
Travel in the 1800's & Wagon Wheel Assembly

Social Studies Standards

E.1.K.1 Discuss needs and wants and how they are restricted by limited resources.

G.1.K.6 Identify the influence of weather and climate on people's daily lives.

H.1.K.3 Compare the life of a student today (present) to the life of a student in the past using visual representations (e.g., growing food, rules and laws, making clothing, transportation, communication).

H.1.K.7 Describe materials and methods that allow people to learn about the past (e.g., photos, artifacts, diaries, oral history, stories)

G.1.1.6 Describe the influence of weather, climate, and physical characteristics on people's daily lives.

G.1.1.7 Explain ways people utilize natural resources such as timber, minerals, oil, coal, and natural gas in their community.

H.1.1.1 Explain similarities and differences of everyday life in different times using chronological terms.

H.1.1.3 Compare present day families, objects, and events with those in the past using visual representations, news stories, and artifacts (e.g., daily life tasks, food, clothing, transportation, communication, recreation).

H.1.1.7 Draw conclusions about life in the past using historical records and artifacts (e.g., photos, diaries, oral history).

G.1.2.6 Explain the influence of weather, climate, and physical characteristics on people's daily lives in a place or region.

H.1.2.3 Compare life in a community past and present using maps, photographs, news stories, artifacts, or interviews (e.g., transportation, communication, recreation, jobs, housing).

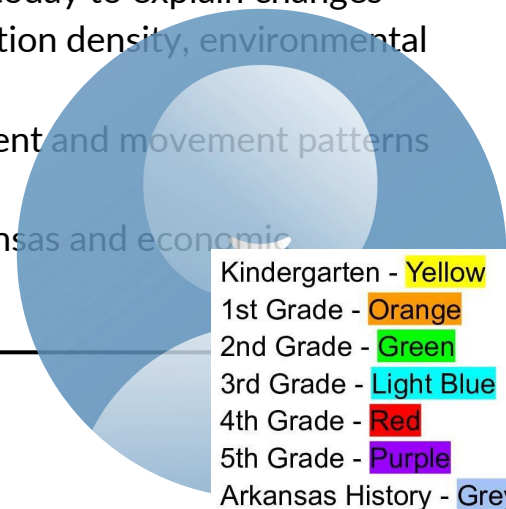
G.1.3.6 Investigate the influence of physical characteristics upon people's choices in Arkansas and the United States (i.e., where people live and work).

H.1.3.3 Compare life from a specific historical time period to life today noting changes over time (e.g., transportation, jobs, urban growth, population density, natural resources, communication).

H.1.4.3 Compare life from a specific historical time period to life today to explain changes over time (e.g., economic growth, urbanization, resources, population density, environmental issues).

G.1.ARH.5 Analyze the impact of geographic features on settlement and movement patterns around the state.

G.1.ARH.6 Analyze relationships between the geography of Arkansas and economic development over time.



Vocabulary

Wagon:

platform on wheels pulled by livestock

Stagecoach:

a carriage pulled by horses that carries people and mail

Steamboat:

A boat that moves by the power of a steam engine

Steam Train:

a train that is powered by a steam engine.

Steam Engine:

an engine that uses the expansion or rapid condensation of steam to generate power.

Sultana:

A paddlewheel steamboat that exploded on the Mississippi river

Context

In the 1800s, Arkansas was a young state, having been admitted to the Union in 1836. The state was predominantly rural, with vast areas of wilderness and few developed roads. Travel was arduous and time-consuming, and the means of transportation available were limited and often dictated by the terrain and seasons.

Modes of Travel

1. On Foot:

The most basic form of travel was walking, particularly for short distances. Many early settlers traveled on foot due to the lack of affordable transportation options.

2. Horseback:

Common for both short and long distances. Horses were valuable assets, and horseback travel was faster than walking. Saddle bags were used to carry goods and personal belongings.

3. Wagons:

Wagons were larger, sturdier vehicles pulled by horses, mules, or oxen. Used for transporting goods, families, and supplies, especially for long journeys like westward migration.

4. Stagecoaches:

Stagecoaches were used for longer travel between towns and cities. Stagecoach routes connected more developed areas, providing scheduled transport of passengers and mail. Travel by stagecoach was relatively expensive and uncomfortable, with rough roads and limited amenities.

5. River Travel:

Rivers were vital transportation routes, especially the Arkansas and Mississippi rivers

- Flatboats: Simple, flat-bottomed boats used for downstream travel, often dismantled and sold for lumber at the journey's end.

- Keelboats: Larger, more durable boats that could travel upstream, though requiring significant manpower or towing by animals.

- Steamboats: By the 1840s, steamboats had become an important mode of transportation for passengers and goods, particularly on major rivers. They provided a relatively faster and more comfortable travel option.

6. Roads and Trails:

Roads were often little more than dirt paths, becoming muddy and impassable in bad weather. Major trails like the Southwest Trail (also known as the National Road) connected Arkansas with other states and facilitated westward migration. Bridges were rare, and travelers often had to ford rivers and streams.

Context

Challenges of Travel

1. Terrain:

Arkansas's diverse landscape, including mountains, forests, and rivers, posed significant challenges. Roads were often rough, poorly maintained, and difficult to navigate.

2. Weather:

Rain could turn dirt roads into quagmires, and snow or ice could make travel treacherous. Hot, dry summers could also make travel exhausting and increase the risk of dehydration.

3. Health and Safety:

Travel was physically demanding and could be dangerous due to accidents, diseases, and encounters with wildlife. Limited medical care and the risk of injury or illness posed serious concerns for travelers.

4. Supplies and Provisions:

Travelers needed to carry sufficient food, water, and supplies, as inns and stores were scarce. Wagon trains and caravans often traveled together for mutual support and safety.

Cultural and Social Aspects

1. Community and Communication:

Travel was a significant social event, often involving multiple families or groups. Stagecoach stations and river ports served as hubs of communication and commerce, where news and goods were exchanged.

2. Economic Impact:

Travel and transportation were crucial for trade and the economy, enabling the movement of agricultural products, timber, and other goods. The development of transportation infrastructure, such as roads and river ports, was essential for the state's growth and integration into national markets.

Context

Teaching Tips

- Visual Aids: Use maps, illustrations of transportation methods, and pictures of typical 1800s Arkansas landscapes.
- Hands-on Activities: Simulate packing a wagon for a journey or constructing a simple model of a flatboat.
- Primary Sources: Included are diary entries from people who traveled through or settled in Arkansas during the 1800s.
- Comparative Analysis: Compare and contrast 1800s travel methods with modern transportation. Discuss the impact of technological advancements on travel time and safety.

Discussion Questions:

- What were the main challenges of traveling in 1800s Arkansas?
- How did the different modes of travel impact the daily lives of people in Arkansas?
- In what ways did travel and transportation influence the economic development of Arkansas?

Understanding travel in 1840s Arkansas can help students appreciate the hardships and resilience of early settlers and the importance of transportation in shaping the state's history.

Primary Source Analysis

On the following pages are primary sources for teachers to review with their students. As you review the materials, promote student inquiry. Be sure to ask them about things that they notice or things that they wonder. You may also ask students about the author's purpose, how this source ties into what they have learned in class or from prior knowledge.

Analyze a Photograph



Meet the photo.

What do you see?

Is the photo?

☐ BLACK AND WHITE ☐ COLOR

Is there a caption?

☐ YES ☐ NO

If so, what does the caption tell you?



Observe its parts.

Circle what you see in the photo.



PEOPLE



OBJECTS



BOTH

What are the people doing in the photo?

What are the objects used for in the photo?

Write two words that describe the photo.

Try to make sense of it.

Who do you think took this photo?

Where do you think this photo was taken?

List something that helps you prove where it was taken.

Why do you think the photo was taken?

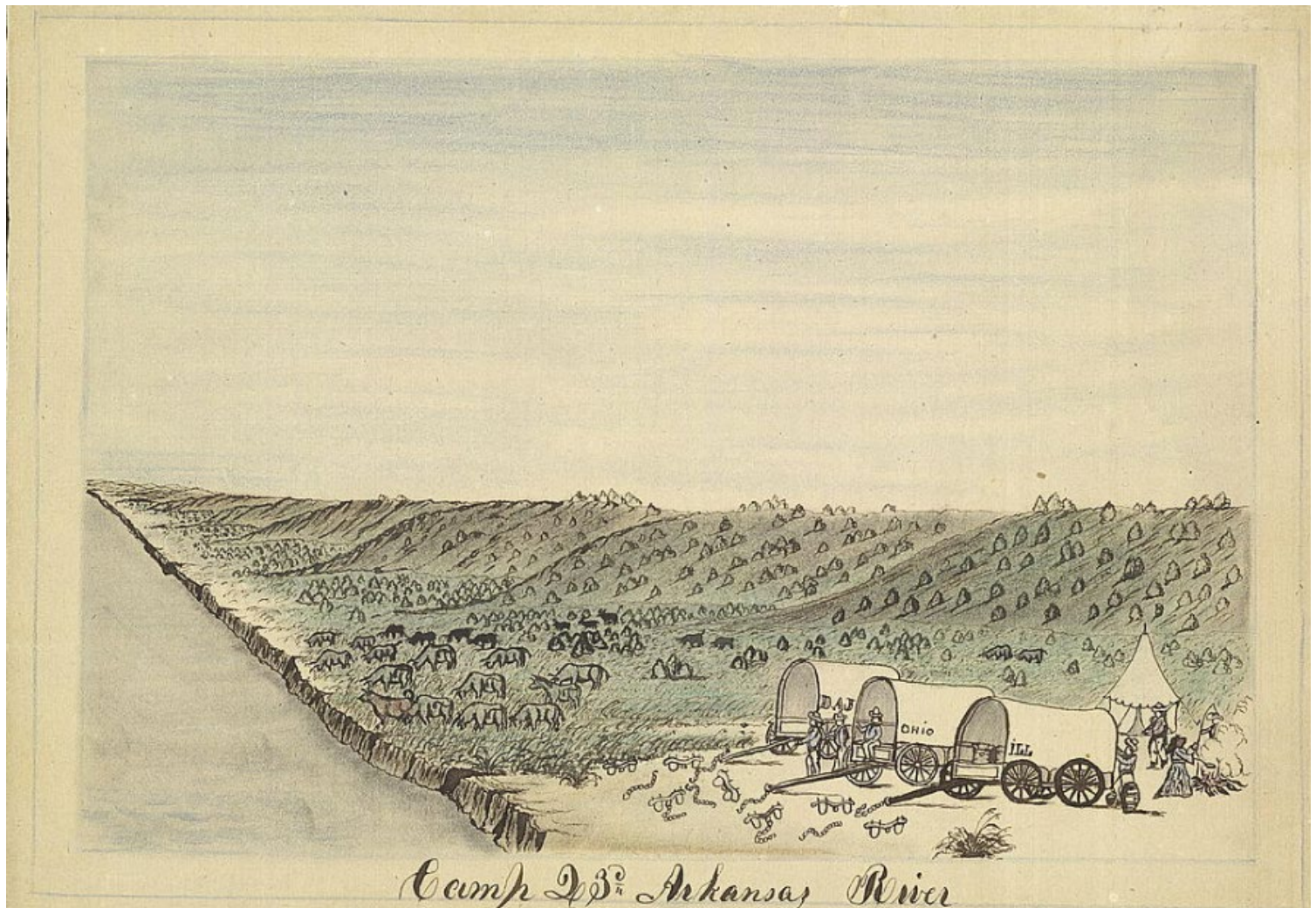
How does this photo compare to modern times?

Use it as historical evidence.

Where do you think you could find out more information about the people or objects in the photo?



Image ~ "Camp 23rd Arkansas River"



Drawing shows a tent and three covered wagons camped on the Arkansas River, lower right. Horses and cows graze near the banks of the river. Horses and oxen graze to the left. Travel over land was usually done in large wagons such as those drawn here by Daniel Jenks in 1859. Notice how the wagons look, are they what you would imagine?

Jenks, Daniel A. *Camp 23rd Arkansas River*, 1859, drawing on paper. Library of Congress, accessed October 7, 2024, <https://www.loc.gov/item/2004661631/>.

Analyze a Written Document



Meet the document.

Are there any special markings on the document? Circle all that apply.



STAMP



POSTMARK



HANDWRITTEN



OFFICIAL
SEAL



SPECIAL
LETTERHEAD



OTHER

Is it handwritten or typed?



BOTH

Write down any words that you don't know. Then look up the definitions.



Try to make sense of it.

What is the main idea of the document?

List two quotes (words from the document) that help support the main idea.

Observe its parts.

Who wrote this document?

What is the date of the document?

Who read or received this document?



Use it as historical evidence.

Where do you think you could find out more information about the persons who wrote or received this document?

Where do you think you could find out more information about this event?



Document ~ Letter from A. M. Woodruff, February 6, 1850. (Part 1)

Curtis Creek, California, February 6, 1850

I believe I gave you a description of our journey up to Albuquerque, where I wrote you last while in New Mexico. After leaving Albuquerque, we passed down the Rio Grande about two hundred and fifty miles, passing on our route several Indian villages, ranchos, and the town of Socorro, where there is a force of dragoons stationed. Socorro contains about five hundred inhabitants, but like all Mexican towns, is a dirty, filthy place. We lay by here one day to recruit our teams for a long drive to the next camp on the Rio Grande. We left the river about thirty-five miles above El Paso and took Colonel Cook's trail (a very circuitous one) down through the state of Sonora, Mexico. Before leaving the river, we supplied ourselves with water for beast as well as for man, for a march of thirty-six miles on which we understood there was not a drop of water; but after marching about eighteen miles, we came to what is called Foster's Hole, a very large hole in a rock capable of holding one hundred barrels of water. At this place we watered our teams and traveled on, passing a large valley covered with fine grass and wild peas. We struck camp on the plain when night came (without water) and next morning about nine o'clock made the spring, where we had good water but very little grass. We lay by here the remainder of that day and part of the next.

It was at that place (and the only one) that we saw Indians. Mr. Thibault had strayed off from camp, hunting, and fell in with three Apache. When he first saw them, they were riding at a fast gait and seemed to be on the trail of something and did not perceive him until he hailed them and presented his gun. They halted and asked him in Spanish if he was an American. He replied that he was. The Indians were friendly to Americans, and one of them took him up behind and brought him into camp. The Indians were on the trail of a cow which had been given to them by an emigrant and which some Texans had driven off some two or three hours before. We gave them a note to the Texans, saying that they had claimed the cow of us, and they rode off down the road at full gallop after them. About sundown they returned with part of the cow and a note from the Texans, saying that they had killed the cow before the Indians had overtook them, and had bought part of it of them for a pistol, percussion cap, and some other little articles, which they showed us. They promised to return in the morning with mules and horses to trade. But when they came, there were so many wishing to trade (Davis's and the Clarksville, Arkansas, companies had arrived over night) and were pulled and hauled about at such a rate, that they were frightened off and but very few trades made. If our company had been alone, we might have traded off our broken-down mules and horses and have got good fresh teams again.

This letter written by A.M. Woodruff, son of noted early Arkansan William Woodruff, details a few moments of the long and strenuous journey overland to California. This letter was written upon arrival in February of 1850, when do you think A.M. Woodruff left Arkansas?

Woodruff, Alden M. "The Gila Route to California," *Arkansas State Gazette and Democrat*, April 26, 1850,

<https://www.newspapers.com/article/weekly-arkansas-gazette-the-gila-route-t/36232220/>

Document ~ Letter from A. M. Woodruff, February 6, 1850. (Part 2)

We left this place about three o'clock in the evening and traveled about twelve miles to the next water. We reached the Rio Mimbres next day, a distance of about twenty-five miles. Here I drank the best water I had tasted since I left home. It was equal to ice water. Next day we camped near Ojo de Vaca (Cow Spring), where we lay by one day for the Lincoln Company to overtake us. Here we made a great fire on a high hill, to get some Indians to come into camp to trade with, but none came. After leaving Ojo de Vaca, we traveled fourteen miles to the next camp, but in getting there were found that the water had dried up. We, of course, jogged along, hoping every mile to find water; but on we went until late at night and no water. Two of my mules gave out about eight o'clock, and I was obliged to lay by for the night. Some of the teams got to the spring that night but were not able to get water, there being so many teams ahead of them. I got to the place about 9 o'clock next morning but could get no water except for my own use. But luckily for us, some holes of water were found about a mile from the road. We, of course, kept it to ourselves until our animals had drunk their fill. We left this place for Dry Lake, about fifteen miles distant, and could get no water for our mules. Next morning we heard there was water about two miles distant, and immediately packed up and drove down, where we found a large well which afforded an abundance of water, such as it was. It was clear and cool enough but tasted strong of decayed vegetation. We lay by here one day.

Nothing of any consequence transpired until we reached Guadalupe pass, the worst place for wagons to travel over I ever saw. It was almost perpendicular for two miles. We had to take off our mules and let our wagons down with ropes, etc. After getting to the bottom, we traveled down a canyon for some twelve miles or more, crossing a stream that ran through it some thirty-five or forty times in that distance. About the twenty-fifth August we arrived at Santa Cruz, one of the frontier towns of Mexico. It was at this place that I traded off my pinchbeck jewelry to very good advantage. For that which cost me about seventy-five cents, I got two and one-half bushels of unbolted flour, several pounds of sugar, and several other little articles. It was a long time before I could get the women to bring their flour to my wagon, but I finally devised a plan. Add. S. Borrowed a fiddle and sat on the wagon pole and played, while I sat in the wagon and dealt out jewelry to the women for their flour and anything else that they had for sale. After we shut up shop, Add. And some of the boys invited the women out and had a fandango.

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Document ~ Letter from A. M. Woodruff, February 6, 1850. (Part 3)

We left Santa Cruz and traveled down the Santa Cruz river. We passed through one of the most beautiful valleys I ever saw. All Along the banks we found deserted towns, ranchos, and furnaces. The whole country abound sin rich gold and silver mines. But as son as a town or rancho is built, the Apache tear it down and kill all the males and carry off all the females. The valley is covered with mesquite timber and is the finest grazing country (except California) I ever saw. We traveled down the river about one hundred miles to Tucson, where to protect the inhabitants, but as son as they go outside the town, the Apache drive them again. They are like all Mexican soldiery. After leaving Tucson, the next seventy-five miles of our road to the Gila river was through a perfect desert. In the dry season there is not a single drop of water and but little or no grass. But luckily for us, there had been several rains, and we found holes of water all along the road. And there was considerable young grass springing up, which helped amazingly, but it was only in spots that we found this. It was in the midst of this barren waste that we lost William Fagan, one of the best young men in our company...

It took us four or five days to make the Gila, when we found what little grass there was, eaten close to the ground. We found here the Pima Indians, represented by Lieutenant Emory as the most innocent and harmless race of Indians on the continent. We camped among them one night, and next morning we were minus our lead line; and almost every wagon lost some article from their wagon or harness. They might have been honest when Emory was among them, but they have learned bad manners since. We bought corn, fodder, wheat, melons, and such things from the Pima. They asked high prices in money, but a hickory shirt would go as far as five dollars with them.

We traveled down the river three or four days and found no grass – we had plenty of corn and wheat – but we soon learned how to find grass. We had to swim our stock over to the bars and islands, which were subject to overflow, and on some found plenty of fine grass. It was on this river that my best two mules (Pol and Bill) were ruined by getting mired in the quicksand. After my mules were broken down, I had to swap off both for one, leave my wagon, and pack. We traveled about twenty days down the Gila before getting to the crossing of the Colorado, when we crossed in a boat made by some people from Pope county, Arkansas. Burke Johnson was among them. We paid them \$1.25 to cross our packs and had to swim our mules. Pierce lost his mule in swimming.

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Document ~ Letter from A. M. Woodruff, February 6, 1850. (Part 4)

We left the Colorado and started into the Great Desert, and camped at the first well, about fifteen miles from the river. Here we had to tie up our mules without anything to eat except a few mesquite beans, and at twelve o'clock that night made out to get all our animals watered. The well yielded about a pailful every fifteen minutes. Next morn we drove our mules about twelve miles from the road, where we found plenty of beans. We gathered all we could, and after letting our mules eat their fill from under the trees, we packed up and started for the next wells, about twenty miles distant. When we got to the wells we found them dry. We wandered about hunting water until after dark, when we heard some one halloo. We went to them and found them to be Keats and mess, who had started before us in the morning. They had found some holes of water, which our poor mules waded into with a rush. We had to tie up that night without anything for our mules to eat, and next morning we made New river, about twelve miles distant. Here we found plenty of water and grass. There is something strange about this river. It had sprung up about six months before, and its banks were lined with fine grass, all the growth of a few months. We stayed here about five hours, and started for the next well (five miles), now a lake formed by New river; after watering, started for the next well (a lake also), which we made about eight o'clock. We fed this night on beans which we had taken care to supply ourselves with at the river. We left next morning and made Carrizo creek that day, a distance of about thirty miles. Next day we made Vallecito. Here we found a little grass and plenty of Sulphur water. We lay by here one day, and the next made San Felipe, where we had good grass and water. Here we all concluded that we would go down to San Diego and take the steamer; so next day we packed up and took a mule trail, which cut off some thirty miles, and camped that night at Santa Isabella. Here we had quite a feast on peaches and grapes. We lay by one day, and next drive made Santa Maria, and next evening about eight o'clock we made the old mission of San Diego, five miles from the town, passing in the eve the rancho Santa Monica. Next day we drove to within half a mile of town and camped, to await the arrival of the steamer. We were at San Diego five days before the steamer arrived, when we all took steerage passage. It went mighty hard. And in three days were in San Fransisco; and in a fortnight more we were in the diggings.

A.M.W.

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Analyze a Written Document



Meet the document.

Are there any special markings on the document? Circle all that apply.



STAMP



POSTMARK



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OFFICIAL
SEAL



SPECIAL
LETTERHEAD



OTHER

Is it handwritten or typed?



Write down any words that you don't know. Then look up the definitions.



Try to make sense of it.

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List two quotes (words from the document) that help support the main idea.

Observe its parts.

Who wrote this document?

What is the date of the document?

Who read or received this document?



Use it as historical evidence.

Where do you think you could find out more information about the persons who wrote or received this document?

Where do you think you could find out more information about this event?



– Document ~ "California Outfits, &c."

California Outfits, &c.
WAGON-MAKING
AND WHEELWRIGHT ESTABLISHMENT.



THE subscriber respectfully informs Emigrants to California, and the public generally, that having on hand a good supply of seasoned timber, he is prepared to furnish them with

WAGON BEDS,
RUNNING GEAR,
ODD AXLE TREES, BOLSTERS, &c.
Also, Mending and Repairing,
In all its branches.

All orders in his line will meet with prompt attention, and executed in a strong and workmanlike manner, on reasonable terms.

JOSEPH HAWKINS,
Feb. 17, 1849. Main street.

To travel all the way to California from Arkansas you would need a sturdy wagon. Just like automotive companies today, there were several wagon companies who specialized in building wagons for the overland journey.

"California Outfits, &c" *The Arkansas Intelligencer*, February 17, 1849,
<https://www.newspapers.com/article/arkansas-intelligencer-california-outfit/156720716/>

Analyze an Artifact or Object



Meet the Artifact.

What do you think it is?

Observe its parts.

What do you think the object is made out of? Circle all that apply.



BONE



CERAMIC
POTTERY



FABRIC



GLASS



LEATHER



METAL



PAPER



PLASTIC



STONE



WOOD

How do you think the object feels?

Circle all that apply.



HEAVY



LIGHT



SMOOTH



ROUGH



HARD



SOFT

What is the color of the object?

What is the shape of the object?

What size is the object? Circle one.

SMALL



LIKE A
COIN

MEDIUM



LIKE A
BASKETBALL

LARGE



LIKE A
CAR

What are three words that describe the object?

Try to make sense of it.

What do you think the object was used for?

Who do you think would have used the object?

What does the object tell us about the time period when it was made and used?

Do we still use this object today? If so, how is it different?



Use it as historical evidence.

Where do you think you could find out more information about the object or the people who used it?



Artifact ~ Spokeshave



A spokeshave is a tool used to create the spokes of a wagon wheel. This spokeshave was owned by Little Rock craftsman named August Linzel.

Spokeshave, c. 1869, wood & metal, Accession# 87.029.0013. Historic Arkansas Museum, Little Rock, AR.