

Settling the Shenandoah

Standards of Learning

Virginia Studies: VS.4b

Objective

Students will:

- Identify the cultural influences of the German and Scotch-Irish settlers on the landscape of the Shenandoah Valley by creating a home or barn in the architectural style used by the German and Scotch-Irish

Materials

- US Map (on overhead)
- markers
- construction paper
- glue
- popsicle sticks
- markers/crayons
- modeling clay

Background Knowledge

During the 1700s German and Scotch-Irish immigrants began to settle in the Shenandoah Valley. Most traveled along the migration route, also called the “Great Wagon Road,” from Pennsylvania in search of affordable land on which to farm and build their communities. They formed communities of farmsteads and raised livestock and grain. Their heritage can be seen reflected in their architecture. The Germans brought with them their knowledge of log construction and bank barns. German homes were made using the plentiful timber, as well as limestone, from the Shenandoah region. The space between the logs and/or stones was then “daubed” using clay, lime, sand, and straw. Additionally, they built bank barns, which were two-story barns that were built into the slope of a hill.

While the Scotch-Irish typically lived in stone homes in their homeland, they adapted this style to the materials available (timber); thus living in log homes similar to the Germans. The Scotch-Irish are credited with spreading the “log cabin” style across the American frontier.

Procedure

1. Ask students to imagine that they have been chosen to settle a deserted island. What would their buildings look like?
2. Ask students what factors would influence the building of their houses. Would they want to build something to remind them of home? What resources would they have available? Discuss with students that they would have to rely on materials of the island.
3. Tell students that the early settlers of Virginia took the same factors into account as they settled Virginia and built their homes, barns, and other buildings. They brought with them knowledge and customs from their home countries and combined this with the resources that were available.
4. Put a map of the US on the overhead. Have a student trace the migration route that many Scotch-Irish and German settlers took from Pennsylvania to the Shenandoah Valley of Virginia. Discuss reasons for migration; namely, the desire for affordable land.
5. Show pictures and discuss what the homes and barns of the Germans and Scotch-Irish looked like. (see Background Knowledge)



6. Pass out the following supplies to each student: one piece of construction paper, glue, markers, clay, and popsicle sticks.
7. Students will be creating a barn in the style of the German or Scotch-Irish.
8. Have students draw a square in the middle of their paper. In the square they are to glue popsicle sticks down horizontally, leaving a little space in between each.
9. Next, have students take glue and a little bit of clay to “daub” the spaces between the popsicle sticks.
10. Draw a triangle on top of the square, this is the roof.
11. Next draw the mountains and crop fields around the barn. German barns, in particular, were often built into the sides of mountains (thus, called bank barns) so they may draw this as well.

Extension

Create a 3-D barn by gluing the popsicle sticks and clay to the sides of a tissue box.

Take a field trip to the Frontier Culture Museum in Staunton, Virginia. Visit their website to learn more, www.frontier.virginia.gov.

References

www.frontier.virginia.gov

www.virginiavignettes.org

www.virginia.org

