

Objectives:

Students will be able to:

- understand the exchange of goods between trappers and traders by solving mathematical problems

Connection to Colorado Social Studies Standards:

- 4th grade: 1.1.c, 2.2.c, 5.1.a, 5.1.d

Materials: Scratch paper, pencils, timer

Time: 1 class period

Background

When a trapper got ready to head up to the mountains for another season of work, he wanted to make sure that he had all the supplies he would need for the year before setting out. He was most likely to buy his supplies from a trading fort or from petty traders he might run into.

The following is a list of all the items he would need:

- 2-3 horses or mules - one to saddle, the others to carry equipment and pelts
- 6 traps - carried in a leather bag called a “trap-sack”
- 1 rifle and enough ammunition to last two years
- A hatchet - to carry on the pommel of your saddle
- A saddle, bridle, and several apishamores - square pieces of buffalo robes to use as saddle blankets
- A whetstone in a sheath of buffalo hide
- pistols
- bullet pouch to carry steel balls, flint and steel, and other odds and ends
- powder horn - usually made from buffalo horns, which are short and black
- bullet mold awl - a tool to punch holes in leather so that it could be sewn together
- 1-2 pounds of tobacco in a pouch
- Possibles bag - a deerskin bag containing:
 - cured deerskin - for making moccasins, etc.
 - clay pipe in a pipe holder
 - small wooden box containing castoreum, or beaver scent
 - trade items and trinkets - to trade with Indians
- Buffalo (bison) robe - to use as a blanket
- Kettles - for cooking

Suggested Procedure:

1. Divide the class into two equal teams. Give each team (or each student) a copy of “Rendezvous Price! 1825”.
2. Read the problems to them orally one at a time. Allow them 3 to 5 minutes to work. The first team/student to solve the problem correctly wins a point for their team.
3. Once all of the questions have been answered give the team with the most points a reward of your choice.

Questions:

In 1825, a beaver pelt was worth different amounts if you were a free trapper or you had a contract with a company. How much would you receive for each pelt if you were a free trapper? **Answer: \$5.00 per pound.**

How much if you had a contract with Ashley? **Answer: \$2.00 per pound**

You are a trapper. To join Ashley's company, you would need your own set of traps. A set has six traps, how much will that cost? **Answer: \$54.00**

How much will a set of 6 traps weigh? **Answer: 36 pounds**

If you had an Ashley contract how many beaver pelts would it take to buy the following: 5 lbs. of coffee, 5 lbs. of sugar, and 5 lbs. of flour? **Answer: 10 pelts**

How much would 10 3-point North-West blankets cost? **Answer: \$90.00**

As a free trader the cost of 1 Hawken rifle, 5 lbs. of lead, and 8 lbs. of gunpowder is? **Answer: \$45.00**

How much would 1 awl, 2 lbs. of salt, ½ lb. of pepper, 1 pair of scissors, and 1 dozen fishhooks cost? **Answer: \$11.00**

A beaver weighs about 37 pounds. If you caught 8 beavers in one day and carried them back to camp, how much weight did you carry? **Answer: 296 pounds**

If you were a free trapper and had trapped 250 beavers in 1825, how much money would you have made at the rendezvous? **Answer: \$1,250.00**

You are a trader. American Indians will trade pelts for cloth, dye, and beads. For you to start your business you need 15 yards of blue cloth, 20 yards of scarlet cloth, 20 pieces of vermilion, and 10 pounds of beads. How much will this cost? **Answer: \$365.00**

Ashley could sell pelts in St. Louis for \$10.00 each. What is his profit if a contract trapper sold him 150 lbs.? **Answer: \$1,200.00**

You are at the headwaters of the Missouri River in Montana and you want to get to Ft. Defiance in South Dakota. Ft. Defiance is half-way to St. Louis, how many miles downstream would you have to travel to get there? **Answer: 1,475 miles**

RENDEZVOUS PRICES!

1825

2,950 MILES FROM ST. LOUIS TO THE HEADWATERS OF THE
MISSOURI RIVER IN MONTANA

BEAVER PELTS WEIGH 2 POUNDS (LBS) EACH

PEPPER \$6.00/LB	SCARLET CLOTH \$6.00/YD	BEAVER PELTS FREE TRAPPERS \$5.00/LB. ASHLEY CONTRACT \$2.00/LB
SUGAR \$1.50/LB	BLUE CLOTH \$5.00/YD	TRAPS \$9.00 EACH WEIGHT - 6 LBS.
TOBACCO \$3.00/LB	FLANNEL CLOTH \$1.50/YD	HAWKEN RIFLE \$24.00
COFFEE \$1.50/LB	BUTTONS \$1.50/DOZEN	GUN POWDER \$2.00 /LB.

SALT \$1.25/LB	RIBBONS \$.75/YD	LEAD \$1.00/LB
FLOUR \$1.00/LB	BEADS \$5.00/LB.	FLINTS \$1.00/DOZEN
RUM \$13.50/GALLON	BEST QUALITY 3-POINT NORTH WEST BLANKET \$9.00 EACH	FISH HOOKS \$1.50/DOZEN
VERMILLION \$6.00/EACH	SCISSORS \$2.00 EACH	AWL \$2.00 EACH
MOCCASINS \$.50/PAIR	KNIFE \$2.50 EACH MOCCASINS \$.50/PAIR	SPURS \$2.00/PAIR