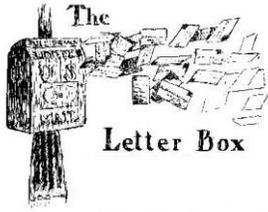


Reading and 'Riting in 19th Century



Materials:

Early School copy book
Ink
Pens pencils
Slates
Chalk

BACKGROUND:

Reading and writing in the 19th century meant being able to read at least the 8th grade level and having a “good hand” or legible handwriting. Students began early in their schooling, using slates to do their practice work or “slate work” followed by work with pen and ink in their copy books. Students were graded on their handwriting, penmanship being an important part of an educated person’s bag of skills. Today, handwriting is on the decline with the computer keyboard. Some schools do not teach it. Might ask students about that. Brain research shows that it’s important that children know how to write by hand. Important in their growth and development as thinkers and learners. Hiring employers also like a handwritten note after an interview.

TALK:

How many of you can write your name in cursive? Pupils (19th century term) were required to write by hand and were even graded on it. Practice began using slates and slate pencils or chalk. (*Show slate*) Once script was mastered, students went onto pen and paper. They wrote in copy books either their parents made for them or bought at the general store. Point out to students that the ink used with a pen holder and steel nib is different from the ink in their felt pens. You do not push on the pen point. It will splatter (and give you a poor grade)

ACTIVITY:

- ❖ Pass out slates. (You can use a small tablet-sized white board, something they can write with chalk on. If not enough, share. Explain how slates were like the dry eraser boards today. Pass out chalk and pencils.
- ❖ Hand out Early School copy book and have the students write their name on the front with a pencil. Open to the inside. Have the students copy the McGuffey script on their slates, but first demonstrate some letters. They can write their name, copy the slate work.
- ❖ Invite ½ of the kids to begin writing with pens in the copy book. As soon as there is room more kids can come up. When finished they can play with some of the pioneer toys and games.

TIME: 15 minutes for everything!