

Life of a Pioneer Kid

PIONEER LESSON 2

Pioneers moved into the Florida frontier during most of the 1800s (the 19th century). Many were tempted to brave the wilderness by the promise of free land offered by national laws that aimed to attract settlers. The warm Florida climate, which was ideal for farming, also attracted settlers. Most pioneers arrived with very little. They relied on the natural environment for the things they needed. They had to grow their own crops, raise their own cattle, and hunt and forage in the wilderness. They had to build their own homes and furniture from scratch, sew their own clothing, and often make their own household goods, including butter and flour. Imagine what it would have been like to do all this work in the hot Florida summer!



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The hard work was not just for grownups. Pioneer kids had to do many chores every day, so that the whole family could have the things they needed. Children helped with the laundry, for example, and that could take a whole day – boiling water for each batch, scrubbing and wringing the laundry by hand, and hanging it out to dry.

Pioneer kids also woke up early each day to tend to the family's animals. They helped milk the cows, feed the chickens, and collect the eggs. They pitched in to make items for the household, too, such as candles and butter.

These are just a few of the responsibilities pioneer kids took on! What kind of chores do you do at home? Would you want to trade places with the pioneers?



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ACTIVITY

To make butter, pioneer kids used a wooden churn and milk from their cows, but you can make your own butter at home, using whipping cream. Give it a try!

Here's how it works. Butter is basically the fattiest part of milk. To make it, pioneers would let milk settle after they milked a cow. The cream would rise to the top, and they would skim it off. Then, they would pour the cream into a wooden butter churn, where they would repeatedly move a plunger up and down.

This *churning* process broke up the membranes around the fat in the milk, so it could clump together and separate from the liquid. Although you'll "churn" in a slightly different way, you too will see a clump of butter sitting in a much thinner liquid than you started with.

WHAT YOU'LL NEED:

- Heavy whipping cream
- Sample cup or small food-storage container with lid
- Napkin or paper towel



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ACTIVITY



WHAT TO DO:

1. Pour a little heavy cream into your sample cup or food-storage container. Only fill it about 1/3 of the way.
2. Wait about 10 to 15 minutes to let your cream warm up a bit. (The pioneers would have used cream when it was cool but not cold.)
3. Place the lid on your container, and make sure it is secure all the way around.
4. Wrap your container in a napkin (just to make sure nothing spills).
5. Shake your container hard for at least 3 or 4 minutes straight! You'll know you're done when you feel a ball of butter shaking around in the container.
6. Unwrap the container and open it carefully, making sure to keep it on the napkin.



You should see your butter in a solid ball separated from the milky liquid. If you haven't quite gotten solid butter yet, just replace the lid, rewrap the container in the napkin, and keep shaking.

This is just like the butter you buy in the store. Pour off the excess liquid and try it on some toast or crackers!

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This lesson helps reinforce these Florida State Standards for K-5th grade:

- SS.K.A.2.1 Compare children and families of today with those in the past.
- SS.1.A.2.1 Understand history tells the story of people and events of other times and places.
- SS.1.A.2.2 Compare life now with life in the past.
- SS.2.A.2.5 Identify reasons people came to the United States throughout history.
- SS.4.A.1.2 Synthesize information related to Florida history through print and electronic media.
- SS.4.A.4.2 Describe pioneer life in Florida.

