed leaving the peasants with only their own personal belongings and no where to live.

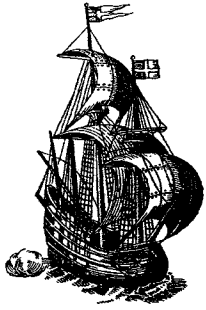
In England and Germany, groups of people were being persecuted for their religious beliefs and were being driven from their homes. They chose to come to North America where they could practice their beliefs freely.

Sailing ships carried the new pioneers to North America across the cold, stormy Atlantic Ocean. Poor people could only afford steerage accommodation on the ships. They were kept below deck in the hold for the entire trip. In the steerage area, people had to sleep in berths and use their chests and trunks for tables and seats. This area became very dirty and smelly. The people were often bored as they had nothing to do.



A journey to the new land was not always a happy one. The trip may have lasted twenty days or three months depending upon the weather. Many people never reached their destination as they died from diseases such as cholera or scurvy. Scurvy is a disease caused by the lack of fresh fruit and vegetables in one's diet. The rough waters and the rolling motion of the ship often made passengers seasick.

These early pioneers were ready to deal with all the hardships they would experience. They would have to put all their skills and knowledge to good use and in new ways to suit their new country.



## Pioneer Reading Activity One



**Read** the Information Card entitled "Who Were the Early Pioneers?"

**Locate** and **record** the answers to the following questions with good sentence answers.

1. Who were the first visitors to reach the shores of North America?

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2. Why did these people come to North America?

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3. Why did other people want to come and settle in North America?  
(Give five good reasons.)

a) \_\_\_\_\_

b) \_\_\_\_\_

c) \_\_\_\_\_

d) \_\_\_\_\_

e) \_\_\_\_\_

4. Why was the trip to North America an unpleasant experience for the new settlers?

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5. What are "scurvy" and "cholera"?

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6. What causes "scurvy"?

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## Clearing the Land

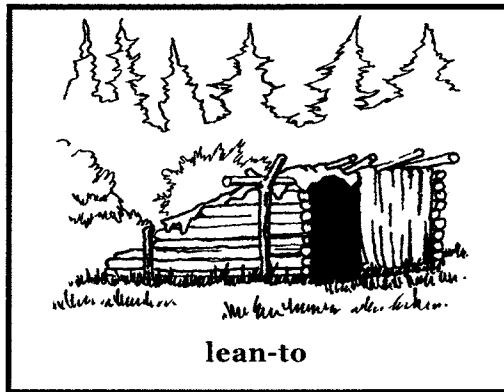
Once the pioneers had arrived at their grants of land, their first task was to clear the land of trees. They also had to built a shelter of some sort for protection. It was usually a "tent" or a "lean-to" made of branches and skins.

Spring was the best time of the year to cut down the trees. The wood was quite dry and the new leaves helped the burning. The pioneers wanted to clear the land as quickly as possible so they could begin planting their crops. There were three main ways the pioneers could clear their land. They could hold a "logging bee". During a "logging bee" nearby neighbors brought their axes and oxen. The pioneers cut down the trees and hauled the logs away. In exchange for their hard work, the pioneer provided his neighbors with food and drink and helped them when they needed it.

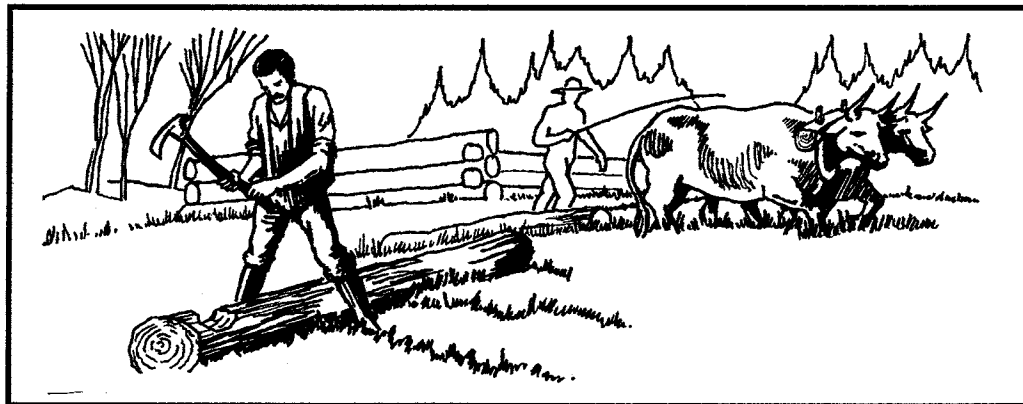
Another way to clear the land was to chop down the trees oneself and then set fire to the underbrush. Thirdly, if a pioneer was wealthy enough, special men called "choppers" could be hired to clear the land.

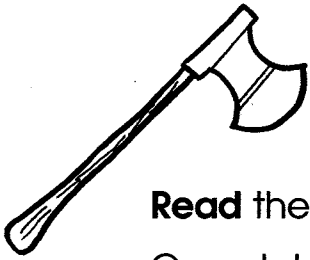
First, all the thick brush was cut away between the trees by the settlers. The brush was piled in heaps for burning. The smaller trees were cut down with an axe and placed on the pile of brush. The larger trees were cut down and dragged to a pile by a team of oxen. These logs would be used later to build a log cabin. The large stumps were left in the ground to rot or were burned out.

The sound of axes rang throughout the forest filling the air. Stinging smoke that curled up from the great piles of burning logs and brush hung heavily over the pioneer's land. The pioneer's wife busily prepared the food for the hungry workers.

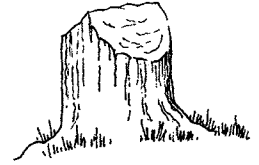


lean-to





## Pioneer Reading Activity Two



**Read** the Information Card entitled "*Clearing the Land*".

Complete the following activities.

### Part A:

**Locate** and **record** the answers to the following questions with complete sentences.

1. What is a "logging bee"?

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2. How does the pioneer farmer pay his neighbors for all their work?

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3. What are "choppers"?

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### Part B:

**Number** in the correct order the following steps taken by the pioneers to clear their land.

\_\_\_\_\_ Larger trees were cut down and dragged away to a log pile by a team of oxen.

\_\_\_\_\_ The thick brush was cut away between the trees first.

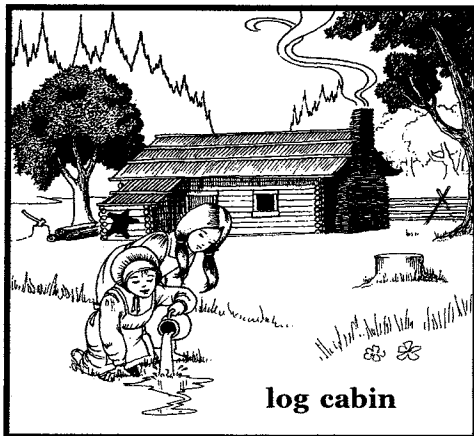
\_\_\_\_\_ The large stumps were left to rot or were burned out.

\_\_\_\_\_ The brush was piled in heaps for burning.

\_\_\_\_\_ These logs would be used to build the log cabin.

\_\_\_\_\_ Smaller trees were cut down and placed on the pile of brush.

## Early Pioneer Homes



The log cabin was often the first permanent shelter built by the pioneers. It was usually built after the land was cleared and the crops were planted.

The early pioneers had to be loggers and lumbermen. Loggers cut down the trees and lumbermen sold the cut trees to someone who needed the wood. The early settlers did both.

A log cabin was usually a square structure measuring six meters (19 feet) long on all sides and three meters (9 feet) high. Logs were placed one on top of the other. The end of each log was notched at the bottom so that it would fit snugly around the top of the log below. The spaces between the logs were filled with a mixture of mud, clay and sand. It became as hard as cement and kept out the rain and the wind.

The roof of the log cabin was made of small trees or saplings. Large pieces of bark were placed on top of the trees. The rain ran off the roof, along the troughs of bark.

A door and a window were cut out by the pioneer with a handsaw. This was a very difficult task. Many log cabins had a door but no windows. Glass was too expensive and difficult to obtain. The windowpane was usually made of paper dipped in oil to allow light in.

The log cabin's floor was often mud, packed down firmly. Sometimes bark was spread on the mud floor to control the dirt. A pile of stones was placed in the middle of the floor. This acted as a fireplace until a proper one could be built. The smoke went out a hole in the roof.

The furniture in a log cabin was simple but useful. The early settler made most of the things he needed such as tables, chairs, stools, and cupboards. The beds were usually attached to the walls of the cabin. Sometimes colorful cushions were used for decoration. Braided rugs made from old rags were often used on the floor. The entire family used the one room for eating and sleeping. The fireplace was the central part of the log cabin.

