
Visit the Blacksmith Shop



Social Studies Standards

Kindergarten - Yellow
1st Grade - Orange
2nd Grade - Green
3rd Grade - Light Blue
4th Grade - Red
5th Grade - Purple
Arkansas History - Grey

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).

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).

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.3.5.5 Describe the different types of economic activities supported by natural resources within a region

H.1.ARH.1 Evaluate the significance of historical events and periods in early Arkansas

Vocabulary

Forge:

a workplace where metal is worked by heating and hammering

Anvil:

iron block used in hammering out metals

Steel:

a strong, hard metal made of iron and carbon

Coal:

a type of rock commonly used for fueling fires

Cutter:

tool used on an anvil to cut metal

Header:

tool used in a blacksmith shop to shape the heads of nails and bolts

Context

In the 1800s, Arkansas was a frontier state with an economy based on agriculture and self-sufficiency. Blacksmiths were vital to these communities, providing necessary services and tools that supported daily life and economic activities. The blacksmith shop was a central part of every town and settlement.

The Role of the Blacksmith

1. Essential Services:

Blacksmiths crafted and repaired tools, equipment, and household items. They provided services essential to farming, transportation, and construction. Common products included plows, hoes, axes, nails, horseshoes, wagon parts, and hardware.

2. Community Hub:

Blacksmith shops were often social gathering places where news and information were exchanged. The blacksmith was a respected and integral member of the community, often involved in local affairs.

Blacksmithing Tools and Techniques

1. Tools of the Trade:

- Forge: A furnace used to heat metal until it is malleable. Forges were typically fueled by coal or charcoal.
- Anvil: A heavy iron block on which the blacksmith hammered hot metal into shape.
- Hammer: Various types and sizes were used for different tasks.
- Tongs: Used to hold and manipulate hot metal.
- Bellows: Devices used to blow air into the forge to increase the temperature of the fire
- Chisels, Punches, and Swages: Tools for cutting, shaping, and finishing metal.

2. Materials:

- Iron: The primary metal used in blacksmithing. Wrought iron was preferred for its malleability and durability.
- Steel: Used for making cutting tools and implements due to its hardness and ability to hold a sharp edge.

3. Techniques:

- Forging: Heating metal in the forge and shaping it with hammers and other tools.
 - Drawing Out: Lengthening metal by hammering it.
 - Upsetting: Shortening and thickening metal by hammering it.
 - Bending and Twisting: Shaping metal into curves and spirals.
 - Welding: Joining pieces of metal by heating and hammering them together.
 - Hardening and Tempering: Processes to increase the hardness and durability of steel.
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Context

The Blacksmith's Shop

1. Layout and Structure:

Typically a simple building with a central forge, an anvil near the forge, and tools and materials organized around the workspace. The shop needed good ventilation due to the heat and smoke from the forge.

2. Work Environment:

Blacksmithing was physically demanding and required skill, strength, and endurance. The shop was hot, noisy, and filled with the smell of burning coal and hot metal.

Economic and Social Impact

1. Supporting Agriculture:

Blacksmiths made and repaired farm tools and equipment, which were essential for agricultural productivity. They were instrumental in the maintenance of wagons and plows, crucial for farming and transportation.

2. Facilitating Transportation:

Blacksmiths shod horses and mules, which were primary means of transportation and work animals. They repaired and manufactured wagon parts, keeping the essential vehicles in working order.

3. Crafting Everyday Items:

Blacksmiths produced household items such as cookware, utensils, and hinges. Their work supported local economies by enabling other trades and crafts.

Challenges and Changes

1. Supply and Demand:

Access to raw materials like iron and coal could be limited, affecting production capabilities. The demand for blacksmithing services varied with economic and seasonal cycles.

2. Skill and Training:

Becoming a blacksmith required years of apprenticeship to learn the necessary skills. Mastery of the trade involved both practical skills and creative problem-solving.

Context

Teaching Tips

- Visual Aids: Provided are pictures or replicas of blacksmith tools and a layout of a typical blacksmith shop.
- Hands-on Activities: At the Historic Arkansas Museum, you will visit a working blacksmith shop.
- Primary Sources: Included are diary entries, letters, or accounts from blacksmiths or community members from the 1800s.
- Comparative Analysis: Compare blacksmithing techniques from the 180s with modern metalworking.

Discussion Questions:

- What was the role of the blacksmith in 1800s Arkansas communities?
- How did blacksmiths contribute to the agricultural and economic development of their towns?
- What skills and tools were essential for a blacksmith to perform their work?

Understanding blacksmithing in 1840s Arkansas provides students with insights into the daily lives of people during this period, the importance of skilled trades, and the impact of technological changes on traditional crafts.

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.

Use it as historical evidence.

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



Image ~ "Politics in the Workshop"



Notice the common forge construction. As well as its close vicinity to the anvil.

Waterman, Thomas, *Politics in the Workshop*, 1867, Oil on canvas. Crystal Bridges Museum of American Art, Bentonville, AR, accessed October 7, 2024, <https://crystalbridges.emuseum.com/objects/113/politics-in-the-workshop?ctx=b6051dc84d913dab089aa279c20f691065849ab2&idx=0>

Analyze a Written Document



Meet the document.

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



STAMP



POSTMARK



HANDWRITTEN
NOTE



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 ~ "For Sale, Lease, or Rent."

FOR SALE, LEASE, OR RENT.



THE plantation whereon the subscriber formerly resided, known as Jericho, in Pulaski county, lying on the head waters of Fourche creek, about 16 miles from Little Rock, on the direct mail route to the Hot Springs, at which place a post-office is established.— There is near 200 acres of cleared land, with good improvements, and under good fence and repair, with a good horse mill, and Blacksmith shop and tools.

I will also sell a portion of the crop grown on the place, and stock of hogs and cattle. Any person wishing to purchase or rent, will apply to the subscriber, living in Little Rock, from whom a bargain may be had and terms made easy for payment.

JAS. LAWSON, JR.
Little Rock, Dec. 5, 1846. 2—1f

This plantation lists a "Blacksmith shop and tools" as part of its assets. The reconstructed blacksmith shop at Historic Arkansas Museum was built next to structures moved from the Pemberton family's plantation on Plum Bayou in Pulaski County, which also had a blacksmith shop.

"For Sale, Lease, Or Rent," *Arkansas State Gazette*, December 12, 1846,
<https://www.newspapers.com/article/weekly-arkansas-gazette-blacksmith-plant/156357226/>

Document ~ "For Sale."

For Sale.

I HAVE seven likely negroes, which I will sell for Cash: a *man* of large stature, not surpassed as a *Blacksmith*, in the State; his brother, a good mechanic; *two others*, farm negroes; and three boys large enough for field hands. Also a woman and child, a good house *servant*. I would prefer selling them together. Title indisputable and free from all incumbrance. Any person wishing to purchase, and wanting a bargain will call upon me, or address me through the Post Office, at Lewisburg, Ark.

ELI BENTLY.

October 1 1845 3--tf.

Eli Bently placed this advertisement in the newspaper to sell seven people he enslaved. Listed first is a man "not surpassed as a *Blacksmith*, in the State;" his skills as a craftsman made him the most valuable of the group. The Historic Arkansas Museum's blacksmith shop is located on block 33 which was once the estate of Chester Ashley, who enslaved a blacksmith. The Pemberton family's plantation on Plum Bayou, partially relocated to block 33, had an enslaved blacksmith as well.

"For Sale" *Arkansas State Gazette*, October 15, 1845,
<https://www.newspapers.com/article/true-democrat-blacksmith-for-sale-true-d/156356608/>

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 ~ Anvil



Large English Colonial period anvil (18th century) in good condition with early features: block shaped, thick waste, pointed feet and one horn with no step surface. With square hardie hole, and round pritchel hole on flat end of top (possibly added later because the pritchel hold became common after 1820), hour glass shaped.

Anvil, 18th Century, Iron, 11.5h x 5.75w x 19.5l inches, Accession# 2010.053.0001. Historic Arkansas Museum, Little Rock, AR.

Artifact ~ Leg Vice



Early style leg vice with delicate turnings on the threaded nut segment and hot punched hole through one leg for the anchor attachment.

Catalog # 2010.053.0008

Leg Vice, no date, Iron, Accession# 2010.053.0008. Historic Arkansas Museum, Little Rock, AR.