



Iowa's One-Room Schools

Grade Level **5**

Class Periods **5**

plus one full day

Goals/Objectives/Student Outcomes:

Students will:

- Compare and contrast a school day in an Iowa one-room country school with that of their own.
- Demonstrate an understanding of the concept of consolidation by addressing issues such as why rural families wanted to keep one-room schools, and why some educators thought larger schools were better.
- Recognize ways in which the consolidation controversy continues today.

Materials:

1. Books and articles listed
2. Compare and contrast transparency, individual charts, newsprint chart
3. Materials used in country school as indicated above

Background:

(Excerpts from "Remembering One-Room Schools," *The Goldfinch* 16 (Fall 1994): 8-13.)

Pioneers who settled Iowa wanted to give their children a good life. They had traveled from the East to build new homes and grow crops on the wild, Iowa prairie. When settlers could support their families, they organized schools for their children.

Early Schools: 1830-1858

At first, children learned at home from mothers and older sisters. When more families settled in an area, parents organized local schools called subscription schools. Children could attend these schools as long as their parents shared the expenses for supplies and teachers. In 1839 a law passed by the territorial legislature made each county responsible for opening and maintaining public schools. Some counties did open schools, but many children did not attend because their parents needed them on the farm. If there was spare time, mothers, aunts, and friends would do their best to teach children to read and write.

Most of Iowa's early schoolhouses were log cabins. Students

sat on long wooden benches and worked on their lessons. When it came time for them to show what they had learned, they stood at the front of the room and recited what they had memorized. Blackboards were simple wooden boards painted black. White limestone was used instead of chalk, and erasers were made out of sheepskin. Textbooks were rare, and many kids learned from the few books they brought from home. Paper and pens were expensive so kids wrote on slates.

To improve Iowa's small unsupervised school system, the state legislature asked a famous educator, Horace Mann, to evaluate education in Iowa. In 1856, Mann told the legislature that all schools should be supported by school taxes. He also believed education should be available to all children, regardless of their race.

Township Schools: 1858-1872

In 1858, another law was passed, and each township in Iowa became responsible for organizing schools. These new school districts built schools and provided tuition-free elementary education to all children between the ages of five and twenty-one. Nine schoolhouses were built in each township and students only had to walk a mile or two to school. Townships elected school boards to hire teachers, buy supplies, and set the school calendar. Most schools were open for three terms—fall, winter, spring. Children did not legally have to attend school, and many kids, especially older boys, stayed home to help with farm chores. Some communities held school in private homes until a proper schoolhouse could be built.

Expanding Communities, Expanding Schools

As Iowa's population grew, school districts could afford to build more schools. By the turn of the century, Iowa's rural population had grown quickly, and there were almost 14,000 one-room schoolhouses across the state. Many schoolhouses looked alike. They were built from wooden boards and then painted bright red, white, or sometimes yellow. Some schools were brick or stone.

Students stored coats, boots, and lunches in the school entryway. Their desks stood in rows in the classroom. A woodburning stove blazed in the winter. Students who were lucky enough to sit close to the fire kept warm. Students in the back rows often shivered while they studied.

In the late 1800s and into the mid-1900s many Iowa kids were using standardized textbooks. Some of the most popular were McGuffey's Readers. First published in 1836, these books taught

kids reading, writing, spelling, public speaking, and history. William McGuffey's books also had strong morals—they taught students to stay away from tobacco and alcohol, respect their elders, be patriotic, and have good manners.

A compulsory education law was passed in 1902, and all children between the ages of seven and fourteen were required to attend school. The new attendance law increased school enrollment significantly. To prepare for new students, wooden country schoolhouses were painted inside and out, furniture updated, and teachers received higher salaries. Oil burning stoves were installed, maps were updated, library books were purchased, and paper and pencils replaced slates.

When electricity found its way to Iowa's rural communities in the 1930s and 1940s, many schoolhouses were wired for electricity. Conditions improved but country schools couldn't compete with urban schools that had more money and supplies. One-room schoolhouses were still in operation into the 1960s. But Iowans said a sad farewell to rural one-room schoolhouses when they joined with high-school districts and closed their doors by 1967.

Consolidating One-Room Schools

The movement to consolidate school districts was the beginning of the end for Iowa's one-room schools. Consolidation meant that all the school districts in certain areas would close their one-room schools and students would attend one centrally located school. In 1895, Iowa had almost 14,000 one-room schools—the largest number in the nation. Many educators and politicians thought these schools were behind the times. They believed country kids would benefit from larger schools where there were more teachers, better equipment, and where kids learned with students all their own age.

But there were problems with consolidation. It required transportation to collect students from widespread farms and take them to school. Horse-drawn school buses, called hacks, moved slowly, and many parents didn't want their children to travel so far, leaving home before sunup and returning after dark. On days when rain turned dirt roads into seas of mud, hacks couldn't risk getting stuck in the mud to pick up all rural students.

Rural parents believed students would receive less personal attention in the large classrooms of a consolidated school than they did in the one-room schools. Kids in one-room schools often went to school with their brothers and sisters and they learned from each other, as well as the teacher. The rural schoolhouse was an extension of the family and the glue that held a community together. Parents didn't want that to change.

For some time, rural communities succeeded in keeping their one-room schools, and consolidation moved slowly in Iowa. In 1913, to encourage rural districts to consolidate, the state offered between \$500 and \$750 a year to any school that offered vocational and industrial courses. One-room schools were too small and poorly equipped to offer these classes, and the extra money went to the consolidated schools.

In 1919, the legislature passed a law ordering schools with fewer than ten students to close. By 1921, there were more than 400 consolidated schools compared to four in 1904. The 1920s farm depression and the Great Depression stalled school consolidation for almost thirty years.

After WWII the state government gave schools more money for rural school-bus transportation. Faster, gasoline-powered buses replaced horse-drawn hacks and more districts decided to consolidate. In 1953,

a new kind of consolidation began. Instead of consolidated districts, larger community districts were formed. Often these new districts combined two or more smaller consolidated districts. By the mid-1960s, Iowa had less than 1,000 school districts as compared to more than 4,000 ten years before.

In 1965, the legislature wrote the end of the story of the one-room school. It passed a law ordering all schools to become part of legal school districts with high schools and by July 1967 most of Iowa's one-room schools were closed. By that time, bright yellow gasoline-powered buses had become a common sight on paved and graveled roads in rural Iowa, transporting children to and from their school and community.

Procedure:

At some point in this lesson be sure to discuss the issue of consolidation and why all one-room public schools in Iowa are out of commission. Raise the questions of how the consolidation issue is still controversial.

1. **Day one:** Using the Compare-Contrast chart (individual charts for children and a transparency or newsprint chart for the teacher), have children as a group describe the characteristics of their school. They may add characteristics to those suggested. Complete the "Our School" column. Make a large classroom chart as kids are making their own individual ones.

Provide background information on country schools (see resource material). Present the reading list to students, asking them to choose one selection. It may be something that they have already read (e.g. a chapter from a book). Instruct them to read the selection taking note of the characteristics of the country school and the activities of the teacher and children described.

Ask a local photo shop to donate three disposable cameras and film processing. Divide kids up in groups and then have them photograph their school. Put these photos on the big classroom chart.

2. **Day two:** Ask small groups of children to describe their reading selections. Continuing in small groups, children will list the country school characteristics as described in their readings using the "Country School" column of their individual charts.

Coming together as a class, let the kids fill out the big class-room chart. When discussing characteristics of one-room schools show pictures from books or magazines. As each characteristic is completed, children should compare or contrast that list in the "Our School" and "Country School" columns.

3. **Day three:** As a review and referring to the Compare-Contrast charts, ask students to discuss how their class and school would be different if it were a one-room country school. What would need to be changed if their class and school were a country school. How would their school day and school activities differ? Throughout the discussion, create a list of the items, routine, and activities that would need to be changed if their class were a country school. For example, instead of pencils, pens, markers, or crayons, what would they use? What would they do at recess? How would they be transported to school? Where and what would they eat for lunch? The result of the discussion should be what would have to be changed in their classroom, school, and routine if it were a country school.

Explain that they will recreate a country school in their class-room for a school day. Using the list, planning committees will be formed. One group would plan for the rearrangement of the class

furniture. Another group may plan for instructional materials. Another group may plan for recess activities, and so on.

4. **Day four:** Planning committees will meet to identify changes, process (e.g. how and where will we move the furniture?), how to communicate needs to other students (e.g. what would country school students wear? What would they bring for lunch?), material needs, and so on.

5. Country Day School Minus One: The afternoon prior to Country School Day is used to prepare the classroom and materials for the next day. Student committees will carry out the activities for which they planned.

6. Country School Day: On the designated day, students will be country school students from the minute they arrive at school. Lessons can be conducted using simulated country school materials. Wood or coal can be carried in from the outside with students designated for stoking the "stove." A restroom some distance from the classroom may be designated as the outhouse or privy. Lunch and recess will simulate the food and play of country school students. Parents and friends can be invited to participate or observe a typical school activity (e.g. games, spelling bee, ciphering bee).

If the country school day is more than the teacher wants to tackle, an alternative activity might be to have students research the games played in one-room schools, and have the kids play them at recess or in gym class (see *The Goldfinch* vol. 16, no. 4, page 27).

7. **Day Five:** Using the Compare and Contrast chart, discuss with the students their experiences. Were they as expected? Is there additional information to add to the chart? Was any information incorrect? As a culminating activity, have students write and/or illustrate "A Day at School" from a first-person perspective. Kids can write a poem, short play or fiction piece (see *The Goldfinch* vol. 16, no. 4, pages 21-25).

Assessment of Outcomes:

Students' abilities to compare and contrast will be demonstrated through: completion of accurate planning and implementation of committee work, completion of accurate and complete charts, the accuracy of "A Day at School" writing and/or illustration assignment.

Extensions Adaptations:

As a preparatory activity to supplement activity, a speaker may be invited to share a one-room country school.

Memorabilia from one-room schools may be displayed in the classroom. Student desks, quill pens and ink holders, slates, McGuffey Readers, lunch pails, school bells, are some of the items that are commonly available. Check with your community's county or local historical organizations to see if they have samples of these objects you could use. Perhaps a guest speaker could bring some personal belongings he or she used when attending a one-room school.

There are many one-room schools open to the public. A visit to a one-room school may be substituted for the project of recreating the one-room school in the classroom.

Some discussion or activities should center on groups like the Amish that still go to one-room schools today (see *The Goldfinch* 16 (Summer 1994): 7). In addition, discuss what early education was like

for Native Americans and African Americans (*The Goldfinch* 16 (Summer 1994): 5-7).

Resources:

Bob Artley. *A Country School: Marion No. 7*. Ames: Iowa State University Press, 1989.

Bob Artley. *Memories of a Former Kid*. Ames: Iowa State University Press, 1978. ("School," pp.70-74).

Arnold Cooper. "A Stony Road: Black Education in Iowa, 1883-1860." *The Annals of Iowa* 48 (Winter/Spring 1986).

B.H. Falk and N.D. Huber. *Country School Memories*. White Bear Lake, MN: Stanton Publication Services, Inc., 1986.

L.E. Fisher. *The Schools*. New York: Holiday House, 1983, pp. 29-51.

Carl Hamilton. *In No Time at All*. Ames: Iowa State University Press, 1974 (Part Six).

R. Hausherr. *The One-room School at Squabble Hollow*. New York: Four Winds Press, 1988.

James Hearst. *Time Like a Furrow*. Iowa City: Iowa State Historical Department, 1981. ("Country School," pp.137-151).

Bobbie Kalman. *A One-Room School*. Crabtree Publishing Co., 1994.

Dorothy Schwieder, Thomas Morain, and Lynn Nielsen. *Iowa: Past to Present, The People and the Prairie*. Ames: Iowa State University Press, 1989. (Chapter 10, pp. 147-161).

Laura Ingalls Wilder. *Farmer Boy*. New York: Harper and Brothers, 1943. (Chapter 1: "School Days").

Laura Ingalls Wilder. *These Happy Golden Years*. New York: Harper and Brothers, 1943.

Laura Ingalls Wilder. *Little Town on the Prairie*. New York: Harper Brothers, 1953. (Chapter 18: "Literaries"; Chapter 19: "The Whirl of Gaiety").

Laura Ingalls Wilder. *On the Banks of Plum Creek*. New York: Harper Brothers, 1937. (Chapter 20: "School").

Laura Ingalls Wilder. *The Long Winter*. New York: Harper and Brothers Publishers, 1940. (Chapter 9: "Cap Garland").

Little Red Schoolhouse. A Guide for Teachers, Cedar Falls Historical Society.

"Living History Farms School: A Guide for Teachers."

Iowa Country School. 1978. (Film available from Area Education Agencies).

One-Room School (Videotape available from University of Northern Iowa Marshall Center School).

The Country School, Iowa Heritage Series, Iowa Public Broad-casting Network, 1977.

McGuffey Readers

"One-Room Schools in Iowa." *The Goldfinch* 16 (Fall 1994). "Going to School in Iowa."

The Goldfinch 2 (April 1981).

"An Acre of Hill." *The Palimpsest* 68 (Spring 1987): 22. (Photo essay about southwestern rural school.)



A School Day to Remember

by Amy Ruth

History, money, school," eleven-year-old Lee Bailey muttered to herself. "Hmmm." She sat cross-legged on a window seat in her family's rural home as the dark Iowa morning began to wake up.

Although it was late September, the air was sticky and hot, and Lee couldn't sleep. The cows were also wide awake. Lee heard them mooing in the barn. She crawled down from the window seat and wandered outside to milk them.

"I've got to come up with an idea for my Fundraising Day booth," she said aloud as she made her way to the barn. "I'll never help buy a new flag for the school if my imagination keeps shutting off like this."

She pushed open the barn door and was surprised to see Great-Grandma Martha. "Granny!" Lee said, startled, "what are you doing up so early?"

Granny picked up a bucket and walked over to the cows who were so happy to see her they swished their tails in greeting. "I should ask you the same thing, Lee. A growing girl needs her sleep, you know. I've had more than my share in the last 85 years."

Lee sank into a pile of hay and watched Granny's hands move up and down, filling the bucket with warm milk. Lee's family didn't farm for a living, but Granny preferred fresh milk so she kept two cows in the barn.

"What's the trouble, dear?" Granny asked over her shoulder.

Art by Mary Moye-Rowley

"I don't know what to do for my fundraising booth at school," she answered, digging herself deeper into the hay. "My social studies teacher, Ms. Purnell, said it'll give us a chance to explore history, politics, or art. Plus we'll raise money for a new flag."

Granny thought for a moment. "You need to do something ordinary, but with a twist," she said with a smile. "Like a memory booth."

"A what?"

"You know," said Granny, sliding over to a restless Mabel, "like a kissing booth. People give a dollar, but instead of a kiss, they get a memory — a story from the olden days."

Lee nodded silently, her eyes and imagination flashing. "That would work, Granny, but what'll we do about memories?"

"We'll use my memories," replied Granny. "I was a country teacher back in the 1920s and 1930s. Spent two years teaching down the road at the Center School. I was only eighteen when I started there in 1927. I could spin many a tale about those days!"

"Oh, Granny! What a cool idea! There's only one catch — Fundraising Day is Monday."

Granny laughed as she stood up and started back to the house. "That's okay little Lee. I've had plenty of things sneak up on me in my time," she said, pulling the barn door closed behind them. "By Monday morning, I'll churn out stories like my mamma used to churn out butter."

On Monday, Lee introduced all the stories with a history of Granny's life and passed around photographs of Granny as a young teacher. Parents, teachers, and students gathered around Lee's booth and paid a dollar to hear Great-Grandma Martha's stories —

like the time a spring tornado almost blew away the Center School during Granny's first year of teaching.

"It was an ordinary spring day," began Granny from behind the booth. "After a long morning of recitation my students were restless, and I let them out a bit early for recess. They scampered down the schoolhouse steps to play **Fox and Geese** in the schoolyard. I sat at my desk and graded homework assignments. Not ten minutes into recess, rain began pouring from the sky. It was as if someone was emptying a giant pitcher of water onto the schoolhouse. . . ."



"Hurry, children," eighteen-year-old Martha yelled over the howling wind. "Hurry before the rain gets you!" Martha watched the rolling clouds above her as the students scampered into the dry schoolhouse.

"Children," she told them in a stern voice, "take off your wet shoes and wraps here in the entryway. Then choose books from the library shelf and read quietly at your seats. Ben," she concluded, beckoning to twelve-year-old Benjamin Martin, the oldest student, "you come with me."

The children did as they were told, happy to be excused from arithmetic and geography lessons. Martha and Ben went back outside where the wind snapped treetops like they were toothpicks.

"Is everything all right, Miss Reed?" Ben asked.

*Fox and Geese —
chase-and-tag game
popular at country schools*

"I'm not sure, Ben," replied Martha as she wrapped her sweater tightly around her. "There's an awful storm coming. See those clouds?" she said, pointing to dark clouds moving across the sky. "They look like the beginning of a tornado."

Ben knew how dangerous tornadoes were. If he was at home he'd rush to the cellar with his family. But there was no cellar in the schoolhouse and the closest farm was almost two miles away. "What are we going to do?" he asked, trying to keep his voice from shaking.

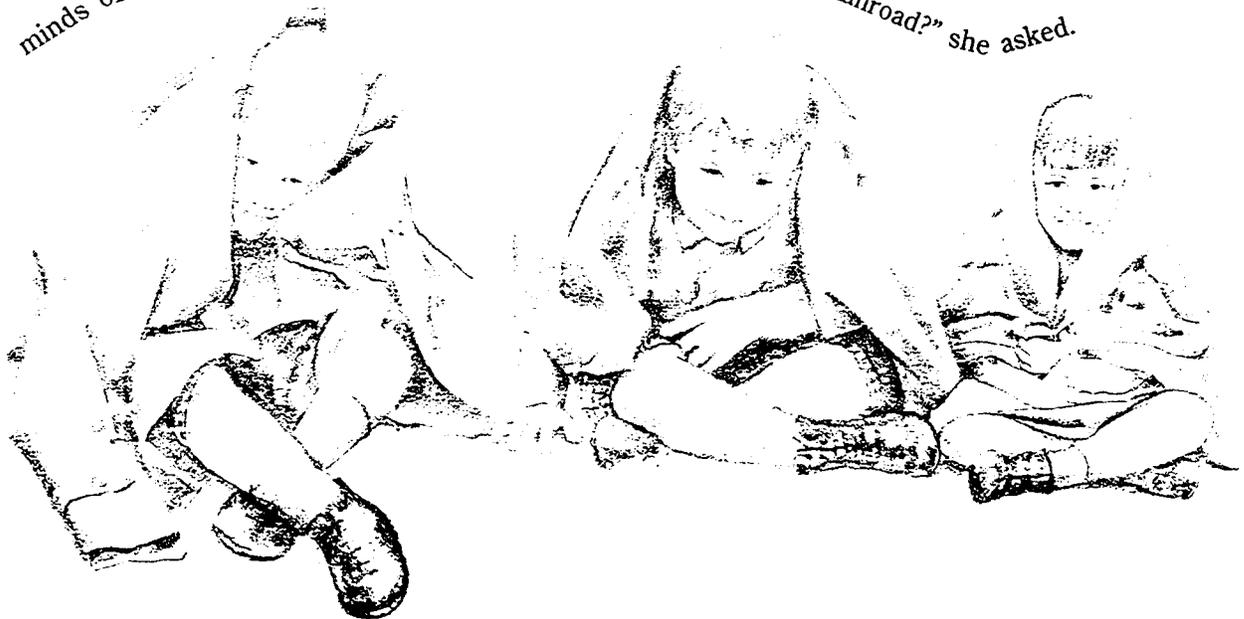
"That's what I wanted to speak to you about, away from the other children," Martha said. "They'll be scared if a tornado hits. I need your help to keep them calm. We'll go back inside and you'll all sit under your desks. I'll think of a game to keep their minds off the storm."

The two went back into the schoolhouse and bolted the door behind them. Ben took his seat at the back of the room and Martha did her best to appear cheerful.

"Children," she said enthusiastically, "how about a game?" Cheers of agreement rang out in the schoolroom. "Let's pretend we're pioneers who settled Iowa more than seventy-five years ago. The desks will be our wagons. We've finished driving for the day, and it's time to settle in for the evening. At the count of three, everyone under your desks! One! Two! Three!"

In three seconds, the children had settled in. "Good," Martha said. "Now, how about a song?"

Eight-year-old Melissa Reece stuck her hand out from under her desk in the center row. "What about I've Been Working on the Railroad?" she asked.



"A fine song," agreed Martha, and started to sing, "I've been working on the railroad, all the live-long day, I've been working on the railroad just to pass the time away. . . ." The children jumped in, their voices drowning out the raging winds.

While they were singing, Martha gathered up the children's damp jackets, coats, and sweaters. "Oh, no!" she exclaimed passing out the wraps. "It's started to rain on the prairie. You'll need to cover yourselves." The children wrapped themselves in their pretend blankets and finished singing.

"I don't know about you," continued Martha from the platform at the head of the schoolroom, "but I think after a long drive, I'd be hungry. Let's rummage through our food supplies and see what there is to eat. Anyone find anything?"

"I did, I did," yelled six-year-old Charles Macintosh from his desk in the front row, "Flapjacks!" The children laughed. "With maple syrup!" he added. "No! No!" yelled an older boy from the back of the room. "Pioneers ate beef jerky and biscuits. When they ran out of food, they ate grasshoppers!"

"Ugh! Oooh!" squealed the younger children, horrified at the thought of eating insects.

Without warning the howling wind swirled furiously around the tiny schoolhouse and touched down under the east windows. The children stopped talking and listened closely. "Tornado!" someone yelled.

"Everyone bury your faces in your coats and stay under your desks!" yelled Martha, her voice straining to be heard above the wind. "Don't look up!"

As they huddled under their desks, windows started breaking and glass blew into the schoolroom.

Martha ran to an empty seat in the middle row, stretching her sweater over her head to protect her face. "It's going to be all right, children!" she shouted, ducking under the desk. "Just stay put!"

From the back of the room, Ben's voice yelled out, "Everybody sing. . . . I've been working on the railroad all the live long day. . . ." The frightened children sang as glass, books, and pencils flew across the room. In the entryway, the wind tossed lunch pails into the air like they were nickels. Homework assignments flew around the front of the room, and the brand new maps banged against the blackboard.

A few moments later, the wind stopped, dropping the final books and pencils to the floor before blowing out the broken windows. "Stay where you are, children," commanded Martha, slowly raising her head, "it's not safe yet."

Glass fell from her dress and hair as she climbed out from under the desk and stood up. "I'm going to look outside," she said. "Nobody move."

Picking her way over broken glass, Martha walked to the entryway. Unbolting the door, she heard a loud knock. She opened the door to find a man, his clothes wrinkled by the wind and wet from the rain, standing on the steps and carrying a black leather bag.

He tipped his dripping hat. "Ma'am," he said politely. "I was just passing by as the storm struck. I took shelter in the ditch behind the school." He stepped into the schoolroom and whistled, a quick, sharp sound. "Looks like you could use a hand," he said, grabbing the broom from the corner. . . .

“. . . And after he swept up the glass, he checked the children for cuts and bruises and found everyone fit as a fiddle,” concluded Granny, as her listeners sighed in relief. “Then he helped straighten the schoolroom. When we finished, he disappeared as quickly as he had arrived.”

That night after supper, Lee knocked quietly on Granny’s bedroom door.

“Come in,” Granny said softly.

Lee opened the door quietly and sat on the bed. “Thanks for today, Granny! Ms. Purnell says we made a lot of money — maybe enough for a new flag. You were awesome!”

Granny smiled from the pillows. “I suspect I was. But so were you. You helped keep my stories alive. Now a lot of people know what life could be like in a one-room country school.”

Lee thought for a minute. “I never thought about it that way,” she said as her imagination started churning again. “But you’re right, Granny! I’ve got to write your stories down. And we’ll make copies for Dad and Mom and the cousins and aunts, and. . . .”

Granny raised a tired hand. “Slow down! There’s time for that tomorrow!”

Lee smiled in agreement and gave Granny a hug. “Good night,” she said.

“Good night, little Lee,” yawned Granny.

Lee paused at the bedroom door. “Granny, what happened to the man who helped you and your students in the tornado?”

Granny laughed gently. “He was the new general store clerk who was studying medicine. He was also your Great-Grandpa James.”

“I thought so,” replied Lee with a wink as she switched off the light and closed the door softly behind her.



A Sample Day in a One Room School

FORENOON.							
REGINS.	CLOSES.	TIME.	1ST CLASS.	2D CLASS.	3D CLASS.	4TH CLASS.	5TH CLASS.
9:00	9:05	5m			OPENING EXERCISES.		
9:05	9:15	10	<i>Reading.</i>	Reading.	Reading.	Arithmetic.	Arithmetic.
9:15	9:30	15	Seat Work.	<i>Reading.</i>	Reading.	Arithmetic.	Arithmetic.
9:30	9:45	15	Seat Work.	Numbers.	<i>Reading.</i>	Arithmetic.	Arithmetic.
9:45	10:00	15	Copying.	Numbers.	Arithmetic.	<i>Arithmetic.</i>	Arithmetic.
10:00	10:20	20	Copying.	Copying.	Arithmetic.	Geography.	<i>Arithmetic.</i>
10:20	10:30	10	*Gen. Lessons.	*Gen. Lessons.	Drawing.	Geography.	Drawing.
10:30	10:45	15			RECESS.		
10:45	11:00	15	Seat Work.	Writing.	<i>Arithmetic.</i>	Geography.	Geography.
11:00	11:15	15	Seat Work.	Copying.	Language.	<i>Geography.</i>	Geography.
11:15	11:30	15	Numbers.	Copying.	Language.	Reading.	<i>Geog. or Hist.</i>
11:30	11:45	15	Numbers.	Reading.	Writing.	<i>Reading.</i>	Reading.
11:45	12:00	15	Dismissed.	Reading.	Reading.	Grammar.	<i>Reading.</i>
AFTERNOON.							
1:00	1:10	10	Reading.	Reading.	Reading.	Grammar.	Grammar.
1:10	1:20	10	Copying.	<i>Reading.</i>	Reading.	Grammar.	Grammar.
1:20	1:30	10	Copying.	Copying.	<i>Reading.</i>	Grammar.	Grammar.
1:30	1:45	15	Numbers.	Copying.	Spelling.	<i>Grammar.</i>	Grammar.
1:45	2:00	15	Numbers.	Writing.	Spelling.	Drawing.	<i>Grammar.</i>
2:00	2:30	30	*Gen. Lessons.	*Gen. Lessons.	*Gen. Lessons.	Writing.	Physiology
2:30	2:45	15			RECESS.		
2:45	3:00	15	Reading.	Reading.	Spelling.	Spelling.	<i>Physiology.</i>
3:00	3:10	10	<i>Reading.</i>	Reading.	Spelling.	Spelling.	Spelling.
3:10	3:20	10	Copying.	<i>Reading.</i>	Spelling.	Spelling.	Spelling.
3:20	3:30	10	Copying.	Copying.	<i>Spelling.</i>	Spelling.	Spelling.
3:30	3:40	10	Drawing.	Reading.	Copying.	<i>Spelling.</i>	Spelling.
3:40	3:50	10	Numbers.	Reading.	Reading.	Reading.	<i>Spelling.</i>
3:50	4:00	10			<i>General Exercises.</i>		

Italic type denotes recitations. Roman letters what the other classes should study. Classes are numbered to correspond with the readers. * Gen'l Lessons or Dismissed.



PART I - GENERAL VOCABULARY

DIRECTIONS: This is a test of your knowledge of the meaning of words. In each item below, you will find a phrase or sentence at the left, followed by four numbered words. In each case you are to decide which of the four words given has most nearly the same meaning as the underlined word in the phrase. Then write the number of that word in the parentheses before the item.

For example, in the first item, the word "little" has most nearly the same meaning as "small," the underlined word in the phrase at the left. The number 4 is therefore written in the parentheses before the item.

- (4) 0. A small boy.....(1) large, (2) tall, (3) nice, (4) little
- () 1. A dreadful scene.....(1) dangerous, (2) wrong, (3) terrible, (4) disgusting
- () 2. Unclean habits.....(1) strong, (2) filthy, (3) secret, (4) unusual
- () 3. An endless uproar.....(1) loud, (2) sudden, (3) continual, (4) brief
- () 4. Upset our plans.....(1) told, (2) guessed, (3) stole, (4) disturbed
- () 5. Rescue her from danger.....(1) carry, (2) escape, (3) save, (4) hide
- () 6. A furios storm.....(1) fierce, (2) unusual, (3) sudden, (4) cold
- () 7. An angry mob faced him.....(1) tramp, (2) crowd, (3) foe, (4) lunatic
- () 8. To extend a vacation.....(1) take, (2) shorten, (3) lengthen, (4) postpone
- () 9. To slope a lawn.....(1) mow, (2) smooth, (3) slant, (4) straighten
- () 10. The darling of the king.....(1) servant, (2) leader, (3) favorite, (4) jester
- () 11. Wholesome food.....(1) pleasant, (2) delicious, (3) mixed, (4) healthful
- () 12. A shady spot.....(1) pretty, (2) clear, (3) different, (4) sheltered
- () 13. To adjust a telescope.....(1) regulate, (2) use, (3) move, (4) settle
- () 14. An agreeable surprise.....(1) pleasing, (2) interesting, (3) complete, (4) sudden

All those Tests!

Tests are a part of school. Whether we like them or not, they are one way teachers can learn where a student's strengths and weaknesses are. It helps teachers do their job better. There is a special test that most Iowa school children take every year — the Iowa Tests of Basic Skills.

It all began in 1929 as a contest for high school students called the Iowa Academic Meet. The tests for the meet were written by educators at the University of Iowa. First, tests were given in the spring in high schools that chose to take part. They were scored at the schools, and the results were sent to the University. Then, the top-scoring students in each subject went to the University at Iowa City for final tests. Finally, the top ten students in each subject received medals at a banquet.

Teachers were sometimes amazed when they saw the results of the test — some of the top students on the test had been thought lazy or unpromising, and they had been getting poor grades. Once these students had shown their ability their grades often improved quite suddenly!

In 1935, a new test program — the Iowa Tests of Basic Skills — began for grades six through eight. This was not begun as a contest. The purpose was (as it really had been for the high school test) to help teachers know where students were doing well and where they might need help. The tests were very successful and in 1940 they were sold throughout the nation. From that time on, the Iowa Tests of Basic Skills have remained a useful tool to measure learning progress. The test on this page is the vocabulary test from the 1935 Iowa Tests of Basic Skills given to the fifth, sixth, and seventh grades. It was scored by the teacher. It looks very different from today's tests that are scored by an electronic machine that can "read" 40,000 sheets per hour.



Learning the old-fashioned way



A fire crackled in the wood-burning stove, nibbling away at the chill of a rainy, April 1994 morning. Mistress Hansen, the **schoolmarm**, tugged on a rope attached to the schoolhouse bell on the roof. The chimes brought students scrambling toward the schoolhouse and up the muddy path — a path that took them back almost 120 years during their visit to Urbandale's Living History Farms.

"It is April 12, 1875," Mistress Hansen announced. "Boys in one line, girls in another.

"Ulysses S. Grant is our president," she continued in a stern voice. "Cyrus C. Carpen-

ter is Iowa's governor, and there are thirty-seven states in the nation."

Thirteen fifth and sixth graders from Sister Justine Denning's class at St. Mary's Catholic School in Centerville followed in two lines behind Mistress Hansen. They walked through an entryway lined with pegs for coats and caps, and into their classroom for the day — Living History Farm's one-room schoolhouse.

Feet shuffled across wooden floorboards as boys moved toward desks on the left side of the room, and girls took their places on the right.

"There are three rules for conduct in my classroom," Mistress Hansen said. "Sit up straight. Be quiet. Stand to recite." In 1875, there were stiff penalties for misbehavior. Some schools were so strict, they didn't allow students to smile.

"In 1875, children brought their own books to school," said Mistress Hansen.

Before settling into their studies, students stood and faced the flag. Mistress Hansen led the class in a verse of "My Country 'Tis of Thee" and then directed them to their studies.

First, they practiced penmanship.

"Pupils were not allowed to be left-handed in 1875," Mistress Hansen cautioned. "A child's left hand might be tied behind his or her back or slapped with the **ferule** if caught

schoolmarm — old-fashioned name for unmarried, female schoolteacher

ferule — flat piece of wood used for punishment



using it during penmanship.”

The room fell silent, except for the faint clicking of slate pencils.

Although paper was available in 1875, Mistress Hansen explained, it was very expensive. Only perfect work was copied from slates to paper.

The next subject in the Centerville students' school day was Elocution and Articulation.

“It means how well you talk,” Mistress Hansen explained. With McGuffey's Readers in hand, students took turns standing to recite.

“Reading skills were very important because there were no movies, TVs, or radios in homes,” Mistress Hansen explained.

The Centerville students also tackled arithmetic — 1875-style! Story problems challenged them to develop math skills necessary for everyday life.

“Ladies, at home you help feed chickens and collect eggs,” Mistress Hansen began. “Today, you have two dozen eggs to sell to the local store at twelve cents a dozen. You also have three pounds of butter to sell at three cents a pound. Your mother wants you to buy five pounds of sugar, which costs ten cents more. How much will you have left?”

“Gentleman,” she continued. “you help your fathers in stores or out in the fields. You must be able to figure out how much seed to buy, how to sell crops or livestock.”

Students solved the rest of Mistress Hansen's story problems. At recess they played Hide the Thimble, a rainy-day game where one student hid the thimble somewhere in the classroom, then watched as the others hunted for it.

Geography lessons, an Iowa history quiz,

and a spelling bee followed recess. All too soon, 1994 crept back into the schoolhouse and Sister Denning's class returned to the twentieth century.

Paper and books are readily available in schools today — along with computers and other gadgets

that pupils in 1875 never imagined. American schools today have more than one classroom, and each grade has its own teacher.

Despite these differences, eleven-year-old John Maletta didn't think the work in 1875 was more difficult. He's used to tough assignments.

“Sister Denning works us hard!” he said.

Perhaps some things never change. ♡



McGuffey's Readers —1800s
and early 1900s textbooks

Schools for Amish Children

Letter to the Editor
Des Moines Register
November 11, 1965

QUESTION PLAGUES TEACHERS

Are the Amish wrong? As two certified public school teachers, this question plagues us. It seems to us that a huge injustice has been done by our state's persecution of people who sincerely wish to be different.

Granted there is a law that public schools must have "certified" teachers; yet isn't there something drastically wrong with a law that imposes our standard of education upon others who don't accept the standards as valid for their way of life?

This seems to be their main crime; not being like we are. Are they really being persecuted for breaking "the law" or because we assume that our chrome-plated way of life is best?

— Holstein, Iowa

Letter to the Editor
Des Moines Register
July 24, 1971

CLAIM SCORES HIGHER IF AMISH TEACH

According to the Des Moines Register, the study, completed this week, argues that Amish school children in this area who had been taught by Amish teachers scored consistently higher on the Iowa basic skills test than did Amish children from the same cultural background who were taught by certified teachers.

"I will always believe that Iowa and America are big enough in space and spirit to provide a kindly place for all good people regardless of race, creed, or custom. One of the most precious parts of the American heritage has been our willingness as a people to lean over backwards to assure minority groups freedom of belief. It is a tradition worth preserving."

— Governor Harold Hughes, 1966.

In 1728 the first group of Amish crossed the Atlantic and arrived in the New World to practice freely their religious way of life. The Amish were mainly farmers, and as the United States grew westward, groups of Amish people migrated to the farming lands of Iowa.

Most Amish believe that farming is the simplest and best way of life. They use old farming methods. "A tractor gets the work done more quickly, but horses and the love of hard work keeps us nearer to God," one man declared. Clothing and homes are kept as plain as possible. Decoration of any kind is avoided. The Amish discourage knowledge of the world outside their settlement.

To teach their children this way of life the Amish have their own schools. Amish teachers teach reading, writing, and arithmetic. At home children learn farming, cooking, sewing, and gardening.

In Iowa there have been arguments about the Amish kind of schooling. The State of Iowa is responsible for the education of Iowa children. The State law says that school teachers must be certified. Often, Amish schools are taught by young girls with only an elementary school education. In 1965, officials closed an Amish school

because the teacher was uncertified. The parents were told they must send their children to public school. When they refused, heavy fines were demanded. All over the state, people talked about the Amish school issue. They wrote letters to the editor in the newspapers. The governor made his views known.

The Amish based their right to have separate schools on the First Amendment to the United States Constitution. However, the State said these schools were below standard. The Iowa General Assembly debated the school issue. They decided to amend the education Code of Iowa so that the Amish could educate their own children but must request permission each year to open their schools. The schools would be inspected every year before they could open. Permission was granted every year until 1971, when the State Board of Public Instruction denied the Amish request. Once again, Amish parents refused to send their children to public schools. Finally, in another vote, the Board decided in favor of opening the schools. But each year, the Amish must request permission to continue the education of their children in the way they believe is right.



Phoebe W. Sudlow

Phoebe Sudlow had taught in public schools for twelve years. Because she was a good teacher, the city school superintendent asked her to come to Davenport. So, in 1858, Phoebe Sudlow left a rural school in Scott County and began teaching in the city. In only three years she was appointed principal. The Civil War had just begun. Many men, including teachers, were leaving to join the army and women were hired to fill the jobs they left when they went to war. In fact, after the Civil War, there never again were more men teachers than women.

Before Phoebe Sudlow accepted the job of principal, she told the board of education that she expected to receive the same salary that would be given to a man. She refused to consider working for less. The board had to think it over. Women teachers had always been paid much less than men, but the board had never hired a

woman to be principal before! Finally, the school board agreed to her request. Still, women teachers continued to receive less money than men.

Miss Sudlow next became the principal of the Training School for Teachers. Then, in 1874 she was chosen Davenport Superintendent of Schools. This made her the first woman superintendent of public schools in the United States.

Phoebe Sudlow proved that a woman could do a good job as a teacher, principal, or superintendent. Although she continued to work very hard for equal salaries for teachers, she did not live to see her hope come true. This did not happen until the 1960s.

The people of Davenport did not forget Phoebe Sudlow. They named a school for her — a reminder of the outstanding teacher who became the first woman superintendent of schools in the United States.