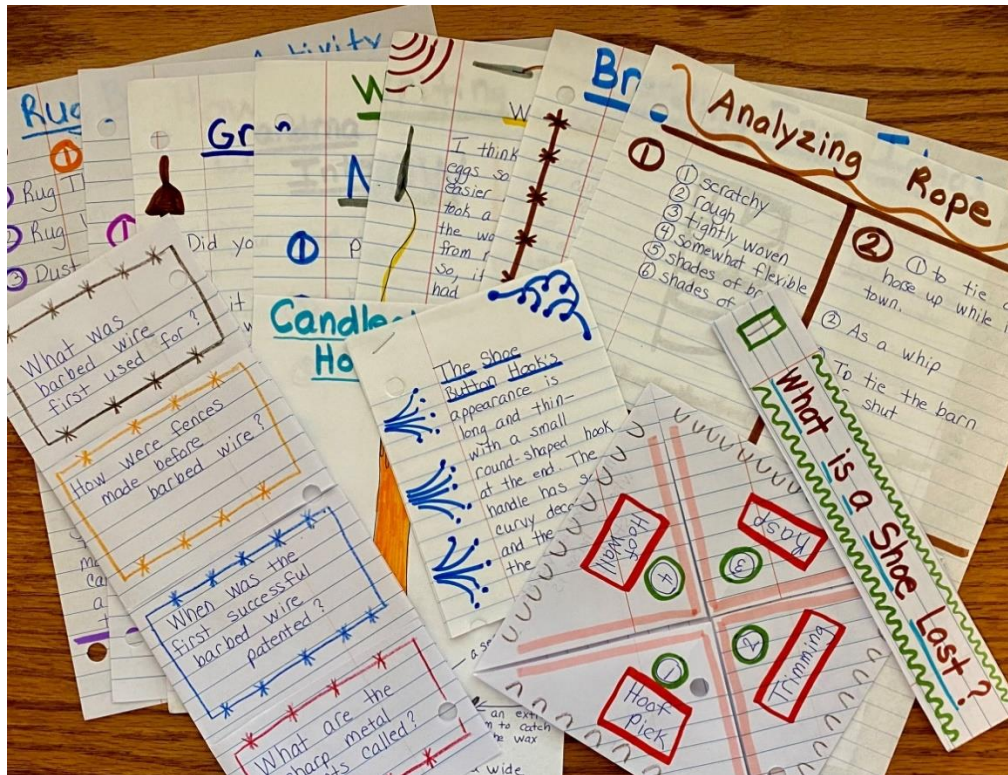




Pioneer Life & Ranching Traditions

➔ Additional Activities ◀ Pioneer Life & Ranching Traditions

In addition to the many activities presented in the Travel Trunk notebook, please browse here for additional ways to make the artifacts of this trunk more meaningful and edifying! And, please remember, *adjust all activities as required*—according to time allowed, grade level, and needs.



Cotton & Cotton Carders

Pioneers used cotton carders to smooth out cotton bolls; to prepare their fibers to be spun into yarn or thread. The process of cotton carding separates individual fibers and helps to remove dirt, plant particle scraps, and fibers that are too short.



→ [How to Hand Card Cotton](#)

→ Watch the video above on carding cotton and answer the following questions on a piece of paper:

- 1) The lady from the video said that it's super, super fun to card cotton. After watching her, do you think you would enjoy carding cotton? Why? Why not?
- 2) Do you think mothers in the pioneer days had a whole bunch of cotton fabric or shirts ready to go in the closet? Or do you think clothing was a little scarcer? Why?
- 3) The thin roll of "Cotton Punis" is shown at the end of the video. How do you think cotton carded, cleaned, rolled, and shaped in this way would be easier to spin into yarn rather than a plain cotton ball just picked from the field?
- 4) Look at this picture of: [A Girl Picking Cotton](#). If you lived in the pioneer and ranching days, which would you rather do, card cotton or pick cotton? Why?

Rug Beater



Rug Beaters were vacuum cleaners for pioneers! If they wanted a rug or mat cleaned, they would have to take it outside, hold onto it, or hang it on a line, and beat it with the rug beater until all the dirt and dust were beat out! This chore was sometimes given to frontier children to do. Believe it or not, you can still buy rug beaters! Some people prefer them over vacuum cleaners!

→Think it over ...

Rug Beaters had a variety of names—one other example would be “dust beater.” Rug Beaters were also used to beat the dirt and dust out of a variety of things. Take a sheet of paper, fold it into fourths, and open it back up; in each section write:

- 1) Three other possible names for a Rug Beater.
- 2) Three other possible uses for a Rug Beater.
- 3) I think Rug Beaters were/were not a good way to get exercise because ...
- 4) I would rather (write down your preferences) ...

A	Beat the Rugs	or	Milk the Cows
B	Beat the Rugs	or	Feed the Chickens
C	Beat the Rugs	or	Churn the Butter
D	Beat the Rugs	or	Pick the Crops
E	Beat the Rugs	or	Shovel Manure

Washboard



Washing clothes on the frontier was a lot of work! Instead of a washing machine, clothes had to be scrubbed repeatedly with a washboard and basin of soapy water. The bumpy edges helped to get the dirt out.

→ [**A Company That Still Makes Washboards**](#)

→ Take a look at the pictures and captions in the article above and answer the following questions on a piece of paper:

- 1) Where are washboards made in the U.S.?
- 2) How many do they make each year?
- 3) How big is the world's biggest washboard?
- 4) What is used to crimp the metal for the washboards?

→ [**Washboards: Good Clean Fun**](#)

Watch this video to see how washboards evolved into musical instruments!

Wooden Shoe Last



Shoe Lasts are wooden forms in shapes similar to human feet. Shoemakers used shoe lasts to make shoes a certain size and design. Why shoe *last*? The word “last” is derived from the Old English word “laest,” which means footprint.

→ What is a Shoe Last?

→ Take a sheet of loose-leaf paper and fold it into eight strips (three horizontal folds). Cut along each fold, creating eight strips of paper. While watching the video (link above), write down one “Shoe Last” fact on seven strips of the paper. Save the eighth strip for a cover and staple your Shoe Last booklet together. Watch the video twice if you need to!

Shoe Button Hook



Pioneer shoes were often snug around the ankle, so an open flap with a long row of buttons was required to keep them on securely. A shoe button hook was typically used to get these small buttons buttoned. The hooked end was fed through the button hole, hooked onto the base of a button, and then pulled through.

→Analyzing a Shoe Button Hook

Take a piece of paper and fold it into four sections. Cut along the fold lines and on each quadrant of paper, write an answer to the prompts below. Staple the four pieces together.

- 1) Describe the Shoe Button Hook's appearance.
- 2) Describe how the Shoe Button Hook feels when you touch it and hold it.
- 3) What is used today to secure shoes rather than button hooks?
- 4) Draw a sketch of the Shoe Button Hook



Darning Egg



Pioneers used darning eggs—typically made out of wood—to help keep a sock steady when its heel or toe area had become worn out and needed some repair sewing. It was a must in the pioneer days to make clothing last as long as possible. You can purchase more modern darning eggs nowadays, but most people just go out and buy a new pair of socks when the heel or toe area wears out.

→Write it Out ...

Write a four-sentence paragraph on why you think pioneers might've had to repair their socks rather than simply purchase new socks.



Candlestick Holder



Candlestick Holder

Frontier Times Museum

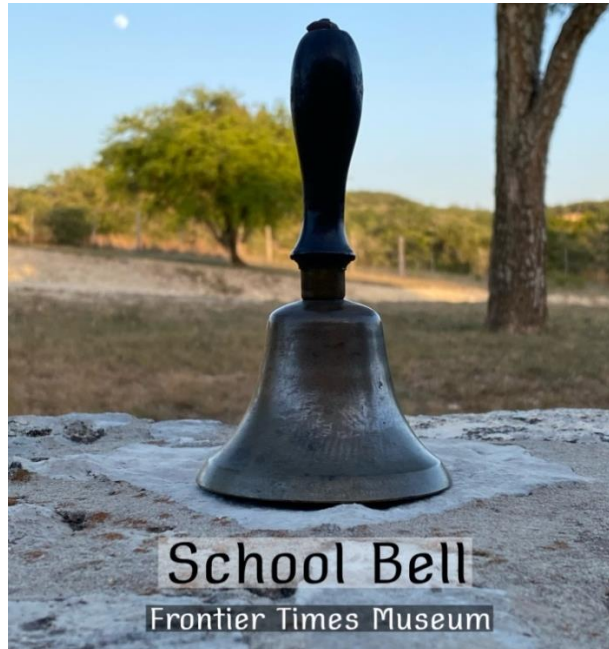
Pioneers lived before electricity was available. So, candles were quite important! And candlestick holders were essential as well. The pioneer families often had to make the candlesticks themselves. Tallow candles were made from animal fat. These were less expensive; however the quality of the light they produced was mediocre and they had a rather unpleasant odor. Some better, but more expensive candles were made from beeswax.

→Candlestick Holder Designing ...

Take a close look at the candlestick holder. Notice its many details: the holder, the stem, the engravings on the bottom rim. Imagine that you were a candlestick holder maker in the pioneer days. Sketch out a drawing of what your candlestick holder would look like. Would you make a fancy one or a plain one? Tall? Short?

→[Click Here for Ideas](#)

School Bell

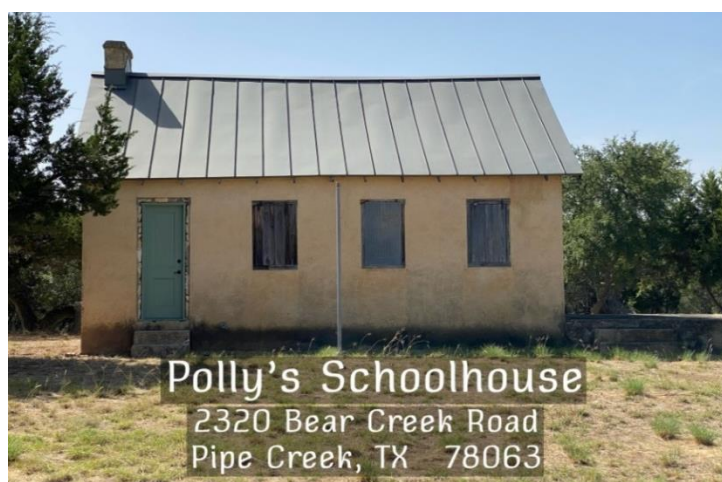


Teachers rang school bells to alert students for certain moments of the day, such as: the start of the school day, the end of lunchtime, and the end of recess. Some schools had a large bell with a pull rope to ring it; others used a smaller hand bell.

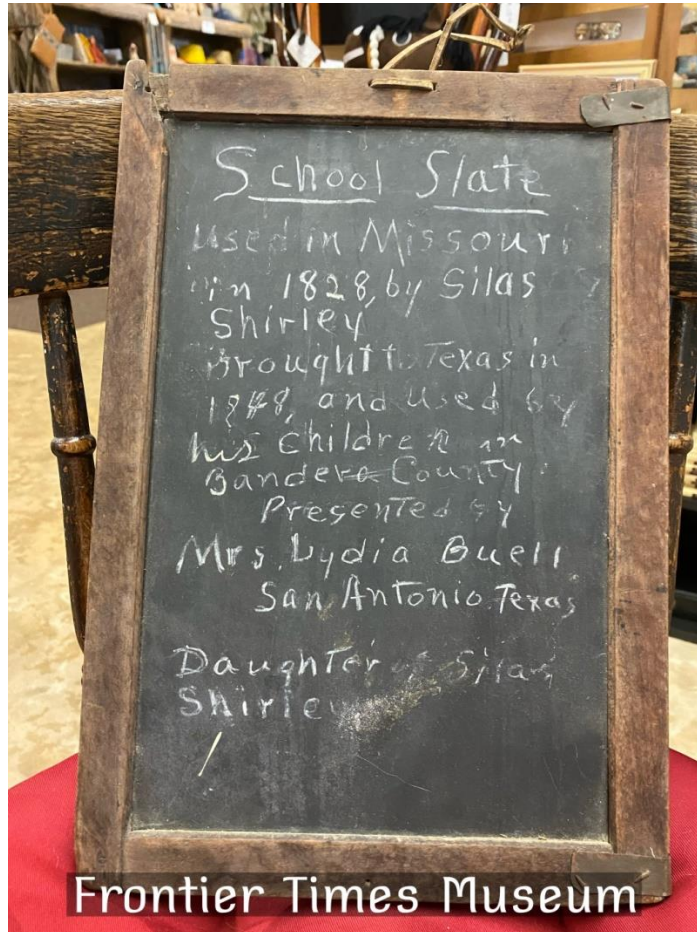
→ Interview Your Grandparents ...

Call your grandparents tonight and ask them:

- 1) If their school used school bells.
- 2) If they ever got to ring the school bell.
- 3) If it was loud or soft.
- 4) If was a hand held bell, or a big bell with a rope to pull.
- 5) What happened if they got to school *after* the bell was rung.



School Slate



In the pioneer days, students typically used a miniature blackboard made out of a flat, rectangular piece of slate stone. They were often trimmed with wood or leather, for the slate edges were rather sharp. Pioneer students did most their schoolwork on a school slate. Using slates, frontier children learned reading, writing, and arithmetic. Paper and ink were expensive, so the slates were helpful to have. Frontier students often took their slates home to practice their school lessons.

→ Make a Then & Now Chart

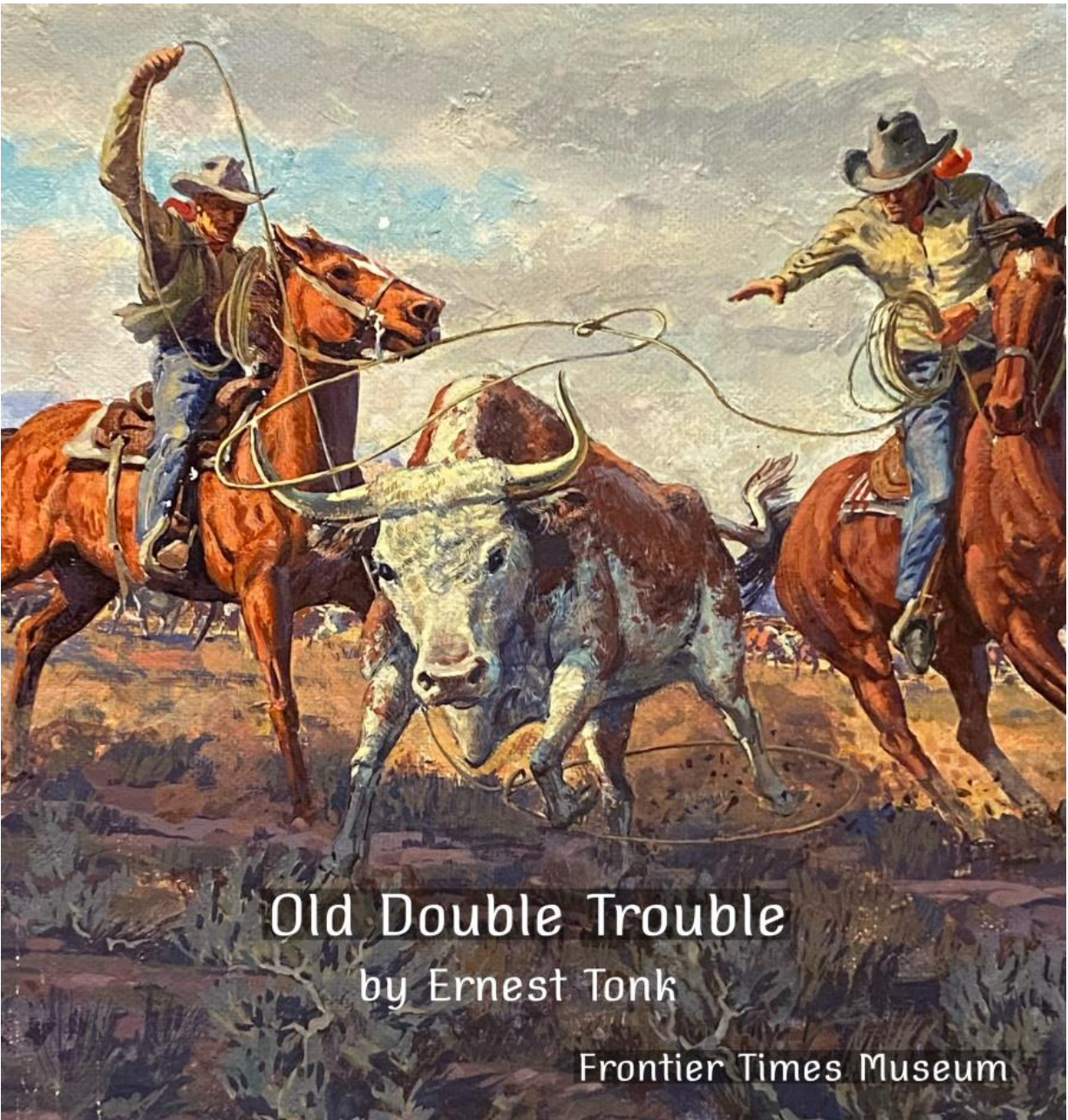
Fold a sheet of paper in half length-wise. Put "THEN" at the top of the left hand side & "NOW" at the top of the right hand side. Come up with a list of five differences between writing tools in the Pioneer Days and now.

→ Need More Ideas for Your Chart?

Take a look at this video:

→ [Charleswood Historical Museum Old One Room Schoolhouse](#)

Lasso



A lasso is a loop of stiff rope designed to be thrown around a target—typically wild horses or cattle, in the cowboy days. Once thrown around the animal, the lasso would be pulled, tightening the rope around the animal. American cowboys learned this style of roping from Mexican Cowboys—or, Vaqueros. Nowadays we have “trick-ropers” who do lots of fun tricks with lassos, but in the cowboy days, they were very useful tools!

→ [Watch Bandera's Trick Roper: Kevin Fitzpatrick](#)

Rope Samples



Rope was made with a variety of fibers—whatever was sturdy and could be found nearby. Take a close look at the rope samples in the Traveling Trunk. Compare and contrast. Are they scratchy or smooth? Are the strands tightly-wound or loose and scraggly? Most cowboy ropes were made out of ...

Horse Hair • Braided Rawhide • Cotton
Seagrass • Mexican Maguey Fiber • Sisal

→Take a Close Look ...

Look at and touch each piece of rope in the trunk carefully. Fold a piece of paper into fourths and write down the following in each section:

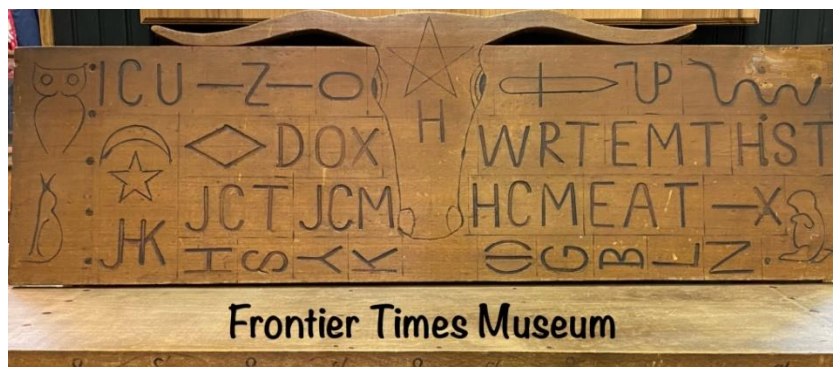
- 1) A list of five words describing the ropes and textures (grab a thesaurus if desired!).
- 2) A list of three things the ropes might've been used for.
- 3) What materials ranching ropes might be made out of today.
- 4) Make a sketch of one of the pieces of rope.

Branding Iron



Branding Iron

Branding Irons were used for marking livestock as a way to identify the owner of each head of cattle. In the pioneer and ranching days, branding irons were heated and pressed into the skin of the cattle, leaving a permanent mark. An American tradition was to incorporate initials into their branding marks.



Frontier Times Museum

→Just Imagine ...

Imagine for a moment that you owned a cowboy ranch in Texas. Take a piece of paper, fold it in half. In each half, design a brand for your ranch and explain in two or three sentences the meaning of your brand.

Horseshoe



A Farrier Shoeing a Horse

Horseshoes, made of metal on the frontier, are used to protect the horses' hooves from too much wear and tear. Horseshoes are attached to the hooves of the horses using nails—the hooves have no nerve endings, so the horses feel no pain during this process—similar to the way you feel no pain when you clip your fingernails. Farriers are the workers who put the horseshoes on.

→Horse Shoeing Beginner Class ...

Get a square piece of paper and fold the four corners to the middle, creating four triangles. Write the one of the following words on each triangle: 1) Hoof Pick 2) Trimming 3) Rasp 4) Hoof Wall

Click on the link below and on the inside of each triangle, write a brief explanation for its key word(s) for shoeing a horse. Use a dictionary for extra help, if needed!

[→How to Shoe a Horse](#)

Spur



Spurs are metal devices placed near the base of a cowboy boot. They are used to help cowboys direct the horses—they are usually reserved for more urgent situations, however. Horses do well with just a nudge from the foot or calf of the cowboy, but a firm push with spurs indicates to the horse that more haste is required. There are lots of different kinds of spurs. Compare the spurs in this photo to the one in the trunk. What are the similarities? What are the differences?

→ **Varieties of Spurs ...**

Take a close look at the spur in the trunk and the spurs in the image above. Take a piece of paper, fold it in half lengthwise and make a list of five differences between the two style of spurs.

→ **Take a Look at These Spurs**

Which are your favorite?

Describe them on the bottom of your piece of paper.

Heart-Shaped Stirrup



Stirrups are light frames to hold the foot of a horse rider. They are attached to the saddle by a strap. Stirrups are helpful for mounting a horse and offer nice foot support while riding. They also help the rider to stay in the saddle! Occasionally you can find specially-designed stirrups—like the heart-shaped one in the Traveling Trunk and pictured above (probably used for a young girl)—but most stirrups have a more basic shape and design.

→ [The Importance of Stirrups](#)

→ Read the first paragraph in the link above. Write a short paragraph paraphrasing (no copying word-for-word!) why stirrups are considered to be so important.

→ [More Stirrup Images](#)

→ Click the link above to see a wide variety of stirrups.

At the bottom of your page, describe a set of stirrups you find most intriguing. If desired, design and sketch a set of stirrups you would like to wear if you had a horse.

Barbed Wire Fence Samples



Barbed Wire fencing had its pros and cons. It really helped to keep cattle in a contained area. Those barbs were just too painful for them to break through. However, as more and more homesteaders put barbed wire fencing around their ranches, the ability for cowboys to herd their cattle to the railroads up north became tricky. Barbed wire fences kept getting in the way and they had to take roundabout passages to get their cattle to the train depots.

→ **Analyze and Ponder ...**

Take a careful look at the barbed wire samples in the trunk. Using the artifact gloves, very, very carefully, touch each strand of fencing. Take a piece of paper and fold it in half lengthwise. Keep it folded but cut three slits on the top layer, creating four flaps. On the front of each flap write one question about barbed wire fence. On the inside of the flap, write the answer. On the reverse of your foldable, sketch the barbed wire design (from the trunk) you find most intriguing. Below are a few resources to help:

→ [Barbed Wire—National Cowboy Museum](#)

→ [10 Facts About Barbed Wired](#)

→ [Barbed Wire - Kidz Search](#)

Sunbonnets



Sunbonnets were a very important accessory for girls and women in the cowboy and pioneer days. They were worn to keep the sun away from the face. An extra ruffle in the back was to protect the neck as well. Sometimes fancier sunbonnets were worn to church on Sundays.

→What do you think?

Take a piece of paper and fold it twice, creating four almost-square sections. Write the following in each quarter section:

- 1) Using a thesaurus, come up with seven words describing the face of this girl in a sunbonnet.
- 2) List three things you can suppose from this photo.
- 3) Write down two questions you would like to ask this girl.
- 4) How would you feel if you had to switch places with [this girl](#)?

Split Drawers

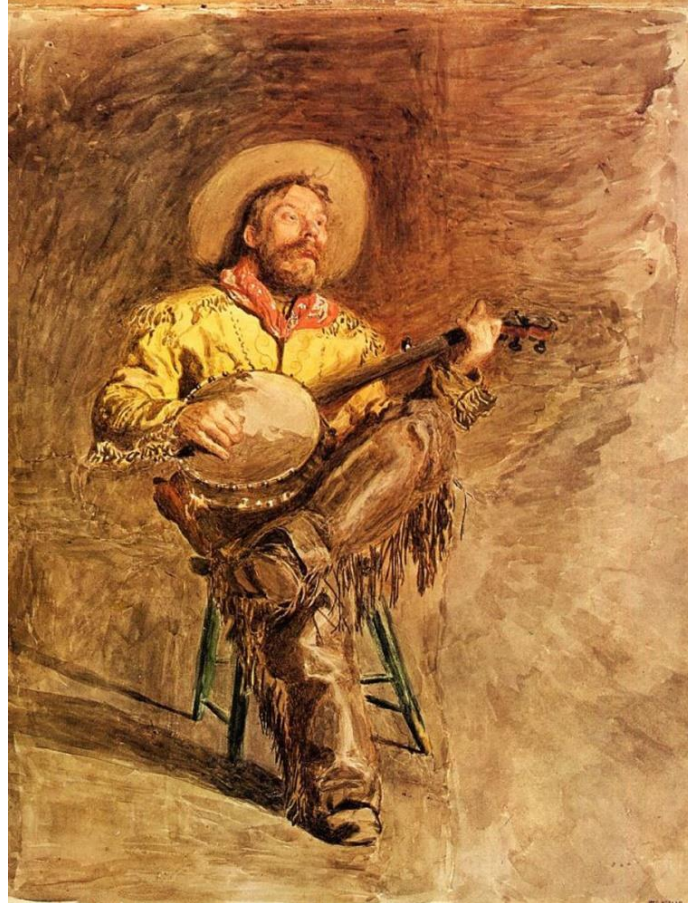


In the pioneer days, split drawers were a handy undergarment for girls and women. The split in the modestly-overlapping fabric made using a privy or outhouse a much more practical situation.



→ **What would you use?** Brainstorm with a friend—what would you do if you had no zippers or elastic? Make a list of what would you use instead to keep your clothing intact. Write down how would you like living without elastic or zippers? (or modern bathrooms!)

Other Western Clothing



Bandanas—Usually made out of cotton and large in size. They helped to absorb sweat and shield the cowboys from the dust and sun. Sometimes cowboys would dip the bandanas in water to help keep their necks cool.

Cowboy Shirts—Were usually long-sleeved to protect arms from the sun and scratchy shrubs. They were typically made out of cotton for the warm months, and flannel or wool for the cooler months.

Cowboy Hats—Evolved from the wide-brimmed sombreros of the Mexican Cowboys (Vaqueros). The wide brims kept the sun out of their eyes and offered protection from rain and sleet.

→ **Compare & Contrast ...**

Take a sheet of paper and fold it in half lengthwise. On the left column, write: Bandanas, Cowboys Shirts, and Cowboys Hats—with about 5 lines in between each item. On the right side column, write things that people wear nowadays instead of these western wear items.

→ **Answer This ...** How would you like wearing Western Clothing? Would it be fun? Practical? Functional? Comfortable? Convenient?

Rag Doll



Rag Dolls are dolls pioneer and ranching mothers made for their children out of scraps of fabric and other materials.

→No-Sew Pioneer Rag Doll Pattern

With a few scraps of fabric, a bit of string, and some scissors, you can try this pattern for a No-Sew Pioneer Rag Doll.

→Would You Rather ... This doll may look overly-simple to you, but in the Pioneer Days, your choice was to have no toys at all, or a handmade toy. Which would you prefer?