

ACTIVITIES AND DISCUSSION TOPICS

Packet 7: Volga German Houses

Teacher	Sequence
<p>1. Have students keep a list, for several days, of the activities which their family does – individually as well as in a group. Leave space on this list to tell where, in their house, the activity takes place. If you lived in a Volga German house today, where would you do these activities? What activities that we do today would be impossible to do in their kind of house? What things would be impossible for them to do in our houses? What activities today have taken the place of those done on the prairie in 1875?</p>	<p>A variety of answers are acceptable to this question. Essentially, their rooms were more multipurpose than ours because we have more specialized areas for work, play, sleep, and relaxing. Many of the things which we do today require electricity so naturally the things would have been impossible to do in 1875. However, many of the same things had to be done then that have to be taken care of today, for instance, disposing of trash; today we send it down the garbage disposal or leave it out front for the garbage collectors. In years past it was fed to livestock or buried.</p>
<p>2. If you moved to the Kansas Prairie one hundred years ago, what sort of house would you have built? Would it be different from the Volga German house? What materials would you have used?</p>	<p>Students will come up with a variety of answers. Discuss them logically and help them draw conclusions. In the end, they should come up with the idea that the simolinkas, and later the stone houses, were very well suited to life on the plains: they were small enough to be built reasonably quickly so that the family could take shelter right away. The materials they used were readily available and cost very little more than hard work. The sod houses were cool in the summer and warm in the winter. Their size and construction made them easy to heat.</p>
<p>3. On paper, design, plan, and furnish your own Kansas prairie house of the 1870s. Make a floor plan, give dimensions, draw a picture of the house. Imagine the household items you would need to set up housekeeping. What items might you have brought with you? What things could you have made yourself? What would you have had to make yourself?</p>	<p>Students should be invited to be creative and resourceful: What is essential to maintaining life? What things can you do without or make very simply for yourself? Do you really need many rooms and an upstairs? Here again they should come up with the notion that the Volga Germans didn't do such a bad job of taking care of their own needs in a very basic way.</p>
<p>4. Look at some of the photographs in</p>	<p>Try to analyze each of the photographs in the following</p>

<p>the packet. What can you tell just from looking at the picture, or “reading” the photograph?</p> <p>The Henry Werth Residence</p>	<p>way, finally comparing different construction methods.</p> <p>A young family because there is only one child. Probably an extended family and the older mother is living with them. Why do you think an outside stair was used? Notice double door (inside and out). Windows scarce and small – glass was hard to come by and it was difficult to make large panes of glass Older woman wears traditional scarf. Other building in background a house or a shed? Why?</p>
--	--