

Pioneer Theme Singing Time

This involves a number of “pioneer” children activities. It takes about 30+ minutes to get through all the activities, so ask for extra time if you can. It could be stretched out to be a full sharing/singing time by using a little longer explanations, and repeating the songs a few more times. The goal is to help the children understand and appreciate the pioneers, review songs (I picked the ones we’re singing on the program), and motivate them to sing well so they can be the next one chosen to do the activities. Always choose the “best” singers – looking for children who are actively involved either by doing actions, or singing the words. If they don’t know the words well, repeat the song 3 or 4 times until they get it. Everyone loved this singing time.

#1: Gathering Chips for Wood

Need: 40 or 50 small pinecones, 2 bandanas or small baskets.

I used pinecones from my yard, counting out an equal number to put in two bags. Mine were really small, so I got 25 for each side. Choose 2 children to spread the “chips” out – each on their own side of the room, and 2 more to be the gatherers. Explain that it was the pioneer children’s responsibility to gather the fuel for the fire they used to cook dinner. On “Go” the 2 gatherers start collecting pinecones into their bandana and then bring it to you for the fire. They must count the pinecones to make sure they got them all. The first one back gets to pick the next song.

#2: Seagulls and crickets

Need: 2 small jars, 2 clothes pins, 16-20 beans divided in half – kidney beans are about the right size. Briefly review the story of the crickets and the seagull. Choose two seagulls to pick the crickets off the crops and save the pioneers. On Go, they use the clothes pins to pick up the beans and drop them in the jar. If you have less time, use fewer beans and put them close to the jar. More time, put the beans on the ground. The first one done picks the next song. The best singers get to be the next pioneer children.

#3: Help the little ones across streams.

Need: Two bigger/stronger children, and 6 smaller children.

Explain that the older brothers and sisters helped the younger ones so their whole family could make it to Zion. Pick a big brother/sister, and then assign smaller ones to be the younger siblings.

Have them start on one side of the room. The imaginary river is between them and the other side.

Their job is to get their siblings across safely. The first family across wins.

#4: Breaking camp.

Need: 2 quilts, and 2 belts – ideally the kind with rings so it’s completely adjustable. 2 children on each team.

While you’re explaining, have each team spread out their bed for the night on opposite sides of the room. Explain that every night the pioneers would set up camp, and every morning, they would need to pack everything back up into their wagon or handcart. They didn’t have sleeping bags, but they packed their blankets or bed rolls up to be about the size of a sleeping bag so it didn’t take up too much room in the wagon. Hand each team a belt and have them pack up their blanket into a bedroll. They didn’t know what to do, so I explained that they needed to fold it over, and fold it over again, and then roll it up. I explained this after I said Go.

#5: Fetch the water

Need: 2 “dippers” (I used 1/3 cup measuring cups), 2 bottles or jars (I used small old fashioned pink milk jars, but jam jars would work too), 2 dish towels (put them under the jars to catch the spills), and 1 pan with water in it.

Explain that pioneer children couldn’t just go to the sink and turn the water on to get a drink. While they were crossing the plains they had to go to streams and fill their buckets and canteens with water. Their parents relied on them to help get the water every day. The object is to use the dipper to fill the jar as quickly as possible without spilling. They were about equally fast filling the jar, so I picked the winner who spilled the least.

#6: Writing in journals

Need: 2 pieces of paper with a journal entry on it. 2 pieces of chalk. 2 children

Explain how lucky we are today that pioneers kept journals of their journey and their feelings. Because of their faithfulness in keeping that record, we know about their joys and trials today. I hope that you are also keeping a daily journal about your family and important things in your life. Each child takes the journal entry and writes it on the board.

Seniors: We traveled 13 miles today. We crossed a river. Ma is sick.

Juniors: We walked 13 miles today.

The winner could be the fastest or have the best handwriting (it’s important that people can read what you write).

#7: Clothesline

Need: About 15 feet of clothes line. I used Jute because I had it, but any thin rope or cord would work. 3 clothing items for each child. They should be approximately the same thing.

12 clothes pins. 2 children to hold the line up high, and 2 children to pin the clothes on the line

Explain that pioneers didn’t have washers and driers. They washed their clothes in the river, or sometimes by hand in wash tubs. And they hung everything out to dry on a clothes line. The sun and the breeze helped them to dry quickly. Pioneer mothers often relied on their children to help with the laundry and the cooking. Everyone pitched in with chores. If they didn’t the family might not survive. Goal is to be the first to get your clothes on the line.

#8: Scriptures

Need: 2 Book or Mormon scriptures – one for each side. Or you could have a set of scriptures for each class.

Explain that it was their belief in Jesus Christ and their faith in what was written in the scriptures and the Book of Mormon that motivated these people to leave their homes and travel thousands of miles across the wilderness to find a home where they could worship God. I’m sure that the children especially loved the stories about Jesus visiting the Nephite children and giving them blessings. Many miracles happened to the children during that time. The object is to be the first team to find the account of Jesus blessing the Nephite children when he said “Behold your little ones” and angels came down and encircled them with fire and ministered to them. (It’s in 3rd Nephi 17: 23-24)