

READING – “LIFE IN THE OLD DAYS”

I Vocabulary. Write the words under the images below: chamber pot, kerosene lamp, quilt, washboard, water pump, Cast iron stove,



1. _____ 2. _____ 3. _____ 4. _____ 5. _____ 6. _____

II Read the article about housework in the old days.

What was life like before electricity, indoor plumbing and natural gas? The Clarke Historical Museum in Eureka has turned back the clock to put together a new exhibit displaying common household items used before modern conveniences drastically changed life as we know it.

During the 1800s, women almost always found themselves in the center of domestic life. Hours were spent learning the domestic arts with an emphasis on cooking, baking, preserving and sewing, and maintaining a household during this time period was a difficult job. Regular housework and food preparation required much more manual labor than it does today and is reflected in the tools used to accomplish these tasks. These types of items, along with children's toys, household remedies and quilts, all from the late 19th and early 20th century, are on exhibit at the museum.

Housework in 19th-century America was harsh physical labor. Preparing even a simple meal was a time- and energy-consuming chore. It was not enough for a housewife to know how to use a cast iron stove. She also had to know how to prepare unprocessed foods for consumption, as there were few factory-prepared foods. Shoppers bought poultry that was still alive and then had to kill and pluck the birds. Fish had to have scales removed. Green coffee had to be roasted and ground. Loaves of sugar had to be pounded, flour sifted, nuts shelled and raisins seeded.

Cleaning was an even more arduous task than cooking. The soot and smoke from coal and wood-burning stoves blackened walls and dirtied drapes and carpets. Gas and kerosene lamps left smelly deposits of black soot on furniture and curtains. Each day, the lamps' glass chimneys had to be wiped and wicks trimmed or replaced. Floors had to be scrubbed, rugs beaten and windows washed.

Before the end of the 19th century, when indoor plumbing became common, chores that involved the use of water were particularly demanding. The overwhelming majority of American families got their water from a hydrant, pump, well or stream located some distance from their house.

The mere job of bringing water into the house could be exhausting. A typical housewife had to carry water eight to 10 times each day. Homes without running water also lacked the simplest way to dispose of garbage: sinks with drains. This meant that homemakers had to carry dirty dishwater, kitchen slop and, worst of all, the contents of chamberpots from their house manually.

Perhaps laundry was the household chore a 19th-century women detested most. On Sunday evenings, she would soak dirty clothes in tubs of warm water. When she awoke the next morning, she had to scrub the laundry on a rough washboard and rub it with soap. Next, she placed the clothes in big vats of boiling water and stirred the clothes with a long pole with an agitator on the end. Then she lifted the clothes out of the vats with a washstick, rinsed them twice, wrung them out and hung them out to dry. Finally, the clothes would be pressed with heavy flatirons and collars would be stiffened with starch.

The public is invited to come learn about "the olden days" at the Clarke and view items used in maintaining a household in the late 19th and early 20th century. This exhibit will be on display through the winter. The Clarke Museum is located at 240 E St. in Old Town Eureka. Hours are 11 a.m. to 4 p.m. Wednesday through Saturday. For more information, call 443-1947

I Write true or false

1. The Clarke Museum has a continuous exhibit about housework in the old days.
2. Meal preparation was not easy in the 19th century.
3. Women had to buy food that was not ready for cooking.
4. Cooking caused more dirt in the home.
5. Kerosene lamps were easy to care for.
6. At the end of the 19th century, indoor plumbing became available.
7. The least difficult job was washing clothes.
8. Washing clothes involved more than seven steps.



II Multiple Choice

1 What is the purpose of this article?

- A. To help people support women's rights.
- B. To explain how life was simpler in the old days.
- C. To generate interest in a museum exhibit about housework in the old days.



2 What do we learn about cooking in the old days?

- A. The food was more delicious.
- B. It was much more complicated than it is nowadays.
- C. People preferred chicken to fish.

3 What is the author's opinion about housework in the 1800s?

- A. We should visit the museum to better understand how people lived a long time ago.
- B. Women were very unhappy because of the work they had to do.
- C. Women should have been paid for the work they did.



4 What does the author think about housework in the 19th century?

- A. It was primitive and caused homemakers to have difficult lives.
- B. It was aided by certain inventions like stove, lamps, etc.
- C. It was a source of social conflict.

4 Which of these would be a correct display sign for this museum exhibit?

QUILTS Women often sewed their own quilts rather than buy bedding at a store	WASHING CLOTHES Women used these types of machines to wash dirty clothes.
CHAMBER POTS After the installation of indoor plumbing, people began to use these types chamberpots.	1800s KITCHENS Dirty water drained from these sinks when the washing up was finished.

III Grammar. Write five sentences about the housework in the old days using "used to"

- (1) _____
- (2) _____
- (3) _____
- (4) _____
- (5) _____