

US AND KYRGYZ SCHOOLS IN THE PAST BACKGROUND INFORMATION

In the United States in the 19th century, one-room schools were common on the frontier. The country was expanding westward. The government encouraged adventurous people to settle new territories by offering them land ownership if they worked a plot of land for a number of years.

Key words: One-room schools, importance of education.

В Соединенных Штатах в 19 веке однокомнатные (карликовые) школы были распространены на границе. Страна расширяла западные районы. Правительство призвало предприимчивых людей поселиться на новых территориях, предлагая им право собственности на землю, если они брали участок земли на несколько лет.

Ключевые слова: однокомнатные школы, важность образования.

In the United States in the 19th century, one-room schools were common on the frontier. The country was expanding westward. The government encouraged adventurous people to settle new territories by offering them land ownership if they

worked a plot of land for a number of years. This offered poor immigrants hope for a better life for their children, even though clearing and cultivating the land could be back-breaking work.

One-room schools were another source of hope

for the settlers. Their children could learn skills their parents didn't have, thus increasing possibilities for their future success in the United States. To establish these schools, community members pooled their resources to build a school and hire a teacher. The community then took responsibility for maintaining the school and slowly updating the building and the teaching materials.

In the text a former schoolboy tells his fond memories of studying in a one-room schoolhouse. He is optimistic about his future and sees himself as being a productive citizen in his community on the new frontier.

Pre-reading

Before reading the text to the students, try to get them to speculate about what life in and around a one-room school might have been like.

1. What do you think a one-room school would look like (inside and outside)?
2. What kind of teacher worked in this type of school?
3. What kind of students studied in a one-room school?

THE LITTLE RED SCHOOLHOUSE

While growing up in Kentucky and Indiana, I went to several one-room schools because my family moved around in search of *fertile* land and a town with a good church and *honest* people.

Each schoolhouse looked pretty much the same inside and outside. We sat on backless *benches* and worked at tables placed along the walls of the room, while the teacher's desk sat at a little higher level at the front of the room. We heated the schoolhouse with a *stove* in the center of the room. We put whatever wood we could find into the fire to stay warm. The outside of the small wooden building was painted red, so everybody called it "the little red school-house." A bell hung above the *porch*, and the teacher rang that bell to tell the students it was time to come inside and get to work.

The teacher couldn't help all of us at the same time, sometimes the teacher had the younger students go to the front of the room, while the older students worked on assignments at their desks. All of the kids in my family made it through the eight-grade system. We worked together, taught one another, and this helped all of us *graduate*. There weren't enough books for all of us at school. We made up for this through *rote* memorization and reciting what we learned. I am still able to *recite* parts of some famous speeches we memorized. The teacher also had us act out plays and compete in *spelling bees*.

We called our teacher a schoolmarm. Besides teaching us, she took care of us like a nurse, gave advice like a *counselor*, and made us sit and stand straight like a *drill sergeant*. I really don't know how my teacher managed a large group of students, aged 5 to 20. Students didn't come to class everyday because most of us worked in the fields on our families' farms. When the teacher had trouble with loud and active boys, she always shook her head and said, "boys will be boys."

Getting an education is important. Our town just built a new church and *elected* a *sheriff*. And people say the railroad will build a train station here soon. I know that I can be more than a farmer. Honesty and hard work will bring you a long way in this land of opportunity. Our greatest president, Abraham Lincoln, studied in a one-room school-house just like me.

DUISHEN

Chinghiz Aitmatov described the first Kyrgyz school in his short novel "Duishen": Duishen is the main hero, who was demobilized from the Red Army, has come to a *remote* Kyrgyz village to organize its first school. He comes up against the *hostility* of those whose children he wants to teach, he is abused and threatened by the *bais*, the rich landowners who still consider themselves to be the rulers of life.

Duishen is *naive*, he is inexperienced and impulsive, but his *greatassets* are his boundless enthusiasm, his nobility of purpose and the courage with which he *plunges* into the hazardous battle against his *foes*.

Duishen's pupil, Altynai, who became a doctor of philosophy, remembers him as follows:

"How courageous of that all but *illiterate* young fellow, who could hardly read and had no text-books, not even an elementary reader, to attempt that truly great job! It was no simple thing trying to teach children whose fathers and forefathers had all been illiterate. Duishen was, of course, completely *innocent* of method and had no kind of program. Rather, he never even suspected that such things existed.

He taught us as well as he could, he taught us what he thought we should know, guided by his instinct alone. But the sincere enthusiasm with which he *tackled* the job was not wasted on us, of that I am sure.

He accomplished more than he realized. Yes, he did, because in that school of his, in that old mud stable with *gaping* holes in the walls through which we could see the snow-clad mountain tops, we Kyrgyz children, who had never left the *confines* of our village, suddenly glimpsed a new

and wonderful world. We learnt that kerosene, which people brought from market, came from the depths of the earth. We came to believe that when our people became a little better off our school would move into a big white building with large windows, and the pupils would have desks.”

Post-reading:

I. Additional Vocabulary Practice

1. Every year, students in the United States compete in a national _____, a contest in which participants must spell difficult words.

2. The farmer bought the land because of the _____ Earth.

3. An _____ person tells the truth and expects others to do the same.

4. The population of a country _____ a leader in a democratic process.

5. The soldiers knew that at 5:00 a.m. the _____ would be ready to make them exercise.

6. When someone commits a crime, it is the job of the _____ to catch him.

7. On summer evenings, my family sits on the _____ and watches the sunset.

8. In the park, the two lovers were sitting on a _____ and talking about their future together.

9. When I come home from school, something tasty is cooking on the _____.

Reference

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10. When the student needed advice about how to apply for university, she asked a _____ at school.

11. Someday I will _____ from a university and find a good job.

12. I am still able to _____ poems that I learned years ago.

II. Who, What, Where, When, How?

Divide the class into groups and ask each group to make a chart with 5 columns. Each column represents information about the text on One-Room Schools (American and Kyrgyz). Then, as a class, share the information that they have.

III. Venn Diagram

(Similarities and Differences of US and Kyrgyz Schools in the Past)

