

Overview

The purpose of this lesson is to discuss the reasons for and purposes of frontier forts in Kansas. The student will learn about Fort Leavenworth, Fort Scott, Fort Riley, Fort Larned, and Fort Hays. The lesson also focuses on everyday life at the forts and the economics of being a soldier. The lesson is presented over three class periods but can be adjusted to meet individual classroom needs.

Standards

Current standards can be found on ksks.org.

Objectives

Content:

- The student will be able to name five frontier forts in Kansas.
- The student will describe the purpose of frontier forts in Kansas.
- The student will summarize details of everyday life at a frontier fort.

Skills:

- The student will explain the cause and effect relationship between the conflict over land and resources and the establishment of the frontier forts.
- The student will work cooperatively to present an oral report.
- The student will write a narrative supporting main ideas with relevant details.

Essential Questions

- Why did the U.S. military find it necessary to patrol the frontier?
- What was everyday life like at a frontier fort?

Activities

This activity uses the following *Read Kansas* cards:

- Fort Leavenworth
- Fort Scott
- Fort Riley
- Fort Larned
- Fort Hays
- The Economics of Being a Soldier On the Frontier

Day 1

1. Discuss with the students the concept of “Manifest Destiny.” Discuss how the Plains Indians might have felt as Americans continued to move westward.
2. Explain that the U.S. military established forts on the frontier to keep the peace.
3. Divide the class into five groups and assign each group a fort to study. Using the *Read Kansas* cards, have each group answer the following questions:
 - Why was the fort established?
 - What was it like to live at the fort?
 - What happened to the fort?
4. Write the questions on the board.

Day 2

1. Ask each group to make a report to the class.
2. After each group has given its report, use the **Frontier Forts: Cause and Effect** graphic organizer to review the purpose of each fort. Create an overhead with the graphic organizer and fill it out as a class. Discuss that there is always a “cause” and “effect” in history. In this case, there was a need that created a “cause,” and the “effect” was the establishment of the forts.
3. Have the class summarize the overall purposes for frontier forts.
4. Use the **Kansas Forts** graphic organizer to review the answers to questions 2 and 3 (from Day 1) for each fort. Complete this graphic organizer as a group.

Day 3

1. Have the students review what they have learned about what it was like to be stationed at a frontier fort. To help their memory, you might want to pass out the one *Read Kansas* card used by each student.
2. Give each student a copy of **The Economics of Being a Soldier on the Frontier** *Read Kansas* card. Read and discuss the card as a class. Discuss the difference between a “need” and a “want.” Review the kind of goods soldiers had access to at the sutler’s store.
3. Assign each student a role as an officer, non-commissioned officer, or private. Have students determine what their monthly pay would be by using **The Economics of Being a Soldier on the Frontier** *Read Kansas* card.
4. Assign each student the task of pretending he or she is a soldier stationed at a frontier fort. Tell students that they have been at the fort for three months. Ask them to write a letter home. In that letter they must describe life at the fort providing relevant details to support their main points. Part of the letter must be an accounting of what they have done with their pay over the last three months.

Assessment

1. Observe the students' participation in developing and presenting the group report.
2. Evaluate the students' ability to write a narrative letter that uses imagination based on historical fact and that can support main points with relevant details.

For the Teacher

Answer key for the Frontier Forts: Cause and Effect worksheet:

Cause	Effect
Fur traders on the Missouri River and travelers on the Santa Fe Trail needed protection.	Establishment of Fort Leavenworth
There was a need to maintain peace between the Indians and the settlers on the frontier. Travelers on the Oregon-California and Santa Fe trails needed protection.	Establishment of Fort Scott
Travelers on the Oregon-California and Santa Fe trails needed protection. Indians needed protection from travelers disrupting their traditional way of life.	Establishment of Fort Riley
A mail station was set up at Pawnee Fork and the mail carriers needed protection. The Indian Agency was stationed at that location and Indians needed to feel safe there.	Establishment of Fort Larned
Employees, passengers, and freight traveling on the Butterfield Overland Despatch needed protection.	Establishment of Fort Hays

Answer key for the Kansas Forts worksheet:

Fort	Daily Life	What Happened?
Fort Leavenworth	Life was quiet and boring. Some soldiers brought their families. Malaria was a problem for many people.	Fort Leavenworth continues as an active military post today. It is home of the leading school for training military officers.
Fort Scott	Soldiers were pretty isolated. Soldiers ate soup, stew, bread, beef, beans, and rice. Officers could have their families with them.	Fort Scott was closed in 1853, but reopened for the Civil War. It was closed for the final time after that. Today it is a national historic site.
Fort Riley	Soldiers participated in military drills. They helped build and maintain the fort. They had to take care of their horses. Cholera was a problem for many soldiers.	Fort Riley continues as an active military post today. Soldiers from Fort Riley are deployed all over the world.
Fort Larned	The soldiers were fairly isolated. Food had to be shipped a long distance and sometimes spoiled. Soldiers often played games for entertainment.	Fort Larned closed in 1878. It is now a national historic site.
Fort Hays	Soldiers at the fort rode into the field to provide protection for travelers. The railroad brought supplies and entertainment to them.	Fort Hays closed in 1889. It is now the Fort Hays State Historic Site and an Agricultural Research Center.

If you are using the textbook, *The Kansas Journey*, this lesson can be used with pages 114-118.

The Kansas State Historical Society has published a Kansas Forts Book Series that provides in-depth information on each fort. The following books are included in that series of eight books:

Hughes, J. Patrick. *Fort Leavenworth: Gateway to the West*. Topeka: Kansas State Historical Society, 2000.

McKale William and William D. Young. *Fort Riley: Citadel of the Frontier West*. Topeka, Kansas State Historical Society, 2000.

Oliva, Leo E. *Fort Hays: Keeping the Peace on the Plains*. Topeka, Kansas State Historical Society, 1996.

Oliva, Leo E. *Fort Larned: Guardian of the Santa Fe Trail*. Topeka, Kansas State Historical Society, 1997.

Oliva, Leo E. *Fort Scott: Courage and Conflict on the Border*. Topeka, Kansas State Historical Society, 1996.

The Kansas State Historical Society has also published a book of primary source materials relating to the frontier forts.

Walker, Joel. *Kansas Forts: Historical Documents for the Classroom*. Topeka, Kansas State Historical Society, 2000.

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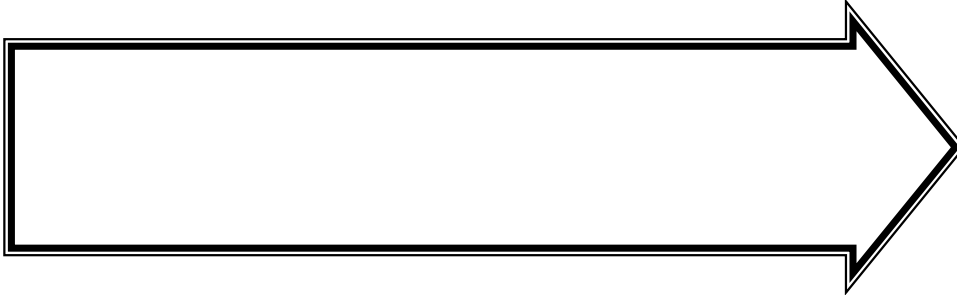
- Kansas State Historical Society collections

Name: _____

Frontier Forts: Cause and Effect

Cause

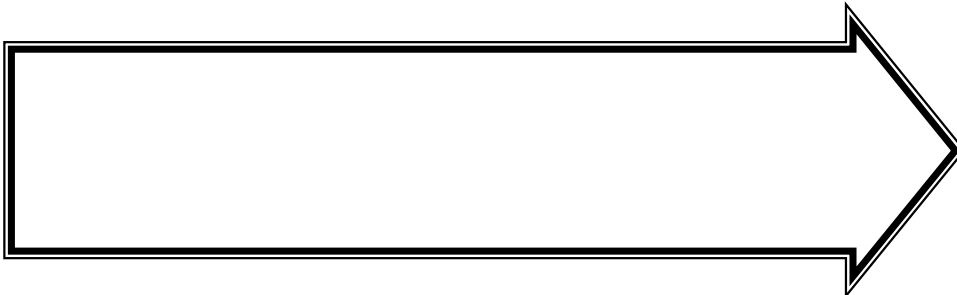
Effect



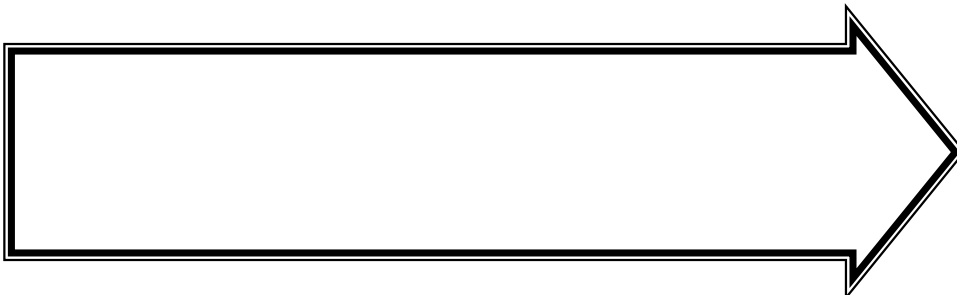
Establishment of **Fort Leavenworth** in 1827



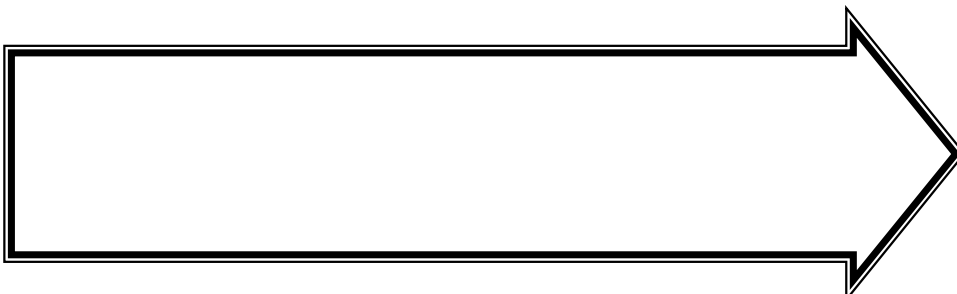
Establishment of **Fort Scott** in 1842



Establishment of **Fort Riley** in 1853



Establishment of **Fort Larned** in 1859



Establishment of **Fort Hays** in 1865

Name: _____

Kansas Forts

Fort	Daily Life at the Fort	What Happened to the Fort?
Fort Leavenworth		
Fort Scott		
Fort Riley		
Fort Larned		
Fort Hays		