

Activity 11: Squak Valley

Meets EALR: Social Studies, History

History 4.2.2	Understands how contributions made by various cultural groups have shaped the history of the community and world
CBA	Meeting Needs and Wants

Objective: Students compare life for the early settlers and life now in Issaquah by listening to several selections from an early settler's, Bessie Wilson Craine's, memoirs. Then students write a journal entry as if they were Bessie.

Materials: Squak Valley: a Tale of Old Issaquah, by Bessie Wilson Craine, paper pencil and crayons

Summary of the book: This book is an accounting of the life of Bessie as a young girl growing up in the area that is now Issaquah. It is interestingly written and has good information that could be enjoyed by students. For those of you who might enjoy some vignettes to share with the children, the following pages have been selected and highlighted. Other parts of the book are equally interesting. We recommend that you skim the book before using the excerpts so that you can give the children "a feel" for the times and people.

Note to Teacher: This book is written from the perspective of an early settler and does have some racist points of view. Please see the letters to the Issaquah Press, attached. We recommend either skipping over the racist comments in the book, or discussing racism, and how different people have different perspectives on events and other people in history. A teacher can also discuss who records history and what groups might get left out of the written history or have biases written against them. This could lead to an interesting lesson on bias and historical sources. However, that is not the focus of this lesson. We chose not to pursue this topic based on the age of the children this unit is intended to teach, second grade. We do ask that any educator be extremely judicious in the use of this book.

Procedure:

1. Read parts of Squak Valley to the students (a story of a young girl growing up in the 1880's in Issaquah). Recommended selections include:
 - Hops pages 4-5, 49, 59 (top of page 5 and 49 have racist comments)
 - Railroad pages 18-19
 - Little town of Gilman pages 22-23 (one sentence on page 23 is racist)
 - Gilman becomes Issaquah pages 35-36

- The country school pages 26, 50
 - Issaquah school page 41
 - Haying pages 27-28
 - The mill and timber industry pages 30-31, 63
 - Coal pages 42, 55-56
 - The roads pages 47-48
2. As students listen to each selection, they can create their own illustrations of what is being described in their book. Students share their pictures with the class to see how similar and different their interpretations of the passages were.
 3. Compare life in Issaquah now to life in Issaquah when Bessie lived here.
 4. Tell the students that they will be writing a journal entry as if they were Bessie Wilson Craine. If students prefer, they may choose to be another person mentioned in Bessie's memoirs. Discuss parts of a journal entry. This might include date, location, setting description, sketches, and an important event or an interesting situation.
 5. As a class make a two-column chart. In the first column list key words and phrases that would be logical to include in a journal entry from the late 1800's, such as farm chores, sewing, cooking, riding horses, playing with pets, etc. In the second column list modern key words and phrases that would not be appropriate to include, such as cars, airplanes, any electric appliances, skyscrapers, etc.
 6. Share some of the photos in the book, Squak Valley, to help stimulate brainstorming ideas.
 7. Students write their journal entries in partners, small groups, or individually.
 8. Students share their journal entries with the class.