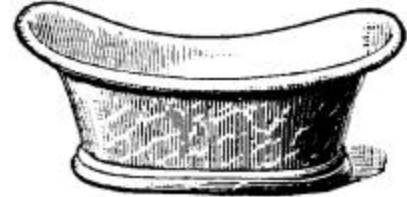


Lessons from the Past

Learn how to conserve water from our gold rush ancestors

Background:

Modern conveniences have made life near the dawn of the 21st century much easier than it was 150 years ago. Our ancestors living at the time of the California gold rush didn't have automobiles, electric lights, refrigerators, microwave ovens, or vacuum cleaners. Nor did most of them have indoor plumbing. Taking a bath meant heating water on your wood burning stove, shaving or brushing your teeth meant a walk to your well or pump with a water pitcher to fill, and washing clothes meant hauling buckets of water from your well to your kitchen or porch. Any chore involving water usually also meant hard work.



Today, water flows so readily from our taps that chores which were once arduous and time consuming are now done with ease. Hot water for a bath or shower is had with the turn of a knob, water for shaving or brushing your teeth comes by simply turning on a faucet, and washing machines clean our dirty clothes. No doubt about it, most of us have no desire to return to the good old days.



Our conveniences are not without their drawbacks, however. One hundred and fifty years ago, people conserved water not so much because it was scarce, but because it was a lot of work lugging it from the well to the house. Today, it's so easy to turn on the tap that it's also easy to waste water. In California, where experts predict we could be short more than 1.4 million acre-feet of water by the year 2010, wasting water is not an option. **Water conservation is a must... California's golden future depends on it.**

Objectives:

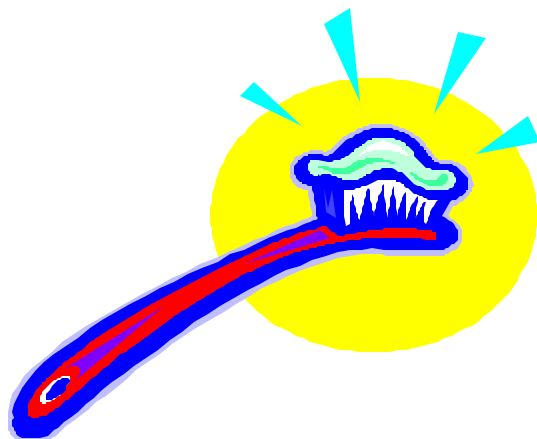
To determine whether our ancestors of 150 years ago used more or less water than we do today to brush their teeth.

To determine approximately how much more or less water our ancestors of 150 years ago used to accomplish this task than we do today.

To determine if any of the techniques used by our ancestors to do this task could be employed today to help us conserve water.

Materials:

One antique water pitcher (or modern substitute).



One bucket.

Two measuring cups.

Two tooth brushes.

One worksheet for each student.

Procedure:

1. Explain to the students that during the gold rush most people did not have the luxury of having indoor plumbing. Ask students how this would have made life different than it is for us today. Share with the students the information contained in the **Background** section of this lesson.
8. Choose a boy and a girl for a teeth brushing demonstration. Arm them both with tooth brushes (no toothpaste needed for this demonstration). Give one of the students a pitcher of water and a glass or mug and have him/her stand in front of the class. Give the other student a glass and have him/her stand at the sink.
9. Have both students brush their teeth for two minutes. The student at the sink should allow the water to run the entire time they brush their teeth, letting the water flow into a bucket. The other student should pour water from the pitcher into the glass or mug and use only that water for the entire teeth brushing process.
10. When they are finished, let them use measuring cups to measure the amount of water they used. Have students record these amounts on their worksheets.
11. Instruct students to complete their worksheets, following the written instructions.
12. Lead a discussion on which methods of teeth brushing used more water. Ask students if there is anything we can learn from our ancestors about conserving water. (We don't need to leave the water running when brushing our teeth.)