



Children of Early Appalachia

Grades 3-7

Toys

Early Appalachian mountaineers found plenty of wood in the forests and used it for many things. They not only built their homes, furniture and barns of wood; they also made kitchen utensils, wooden plates and bowls, spinning wheels, looms for weaving, and toys.

A sturdy two-blade jackknife or folding pocket knife was the main tool used to make tools of long ago. The fact that so much time and effort were put into making toys reflects the love and pride early mountain people felt toward their children. Not everyone agreed that children should have such interesting toys, and some people criticized the time and effort “waster” on toys and children.



Early Appalachian children led very different lives from those of children today. Simple games and toys were their main amusement. The toys were generally made from wood, string bark, leather and cloth. Sunday was a day set aside for worship and rest, and youngsters were forbidden to play noisy games. Two toys allowed on Sunday were whirligigs and little carved Noah's ark sets, complete with animals.

Just like today, boys and girls of long ago went to school, played games, and loved their toys.

Questions and Activities

1. Why do you think so many of the early toys were made of wood?
2. What were the common tools used to make tools of long ago?
3. What are some reasons why children could not play noisy games on Sunday? That still true today where you live? Is it true anywhere? Try to find out.
4. Interview a grandparent or an older neighbor or two about their favorite childhood toy. Report the interview to your class.

From: [An Appalachian Studies Teachers Manual](#)

Sheet written by Lois Vandagriff, Woodland Elementary School, Oak Ridge, Tennessee.