Pre- and Post-Visit Activities
The Frontier Trading Program at the Mercer Museum

Grade Levels: Grades 2 -6

Program Summary:

The Frontier Trading Program weaves a story for students to understand economic relationships in early American communities. It encourages students to make connections between the tools used in Colonial times and the tools preserved in the Mercer Museum. Students participating in The Frontier Trading Program experience the way people lived and obtained goods in early American communities.

The following suggested activities are for students visiting the museum and participating in The Frontier Trading Program. These activities are designed to be supplemental material to help students get the most out of their experience.
Pre-Activities:

Activity 1: Where is it from?

Ask students to look around the classroom or bring in objects from home. Do these items list where the item was made or what company made it? Students might find that most packaged items or clothing have that information. The goal is to see who or what made an object, and where in the world it came from.

During The Frontier Trading Program, students learn that during the Colonial time period people made products themselves, instead of being able to buy them from larger companies. If they couldn’t make them, they might have to trade for objects around the world.

Split the students into groups and have each group examine their items.

- Is there a person’s or company’s name on the item?
- Does it say where it was made?
- How do you think it got here?
- Why do these objects have identifying labels on them while others do not?
- Were they made by hand or by a machine?

Bonus Extension: Students can research who or what company made a particular item. What is the background history of that person or company? Did they always make those items and for how long?
Activity 2: Let’s Trade!

During The Frontier Trading Program, students learn why Colonial Americans traded and bartered for different goods and products. To get ready for that lesson, your class can practice bartering by having a “Trading Day” in your classroom.

Ask your students to bring in objects from home that they are willing to trade or have classroom items that students are able to trade around and return at the end of the activity.

On Trading Day, have each student set up their objects on a table or at their desk. Students then walk around and look at each other’s objects. Next, bartering can begin.

Students ask to barter items from each other, just as Colonial-era artisans, tradespeople, and farmers did as a part of their routine.

At the conclusion discuss the following:
- What did you trade?
- Was it an equal trade? If so, why?
- How would your experience be different if you paid for your object?
- What was good or bad about trading?
Post-Activities:

Activity 1: Design your own Logo

Colonial farmers used butter molds with a unique design to mark which butter was theirs. Today, logos or trademarks do the same thing for products in stores.

Have students think about companies with easily identifiable logos. Which company’s logo includes a design with a swoosh or a golden ‘M’? They might be able to quickly identify these companies as Nike and McDonalds.

Now, you can hand out paper and coloring supplies to your students and tell them to design a personal logo.

Students should consider:
- What does their logo design look like? Is it simple or detailed, like a butter mold?
- Does it have letters?
- How can it be identified as yours?

As a class, share each student’s logos and see if they can guess who designed each logo.
Activity 2: Fill in the Tools Student Worksheet

Directions: During The Frontier Trading Program, you saw different products and the tools used to make them. Using this knowledge, read the sentences below and fill in the blanks using the word bank at the bottom of the page.

1. Sheep have wool that can be spun into yarn. In the spring, farmers use__________ to cut the wool off the sheep, giving the sheep a haircut.

2. Once the wool was washed and carded (combed), it was spun into yarn using a ____________________________.

3. Many small holes were added to tin lanterns with a ___________________________ to let light to shine through.

4. Using a ___________________________, a farmer worked hard to mix dairy milk into delicious butter.

5. The designs on a ___________________________ let people at the market know which farmer made the butter, like a logo or a trademark today.

6. Sugar, grown on islands in the Caribbean Sea, was transported to the docks in Philadelphia on a ________________.

7. No one wanted to waste sugar so, ___________________________ pinched off just a little bit from the top of a sugar cone.

8. A blacksmith made objects from metal, like nails or horseshoes, by heating up the metal and shaping it using a ______________________ and tongs.

Word Bank:

Shears       Hammer       Tin punch       Ship
Sugar nippers Butter mold Drop spindle Butter Churn
Fill in the Tool Student Worksheet ANSWER KEY

1. Sheep have wool that can be spun into yarn. In the spring, farmers use __shears__ to cut the wool off the sheep, giving the sheep a haircut.

2. Once the wool was washed and carded (combed), it was spun into yarn using a __drop spindle______.

3. Many small holes were added to tin lanterns with a __tin punch_____ to let light to shine through.

4. Using a __butter churn____, a farmer worked hard to mix dairy milk into delicious butter.

5. The designs on a __butter mold____ let people at the market know which farmer made the butter, like a logo or a trademark today.

6. Sugar, grown on islands in the Caribbean Sea, was transported to the docks in Philadelphia on a __ship__.

7. No one wanted to waste sugar so, __sugar nippers__ pinched off just a little bit from the top of a sugar cone.

8. A blacksmith made objects from metal, like nails or horseshoes, by heating up the metal and shaping it using a __hammer__ and tongs.