

# RURAL ONE-ROOM SCHOOLHOUSE

Based on Fourth-Grade Texas Essential Knowledge and Skills



INSTITUTE OF  
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**CULTURES**

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## Introduction

Dear Educator,

Thank you for choosing the Rural One-Room Schoolhouse. In this package, you will find everything you will need to implement a primary source based lesson.

We know that you may need to adapt these lessons to fit the constructs of your classroom and the needs of your students. Please feel free to copy the handouts included or create your own!

We look forward to bringing the museum experience to your classroom. If you should have any questions before the visit, please do not hesitate to contact us.

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## Texas Essential Knowledge and Skills

The following fourth-grade TEKS are covered through the implementation of the included lessons. Additional TEKS for fourth grade and other grade levels may also be covered through adaptations to the activities.

### **Fourth Grade Social Studies TEKS:**

*4.19: Culture.* The student understands the contributions of people of various racial, ethnic, and religious groups to Texas. The student is expected to: (A) identify the similarities and differences among various racial, ethnic, and religious groups in Texas

*4.22: Social studies skills.* The student communicates in written, oral, and visual forms. The student is expected to (A) use social studies terminology correctly (B) incorporate main and supporting ideas in verbal and written communications (C) express ideas orally based on research and experiences (D) create written and visual material such as journal entries, reports, graphic organizers, outlines, and bibliographies and (E) use standard grammar, spelling, sentence structure, and punctuation.

*4.23: Social studies skills.* The student uses problem solving and decision-making skills, working independently and with others in a variety of settings. The student is expected to: a) use a problem-solving process to identify a problem, gather information, list and consider options, consider advantages and disadvantages, choose and implement a solution, and evaluate the effectiveness of the solution.

### **Fourth Grade English Language Arts TEKS:**

*4.29: Listening and Speaking/Teamwork.* Students work productively with others in teams. Students continue to apply earlier standards with greater complexity. Students are expected to participate in teacher- and student-led discussions by posing and answering questions with appropriate detail and by providing suggestions that build upon the ideas of others.

*4.16 Writing/Literary Texts.* Students write literary texts to express their ideas and feelings about real or imagined people, events, and ideas. Students are expected to: (A) write imaginative stories that build the plot to a climax and contain details about the characters and setting.

# Rural One-Room Schoolhouse: An Introduction to Early Classrooms in Texas Jigsaw

**Estimated Time:** 45 minutes

## **Materials:**

- Copies of reproducible *Rural One-Room Schoolhouse: An Introduction to Early Classrooms in Texas Jigsaw Activity*, page 5
- Copies of reproducible *Rural One-Room Schoolhouse* readings, pages 6-8

## **Instructions:**

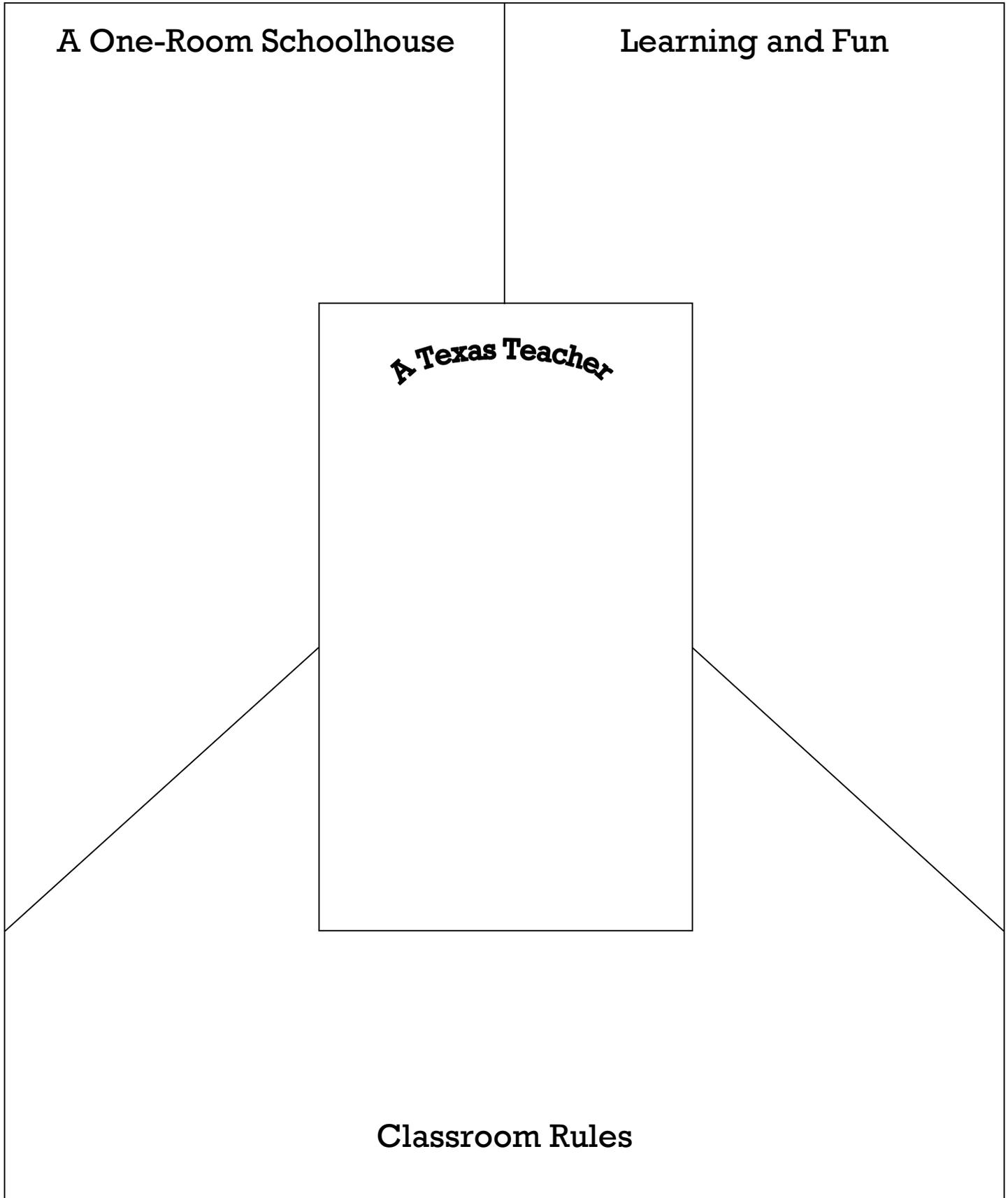
1. Divide students into nine groups. Tell the students that each group will read about one aspect of life and culture in a one-room schoolhouse and they need to become the experts on their subjects. In a few minutes, it will be their responsibility to teach their classmates.
2. Ask students to read silently or aloud to each other. The group should make notes as they read in their appropriate portion of the Jigsaw Activity Page. Reading assignments will be divided into the following sections:
  - a. A One-Room Schoolhouse
  - b. Learning and Fun
  - c. Classroom Rules
3. Once students have become the experts on their subjects and completed their portions of the graphic organizer, regroup them. You should have nine groups of three students and each student should be the expert on one section of the reading. If you have more than 27 students, you will need to adjust the grouping assignments and you may have more than one expert in each group.
4. Students should present the information that they learned to their new group members, and help them complete their Jigsaw Activity Page. If you have more students, ask those students that are duplicates in the group to share the responsibility of teaching their classmates. Remind the students that they are essentially the teacher for their subject, so it is important that they explain their topic as best they can.
5. When this activity is completed, students should have learned about each topic related to a one-room schoolhouse in Texas, completed the Jigsaw Activity Page, and had the opportunity to teach their fellow classmates.

**Note:** This assignment can also be completed individually.

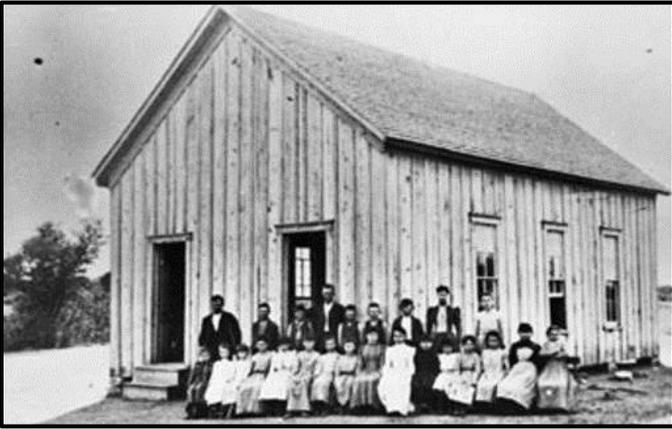
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**Rural One-Room Schoolhouse: An Introduction to Early Classrooms in Texas**

*Directions: Fill in the chart with facts from your reading and the information your classmates teach you, following your teacher's instructions for your jigsaw activity. Then draw a picture in the center to represent how a teacher may have looked.*



# A One-Room Schoolhouse



*Students and faculty in front of one-room frame school building at Nine, McCulloch Co., TX (ca. 1885).*



*Teacher and students outside of Crosbyton School (no date).*

Students in Texas today attend schools both big and small. It is common to find a variety of students and teachers learning, playing games, reading books, and using technology every day across the state. Some of the traditions we have in schools are from a long time ago, but going to a school in Texas in the 1800s would have been a very different experience.

Today, the state government raises money to pay for all students to have a free, public education, but that was not always true. In the late 1800s, the Texas government passed the first laws that used tax money to pay for schools to be built and set up the first school districts.

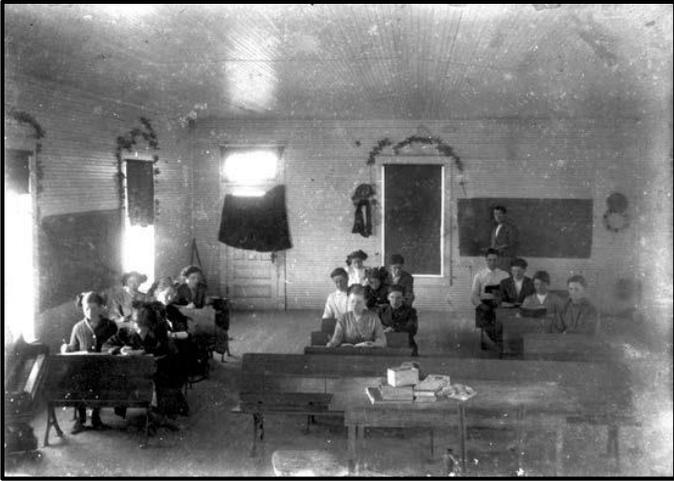
Although the government provided money to build schools, it was up to the community to build the schoolhouse. Adults and children helped build the school and its furniture. Everyone worked hard to build the school, so it often had many uses. When classes were not being held, it might also serve as a church or a place to have town meetings.

Unlike classrooms today, that might have colorful pictures on bulletin boards and examples

of excellent student work hanging on the walls, a one-room school had little decoration. A typical room was drab, or boring. On the teacher's desk, it was common to have only a Bible and a dictionary. The other essential, or important, items you might find in a one-room school are: simple desks with backless benches, a teacher's desk and chair, a blackboard, an iron potbelly stove, pegs for coats to hang, a water bucket and dipper, cleaning supplies, and slate pencils.

Early Texas schoolhouses were usually cold in the winter. They had one wood-burning potbelly stove to keep students warm. Most schools did not have indoor plumbing, so restrooms were built in out-houses outside. They also did not have water fountains. The teacher filled a bucket of water from the well or water pump outside and students shared one ladle to drink from during the day. There were no custodians, so children were expected to help clean the schoolhouse.

# Learning and Fun



*Interior of school with students seated at desks and teacher standing in the rear in Simmons, TX (1909).*

A normal school day began at 9:00 a.m. and ended at 4:00 p.m. Students in all grade levels were in the same room. Boys sat on one side of the room, and girls sat on the other. School started with students saying a prayer, reading a Bible verse, saying the Pledge of Allegiance, and singing a patriotic song.

A long time ago, students worked individually and silently. They had to memorize their lessons and recite them for their teacher. Paper was expensive, so students wrote their lessons on slate boards. Children were not encouraged to think for themselves or to be creative. They had strict rules, and students learned morals and good behavior through the stories they read.

The community decided what subjects the students learned in school. There were no state rules or tests for teachers to follow in the classroom, so teachers taught the same way they were taught as children.

All students learned reading, writing, and arithmetic. Older students might learn geography, history, and science. Spelling and penmanship, or beautiful handwriting, were important, too.

Reading was the most important subject taught in a one-room schoolhouse. Most Americans in the 1800s and early 1900s believed learning to read was a major accomplishment. Students were expected to stand and recite reading assignments in front of the entire class.

Students spent time practicing their handwriting and spelling. Being a good speller was a sign of a good education. Spelling bees were a form of entertainment and the community was invited to the school to watch. Some schoolhouses had a piano for entertainment before school, but most creative learning like music and art were seen as a waste of time.

As in any school, recess and lunch were the favorite times of day for many students.

Recess was usually 15 minutes long. Schools in the 1800s did not have playgrounds, so children played games and found creative ways of entertaining themselves. Boys and girls usually played separately and students used items found around the school in their games.

During recess, students played games that are still popular today like Red Rover, hide-and-seek, and jump rope. Girls played hopscotch and jump rope, while boys sometimes played baseball with sticks and balls of string. Girls sometimes played with dolls made from socks.

Lunches were brought from home in lard buckets. Students usually brought leftovers from dinner. A typical lunch might include cold biscuits or bread, jam or honey, and maybe bacon leftover from breakfast.

# Classroom Rules



*Students and teacher outside Pedernales School near Fredericksburg, TX (Between 1900 and 1910).*



*Girls seated in San Antonio classroom with teachers standing in the back (no date).*

Everyone in a one-room schoolhouse had strict rules to follow. The community chose a group of respected men to hire and enforce rules of conduct for teachers.

Most teachers in one-room schoolhouses were young women. They could be as young as 16 or 17. In order to be a teacher, a woman had to finish at least seventh grade and pass a teacher's exam. Taking college classes was helpful, but it was not required of teachers.

Although teachers did not wear a uniform, they were expected to follow a strict dress code. They wore long skirts that went to the floor. Their shirts were high-necked with long sleeves. Most of their clothes were very simple and plain colors like grey, brown, black, or white. Hair was pulled back in a bun, and they were not allowed to wear make-up.

Teachers had rules for their personal lives. They were only allowed to speak to men if they were close relatives. Smoking and drinking were

not permitted. Teachers were usually young, single women, without their own homes. They lived with their students, and moved to different homes each month. If a teacher got married, she usually had to quit her job.

Students followed very strict rules in early schools. Children were expected to behave like young adults. They were not allowed to talk unless recognized by the teacher. Then, students stood up by their desks before speaking. Students could not talk or pass notes while they were working. If a student broke a rule, he or she might be hit with a switch. Boys who broke rules were sometimes punished by having to sit with the girls. Students who did not complete their lessons correctly had to wear a dunce cap. Other punishments included hair pulling, head thumping, standing on one foot for thirty minutes, and kneeling on rocks. Most schools did not have problems with children misbehaving, because parents worked with the teacher to make sure kids followed all of the rules.

# Classroom Compare and Contrast

**Estimated Time:** 30 minutes

**Materials:**

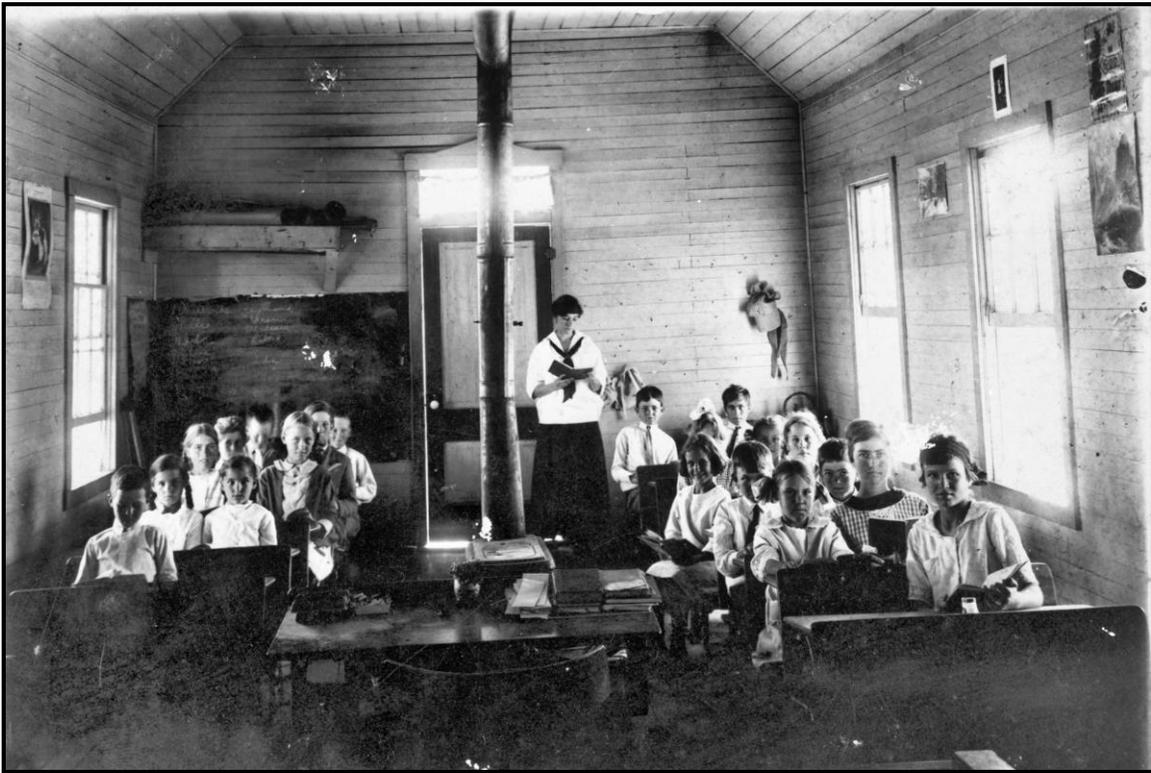
- Copies of reproducible *Classroom Compare and Contrast* Activity Pages (copied front to back), pages 10-11

**Instructions:**

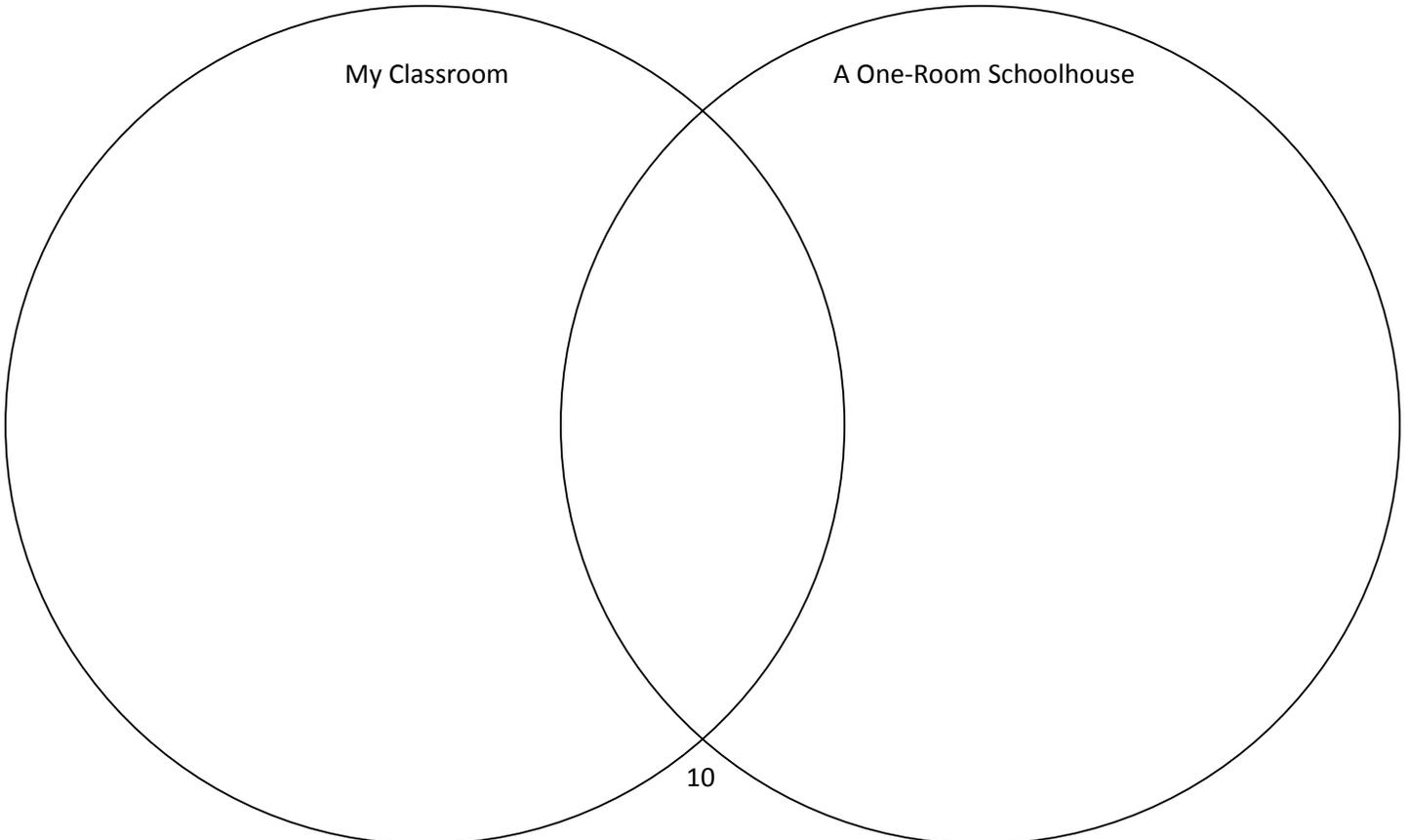
1. Ask students to complete the Venn diagram on the *Classroom Compare and Contrast* Activity Page by writing down facts and details describing their own classroom and the classroom in the picture on the activity page.
2. When students have finished making notes on their *Classroom Compare and Contrast* Activity Page, draw a Venn diagram on the board and ask students to share their observations. Compile a list of the most interesting similarities and differences.
3. When the class has finished sharing, ask them to turn their *Classroom Compare and Contrast* Activity Page over to the back and write four to five sentences responding to the following: Imagine students from 100 years in the future see a picture of your classroom. What do you think they will find odd or different about your class? What do you think might still be the same?

### Classroom Compare and Contrast

Directions: Look at the picture of a classroom from Texas in 1915. Compare and contrast this classroom to your own by completing the Venn diagram below. List details from the photo and what you see in your own classroom.



Detail from interior of the Castell, Texas Two-Room School with Mrs. Anita McLean (ca 1915-1916)





# A Day at a One-Room Schoolhouse

**Estimated Time:** 45 minutes

**Materials:**

- Previously completed *Rural One-Room Schoolhouse: An Introduction to Early Classrooms in Texas* Jigsaw Activity, page 5
- Notebook paper or blank paper

**Instructions:**

1. Using all of the information learned in the preceding activities, ask students to think about what a day in the life of a student or teacher in a one-room schoolhouse might have been like.
2. Instruct students to write a two-page story about a student or teacher in a rural one-room schoolhouse. In their story, they should include facts and details they learned in the other activities. Students may be creative and make up names for characters, but they should be sure to use factual information about what life was really like.
3. When they complete their writing, ask students to illustrate one aspect of their stories. They may choose to draw characters or scenes.

## References:

- Bryan, Mike and Mary Lay, eds. *Journey from Ignorant Ridge: Stories and Pictures of Texas Schools in the 1800's*. (Austin: Texas Congress of Parents and Teachers, 1976).
- Clegg, Luther Bryan, ed. *The Empty Schoolhouse: Memories of One-Room Texas Schools*. (College Station: Texas A&M University Press, 1997).
- Davis, O. L. *Schools of the Past: A Treasury of Photographs*. (Bloomington: Phi Delta Kappa Educational Foundation, 1976).
- Preuss, Gene B. *To Get a Better School System*. (College Station: Texas A&M University Press, 2009).
- Sitton, Thad and Milam C. Rowold. *Ringing the Children In: Texas Country Schools*. (College Station: Texas A&M University Press, 1987).

### Photos

- Amanda H. Ochse, San Antonio. UTSA Special Collections (71-0048)
- Crosby County Pioneer Museum (John D. McDermett), University of Texas-San Antonio, Special Collections (72-1932).
- Mrs. Anita McLean, San Antonio. UTSA Special Collections (75-197)
- Mrs. Bryant M. Collins, Austin, TX. University of Texas-Special Collections (81-443).
- Pioneer Memorial Museum, Fredericksburg, TX. University of Texas-San Antonio Special Collections (73-719).
- University of the Incarnate Word, San Antonio, TX. University of Texas-San Antonio, Special Collections (96-942).
- UTSA Special Collections (78-513)