

## Letters from a Lumberman

**Subjects:** Social Studies, History, Language Arts, and Reading

**Technology/Equipment/Supplies Needed:**

- Computer with word processing, internet access to access the Digital Wisconsin resources
- VCR & Videos
- Picture books

**Topic:** Wisconsin Lumbering History: *Letters from a Lumberman*

**Grade Level:** 4<sup>th</sup> grade or beyond

**Collaboration:** (w/media specialist, other staff):  
Media specialist to help select print resources to support the lesson

**Lesson Length/**

**No of Sessions:** 3-4 depending on length of time and capabilities of students

**Task/Objectives:** To have students develop a deeper understanding of the conditions endured by early settlers, in particular lumbermen.

To have students empathize with early settlers' struggles, especially separation from their families.

To give students a broad understanding of what Wisconsin looked like before lumbering, and some of the consequences of that process.

**Process (strategies & activities):**

Background knowledge

- By previous studies, students have a good understanding of the "times" of the late 1800's/early 1900's in Wisconsin
  - Geographic areas of state
  - Large cities versus rural living conditions
  - Available transportation and communication systems

Class discussion:

- parents who may either work or be in the service that involves lengthy absences from home.
- relate to early settlers needs to provide for families
- draw from students what they know about early logging days of Wisconsin

- create an Inspiration document of what they know of early logging and “categorize” facts as a class – hopefully categories will emerge for living conditions, work conditions, tools, environment
- divide students into work groups of two or three

Read excerpts from books listed below, and show the videos listed below. Make the books and video available to the students to reference back to them.

Show students pictures from the American Memories web site (<http://memory.loc.gov/>) doing a search using the words “logging” or “lumber camp”. While many of the sites are in Minnesota, they certainly would look similar to Wisconsin. Also, let the students explore the relevant sites listed in the Filamentality HotList below.

NOTE: this could probably become a WebQuest; format of WebQuest would require significant student access to the Internet.

### **Task background:**

Scenario 1: It is the early 1900's. Your family lives in a small town near Milwaukee and you have two brothers and two sisters. Your mom's dad (your grandfather) owns a newspaper in the small town where you live. Your dad has worked for the newspaper, and, after this year will no longer have a job because a larger newspaper is taking over the area. He has heard about the lumbering industry in northern Wisconsin and leaves to get a job cutting down huge pine trees. You, your mom, and your siblings move into your grandparents' house to save money. Your dad will send for you all when he has saved enough to get a place to live, but for now, he lives in a lumber camp.

Scenario 2: It is the early 1900's. Your family lives on a small farm not too far from Milwaukee. Your family is able to raise cattle and enough food for the family. Your dad has a dream of a better life, and has heard of the lumbering industry in northern Wisconsin and the opportunity it presents to earn some additional money. Your older brothers and you are able to do the chores around the house and farm through the fall and winter. Your dad leaves to get a job cutting down huge pine trees and plans to return in time for spring planting. He lives in the lumber camp with the other loggers, and misses you all very much.

Your dad is working hard. He is a strong man, but knows he cannot do the hard labor of lumberjacking forever; besides, some day most or all of the trees will be gone. He has a goal to start small business building furniture, but he needs to buy some tools and supplies to get started; that means he must save a lot of money.

Your dad sends a letter home every week. Every other week it contains money. You miss him and your family writes him letters, too.

**Task** – you may choose to do either of the following or a combination of both:

1. Write three letters from your dad to you and your sisters and brothers; you may also write letters back to your dad.
2. Write captions for the picture collection at <http://www.wisconsinhistory.org/whi/results.asp>

You might want to include in the letters and the captions information about the following:

1. What the land and surroundings are like; you may want to pick a specific locale.
  - Weather conditions
  - Trees
  - Animals
  - Land forms (hills, swamps, lakes)
2. What your dad's living conditions in the lumber camp are like.
  - Sleeping
  - Food/Eating
  - Entertainment
  - Rules
  - Weather – choose a time of the year to write about, or multiple seasons
  - Tools
  - Pollution
3. What some of the other people are like that your dad is working with.
  - Immigrants – from which countries
  - The bosses
  - His coworkers
  - The cooks

Have another group of peers read your letters and give you feedback. You may share ideas with other groups.

### **Digital Wisconsin Resources:**

History program #6: Logging

- Geography 03 Clip 02 -- Logging in Wisconsin
- History Program 08 Using Nature's Resources
  - Clip 04 -- Sawmills & Rivers
  - Clip 06 -- Paper Mills
- History Program 10 Making a Living: Industry
  - Clip 01 -- Timber!
  - Clip 02 -- A Lumberjack's Life
  - Clip 03 -- A Lumberjack's Family
  - Clip 04 -- Sawmill to Furniture Factory
  - Clip 07 -- Logging Wanes
  - Clip 08 -- From Logging to Tourism

### **Books:**

- Daylight in the Swamp! 1884; Robert W. Wells; Northwood, Madison, WI
- The Loggers; 1976; Time-Life Books, New York
- Timber and Men: the Weyerhaeuser Story Ralph W. Hidy

#### **Videos:**

- Journey Back to Lumberjack Camp; Panagopoulos, Janie Lynn
- History of Logging in Wisconsin – Kings of the Woods; 1989; 100% Productions [Available from CESA 10 IMC]
- Romance of the Lumberjack; 1974; Hawkhill productions; Gard, Robert [Available from CESA 10 IMC]
- The Last Lumberjacks; 1994; Minnesota Historical Society. MHS Press Video [Available from CESA 10 IMC]

#### **Internet Resources:**

<http://www.loc.gov>

Search on logging and/or lumber camp

If your dad could have taken pictures, here's what they might have looked like:

<http://www.wisconsinhistory.org/whi/results.asp>

Search on logging and/or lumber camp

<http://www.kn.pacbell.com/wired/fil/pages/listwisconsidi.html>

A Filamentality HotList (links to links) on resources supporting the Digital Wisconsin Project

The class will share their letters and captions. Those writing letters may want to make copies and read them aloud to the class. Those adding captions to pictures may want to put them in a PowerPoint for presentation to the class. Several groups may want to share their captions and rewrite them to make a longer, more descriptive caption.

**Assessment Rubric:** (to be shared with students prior to their group work)

The 6 Trait Model rubric should be used to assess the writing.

In addition, did the writing:

- Adequately take into account the “period” of time?
- Develop a “voice” indicative of father to children?
- Develop sufficient details from the areas of information listed above to satisfy the reader?
- Use technology in a way to enhance the product?

#### **Alignment to Content Standard(s):**

B.4.1

B.4.3

B.4.4

B.4.8

C.4.1

**Alignment to Information and Technology Literacy Standards**

A.4.3  
A.4.4  
B.4.2  
B.4.3  
B.4.4  
B.4.5  
B.4.6  
B.4.7  
B.4.8  
C.4.4  
D.4.1  
D.4.2