



Bent's Fort Trade Game Instructions

Skills & Concepts Explored

Trade; Goods and Services; Wants and Needs; Natural Resources; Manufactured Goods; Scarcity

Activity (10mins): trade game play

Break students into six groups. Give each group one of the of trade partner cards. Explain that these cards are the goods and services that they brought to trade today (meaning they are extra or easily obtained). Walk them briefly though the point value system and explain that the goal of the game is to obtain the highest number of points. Have them trade for about ten minutes or until they start getting distracted. If time permits, have them trade more than once switching trade partners.

Wrap-Up (5mins): Are you an expert trader?

Once they have completed trading have them add their points. You can show them how to count up the points with one of the groups.

SCORE KEY

0-8: Novice Trader

You are a novice trader! Trading at Bent's Fort was slow today, and you left with most of your trade goods. Don't be discouraged though, you will be back to trade at Bent's Fort soon! The more you trade, the better you will get!

9-15: Skilled Trader

You are a skilled trader! Even though you may still have some of your original trade goods, you also got many of the things you need and want for the winter. You are on your way to becoming an expert trader!

16 or higher: Expert Trader

You are an expert trader! You have skillfully traded away your goods for items you will need and want for the winter! Congratulations, and keep up the good work!

BONUS QUESTION: Ask the students if they traded anything that wasn't a natural resource or made in a factory. The idea is to get them to identify the services that were traded in the game. There are two services traded PROTECTION and KNOWLEDGE OF THE TRAILS.



Bent's Fort Trade Game Trade Partner Profiles

Trappers

The fur trappers that visited Bent's Fort were of a variety of different backgrounds. Also called "mountain men" because they spent a lot of time in the mountains, some trappers were employed by companies or were self-employed. The fur trappers that frequented Bent's Fort had a lot of experience exploring, tracking, and sometimes surveying the Rocky Mountains. They brought furs, hides, and sometimes meat to trade at the Fort. They would also offer their services as guides for the military scouting expeditions. The trappers sought to trade for the supplies they needed to trap and hunt as well as manufactured goods made on the east coast, Mexico and Europe. Kit Carson, the famous trapper and guide, was employed at Bent's Fort.

Ute Indians

The Ute Indians are Colorado's longest continuous residence. The tribe was partially nomadic and traveled to hunt and trade. They had extensive knowledge of the terrain, hunting grounds, and seasonal weather patterns. Their information was as vital as their hides and meat they brought to Bent's Fort to trade. Ute men hunted deer and other small mountain animals with a bow and arrow. Ute women would clean the hides of the deer and make clothing and moccasins which were decorated with beads, shells, and animal teeth. The Utes traded with neighboring tribes, such as the Navajo, Comanche, and Pueblo tribes, and came to Bent's Fort occasionally for trade. They traded deerskins, buckskin clothing, and horses for hunting and manufactured materials as well as food and items that would help them survive harsh winters.

Cheyenne and Arapaho Indians

The Cheyenne and Arapaho tribes lived on the plains of eastern Colorado. They were both major trader partners at Bent's Fort and even helped negotiate where the Fort was built. Although both groups had a distinct cultural identity, they were close allies with common life ways and traditions. They were nomadic hunters that followed the bison herds, living in tipis and riding horses. Horses and buffalo hides were the most common and most popular trade commodities for their usefulness to the tribes and the Fort itself. The Cheyenne and Arapaho also traded axes, blankets, knives, embroidery and beadwork for items they needed. The two tribes would trade for manufactured goods and hunting tools as well as food and items for survival.

Military

The United States military came to Bent's Fort to prepare for war with Mexico. As a US outpost on the US/Mexico border (the Arkansas River), the Fort was a symbol of US influence and power in the region as well as a strategic launch pad for invasion. But, evidence suggests that the military was in some ways a burden to the Fort as they did not always pay for the supplies they used or for the rooms they occupied while at the Fort. The Fort was also sometimes used as a hospital for sick and injured soldiers. The soldiers would bring in plenty of horses, guns, and ammunition to trade along with the protection of an army cavalry. They traded mainly for food and survival supplies and frequently for knowledge of the area.

New Mexican Traders

Because of the location of Bent's Fort (600 miles from St. Louis) there was very little currency in circulation. Travelling up from Traders from New Mexico could pay with highly desirable Spanish gold and silver. Since gold and silver were hard currency, their value did not fluctuate as much as bartered goods could. New Mexico traders brought coffee, sugar and expertly made goods from Mexico. They would trade for supplies for the journey home, buffalo hides to make clothing and luxury goods.

St. Louis Traders

The Bent brothers and Ceran St. Vrain had trade contracts with companies back in St. Louis, Missouri that outlined exchange of goods for traded items. The Fort would receive shipments of American items or independent European traders would bring wagon trains of their manufactured goods to be traded. These goods were to be traded for American Indian products so they could be traded in St. Louis, to other tribes or to the Anglo-Americans. The Fort itself was eager for New Mexican traders to come to trade their Spanish currency for luxury Euro-American goods. European goods such as cloth and clothing, sugar, coffee, rice, tea, cutlery, domestic items, barrels of rum and stills, and horses were very popular.