



# The Pioneer Press

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**Grade Level:**

Upper Elementary

**Subject Areas:**

Social Studies, English

**SD Standards:**

Social Studies

English

**Setting:**

Classroom

**Skills:**

Observation, Research,  
Writing, Analyzing,  
Organizing, Applying

**Prior Preparation:**

Split the class and have one group read aloud the book "Samuel Eaton's Day" and have the second group read aloud the book "Sarah Morton's Day". Hold an in-class discussion of what they do in their lives vs. what pioneer children did in their lives with their limited water resources.

Read aloud the "Sod Houses on the Great Plains" by Glen Rounds or the laminated excerpts from "The Sod House Frontier", to your class. This will give your students additional information on the Dakota pioneer way of life.

**Objective:** Students will learn that life on the prairie was sometimes a hardship - not only for the homesteaders, but for the businessmen and women too.

**Materials:**

Paper, pencils, markers, etc.

Internet access

Laminated copy of "The Winnipeg Daily Tribune" or any other historical newspaper (some can be copied from the local library)

Copies of SD Newspapers

"Read All About It" laminated (handout)

Copies of newspaper ads - laminated

**Background:**Today:

Today, South Dakota has 138 newspapers. Eleven are published daily, the rest (127) are published weekly. To be considered a legal newspaper in the state, you have to have a circulation of 200 or more during a calendar year. You also have to publish your paper 50 weeks during the year and it has to contain at least 4 pages per issue. Today's newspapers have to contain reports of happenings of recent occurrences of a varied nature such as political, social, moral, and religious subjects. Most contain legal and official notices, advertisements, comics and other miscellaneous reading matter of general interest to the community.

1890's:

Pioneer newspapers were often one of the last businesses set up in a newly settled town. Early newspapers and job shops worked under very primitive conditions. They were often set up under shade trees at first, then maybe a leaky tent or cold and drafty building. Early typesetters would work by light from candles and lamps. Many pioneer western newspaper presses came to a bad end by being dismantled, smashed and thrown into rivers or dumps, mostly due to public reaction to their owner-editors. These people were often independent, opinionated men, whose editorials took a good deal of newspaper space and not always reflected community opinion.

**Procedure:**

- Your students will construct a pioneer newspaper. Divide the class into small groups. One group will do ads, one will do features, one will do classifieds, etc. Depending on your class size, you can have a few groups or many groups.

- Have each group include at least one ad, feature, classified ad, etc that relates to a water topic.
- Give each group a copy of the Winnipeg Daily Tribune (or whatever historical paper you've got). Advise them that this is a copy of an actual pioneer "old west" newspaper. Review the paper with the entire class. Discuss features of the paper and allow the students time to read the articles, ads, classifieds, etc.
- Hold a discussion about the "Read All About It" handout. Remind the students that their paper will need to be a "frontier"-type of paper. This means that there probably won't be a sports section, a "life" section, etc. Give each group a South Dakota newspaper. Have them compare them to the Winnipeg Daily Tribune. Discuss the differences between now and then.
- Hand out copies of the pioneer ads. Explain that in pioneer days, it was common to see ads from far-away cities in the local paper. Many companies made metal plates and sent them out to newspaper printers for the express purpose of placement into the local paper. Most pioneer papers carried at least 1/3 ads. Ad sales were, in many instances, what kept a newspaper in business. These ads are samples of what were available to the reader during the pioneer days. Many of them show pricing and shipping.
- Students will create their own pioneer ads. Make a list on the chalkboard of possible items that a pioneer family would need to have (saddles, plows, tools, washboards, food items, clothing, farm goods, livestock, etc). Each group can create ads - you can determine how many ads each group will be responsible for adding to the newspaper.
- Have the group layout their pioneer newspaper. Make copies and send home with each student. Make sure to give credit in the paper to each student as his/her part of the "press corp."

### **Extension:**

- Go to [www.tombstone1880.com/archives](http://www.tombstone1880.com/archives) for newspapers articles and photos from the Tombstone, Arizona pioneer paper.
- Go to <http://www.treasurenet.com/images/americanwest/west001.html> to the Historical Image Collection. There you will find pictures of pioneer newspaper people and their surroundings.