

## **BUILDING A LOG CABIN**

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### **OVERVIEW**

Students will use primary sources to learn how miners in Colorado built log cabins. They will design and draw a model of a log cabin. Note that you may follow the procedure outlined below, or use those in conjunction with the Doing History CD-ROM or the Doing History web site.

### **STANDARDS**

- History Standard 2.2 Students know how to interpret and evaluate primary and secondary sources of information.
- Reading and Writing Standard 4: Students apply thinking skills to their reading, writing, speaking, listening, and viewing.

### **OBJECTIVES**

By the end of this activity, students will be able to:

- Explain why log cabins were a common form of shelter in early mining camps.
- Describe the practical problems involved in building a useful shelter out of logs cut from trees.
- Analyze or "read" photographs of log cabins to explain how miners solved the problems involved in the construction of log cabins.
- Design and draw a model of a log cabin and explain the steps involved in constructing it.

### **INQUIRY QUESTIONS**

- Why were log cabins popular during the early days of a mining camp?
- What materials were used in the construction of a log cabin?
- What tools were needed to build one?
- Were most log cabins single-story or multi-story? Why?
- What problems were involved in heating log cabins? How were they solved?
- What problems were involved in constructing a roof for a log cabin? How were they solved?
- What kind of floors did log cabins have?

## PROCEDURE

1. Print out the material described below from the Doing History CD-ROM disk or from the Doing History web site:
  - Open the disk (or web site)
  - Click on the Mining topic
  - Click on the Food, Clothing, and Shelter theme
  - Click on Shelter sequence:
    - Print: Photo 1, "A Miner and his Dogs"
    - Print: Photo 1, In Their Own Words, "A Fine Log Cabin"
    - Print: Photo 3, "A Family in Front of Their Cabin"
  - Click on Interiors sequence:
    - Print: Photo 1, "Inside a Miners' Cabin"
    - Print: Photo 1, In Their Own Words, "Si Dore's Cabin at Bonanza"
    - Print: Photo 2, "A Miners' Cabin"
2. Make an overhead transparency of the attached Log Cabin Focus Questions.
3. Divide the students into small groups, giving each group a set of the photographs and primary source excerpts.
4. Have the students in their groups analyze the photographs by working through the list of questions included on the transparency.
5. After the students have completed the "reading" of the photos, ask them to describe practical problems involved in constructing log cabins and how the photographs indicate how those problems were solved.
6. Ask each group to role-play being a group of miners who are about to build a log cabin. They are to describe the process in writing following this sequence:
  - Draw a picture of each side of the cabin and an overview to help visualize the task.
  - Note the number of people the cabin must house and the materials available to build it.
  - Make an outline of the steps involved in building it:
    - Gathering logs, etc.
    - Add details by explaining how each step is accomplished.
    - Make a list of the problems that might occur and how they intend to solve them.
7. Have each group present its design and describe the process used to build the cabin.

8. Conclude the activity with a discussion of the importance of preserving historic log cabins. Why preserve them? What historical value do they have?