

Build It and They Will Come

OBJECTIVES:

Students will be able to:

- a. Build a model fort or post with representations of buildings, occupants, visitors, supplies, and tools/equipment within
- b. Determine what construction methods and materials are appropriate to the fur trade era
- c. Communicate the reasons for their choices through writing paragraphs

MATERIALS:

- Video: *Crossroads - Colville Valley 1800-1850*
- Publication: *Spokane House, 1810-1814* (published by Friends of Spokane House)
- Wooden dowels, popsicle sticks, toothpicks OR white poster-board or foam-board OR shoeboxes (1 for each student) AND/OR pretzels
- Glue, markers, pencils, rulers, crayons
- Historical data regarding the North West Company, Pacific Fur Company, and the Hudson's Bay Company

INTRODUCTION:

- Show the video and discuss key concepts such as economics, fur trade, westward expansion, exploration, voyageurs, rendezvous, encampment, self-sustaining, habitat, danger, and protection.
- Share information with the class about the various posts and forts in Washington (eastern) and Idaho (northern); address when and why they were built as well as what materials were used (tools, lumber, pegs versus nails, etc.)
- Have the students imagine themselves as employees of a fur trading company that wants to expand into a new area. Their job is to first select an appropriate location then build a post/fort. They need to identify what resources (tools, trees, water, animals, minerals, technology, etc.) are realistically available in the area they have selected at that time in history.

ACTIVITY:

- Determine whether this is to be an individual, small group, or class project. If small groups are chosen, assign design elements to each group. Those might include: a post/fort exterior "wall" group, an interior buildings group, a people and animals group.
- Pass out materials to each student or student group.

- Brainstorm with the class about the fort/post's construction; prompt the students to problem solve any potential dilemmas. Instruct the students to design and create a post. They should reflect measurements in their plans; help the students compare and contrast "life-size" dimensions and the scaled down model sizes.
- Free-drawn, hand-made, or purchased props will be included in the post/fort (i.e. animals, people, water troughs, tools, etc.).
- The model(s) will be displayed in the classroom.
- Direct the students to describe their work in writing; they need to include their reasons for making the decisions they did. They should offer examples of any challenges they faced and how those were overcome.

EXTENSION ACTIVITIES:

- Invite a class of younger students to visit your classroom. Have your students share their model(s) and a brief history with the visiting class. You should hear the students sharing facts they learned in completing this activity.
- Take a field trip to Spokane House Interpretive Center (WA, Riverside State Park), Fort Colville (WA, National Park Service), or any other post/fort in your area.

ASSESSMENT:

- Collect the writing assignments and read over them, assessing proper use of grammar, spelling, and punctuation. Also make sure facts, challenges, and solutions are described.
- During the activity, assess their problem solving skills as they construct their post/fort.
- While brainstorming, evaluate their processes of creative thinking and problem solving.