

Hobos

Grade Level: 4 – 8

Time to Complete: 1 – 2 days

Standard(s) Covered:

SS-04-3.1.1

Students will describe scarcity and explain how scarcity requires people in Kentucky to make economic choices (e.g., use of productive resources – natural, human, capital) and incur opportunity costs.

SS-05-3.1.1

Students will describe scarcity and explain how scarcity required people in different periods in the U.S. (Colonization, Expansion, Twentieth Century to Present) to make economic choices (e.g., use of productive resources-natural, human, capital) and incur opportunity costs.

SS-04-2.1.1

Students will identify early cultures (Native American, Appalachian, pioneers) in KY and explain similarities and differences.

SS-05-2.1.1 Students will identify early cultures (e.g., English, Spanish, French, West African) in the U.S. and analyze their similarities and differences.

SS-04-2.2.1

Students will describe social institutions (government, economy, education, religion, family) in KY and how they respond to the needs of the people.

SS-05-2.2.1

Students will describe social institutions (government, economy, education, religion, family) in the U.S. and explain their role in the growth and development of our nation.

SS-04-2.3.1

Students will describe various forms of interactions (compromise, cooperation, conflict) that occurred between diverse groups (e.g., Native Americans, early settlers).

SS-05-2.3.1

Students will describe various forms of interactions (compromise, cooperation, conflict) that occurred between diverse groups (e.g., Native Americans, European Explorers, English Colonists, British Parliament) in the history of the United States.

Major Objective(s): Students will

- Learn that in the 1900s, a distinct hobo subculture, consisting of English-speaking migratory workers, emerged in America's working class
- Understand that most Hobos were young and unmarried
- Realize that there were important distinctions among the hobo, tramp, and bum
- Learn that in the 1900s, there were estimated to be about 100,000 Hobos in the U.S.
- Realize that Hobos were vital to the creation of the west and its economy

- Understand that the only real assets a hobo had was a reasonable freedom from responsibility and the great value and importance of his true friends
- Realize that Hobos lived in “jungles,” which were peaceful, systematically run homes for vagabonds

Major Points to Teach:

Hobos evolved a distant subculture with its own language, skills, rules of behavior, and even “hobohemia” areas of cities where they stayed between jobs or went to find new ones.

Hoboing was a youthful stage, a kind of working class Grand Tour, with opportunities for experience, adventure, and manly independence from factory life.

A hobo was someone who traveled and worked; a tramp was someone who traveled but didn’t work; a bum was someone who didn’t travel and didn’t work. Hobos were sometimes classified as “no good bums” or tramps or vagrants.

Sometimes they were stereotyped as ignorant, but Hobos published the Hobo News from about 1900 – 1937. It was a monthly magazine containing articles, short stories, and poems written and edited by Hobos themselves. There were also approximately 40 hobo autobiographies, most written between 1880 and 1940.

The “Jungle” was the name of the society of the Hobos and they had what was called the code of the road, and also what was known as the rule of the Jungle.

About the only social life a hobo had, or could actually expect, would be in a hobo jungle.

Teaching strategies:

Keep a hobo journal that describes a week in the life of a hobo.