

The History and Horses of Early Kentucky

Settlers in early Kentucky lived very different lives. Early **Kentuckians** had to build new **settlements** for themselves on the frontier. Food shortages and American Indian attacks could always occur.



Daniel Boone leading his party into Kentucky through the Cumberland Gap. Oil on canvas, by David Wright.

Let's explore the history of Kentucky in the 1790s!

Name _____ Date _____

*This packet is intended for **4th and 5th graders**. It can be completed individually or in small groups.



Moving to Kentucky

Settlers moved to Kentucky in search of **fertile** farmland. When settlers arrived, they found that Kentucky was also great for raising horses. The land is still fertile today.

Early settlers traveled to Kentucky through the Cumberland Gap. The Cumberland Gap was easier to travel through than the mountains around it because it was flat. Kentucky, Virginia, and Tennessee all meet at the Cumberland Gap, so this central trail was very important for the American settlers first exploring Kentucky.



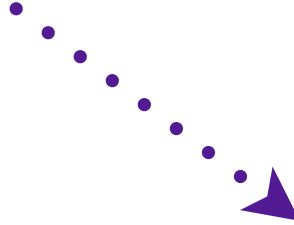
Daniel Boone Escorting Settlers Through the Cumberland Gap, by George Caleb Bingham

Question: Would you want to move to a new land where few people lived? Why or why not?



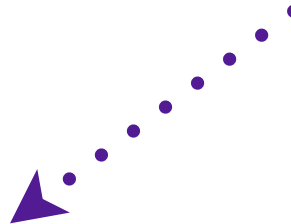
Settlement in Kentucky

William McConnell and his fellow travelers settled at Lexington in 1775, and it became one of the first permanent settlements in Kentucky. Lexington was a dangerous place since it was on the **frontier**.



Before Kentucky became a state, it was a part of Virginia called "Kentucky County." In 1792, **Kentuckians** separated from Virginia and became the 15th state in the newly formed United States.

Often times, American Indians and the settlers would fight. The American Indians were angry that the settlers had moved onto their land, so they harmed the settlers or stole their horses and other possessions.

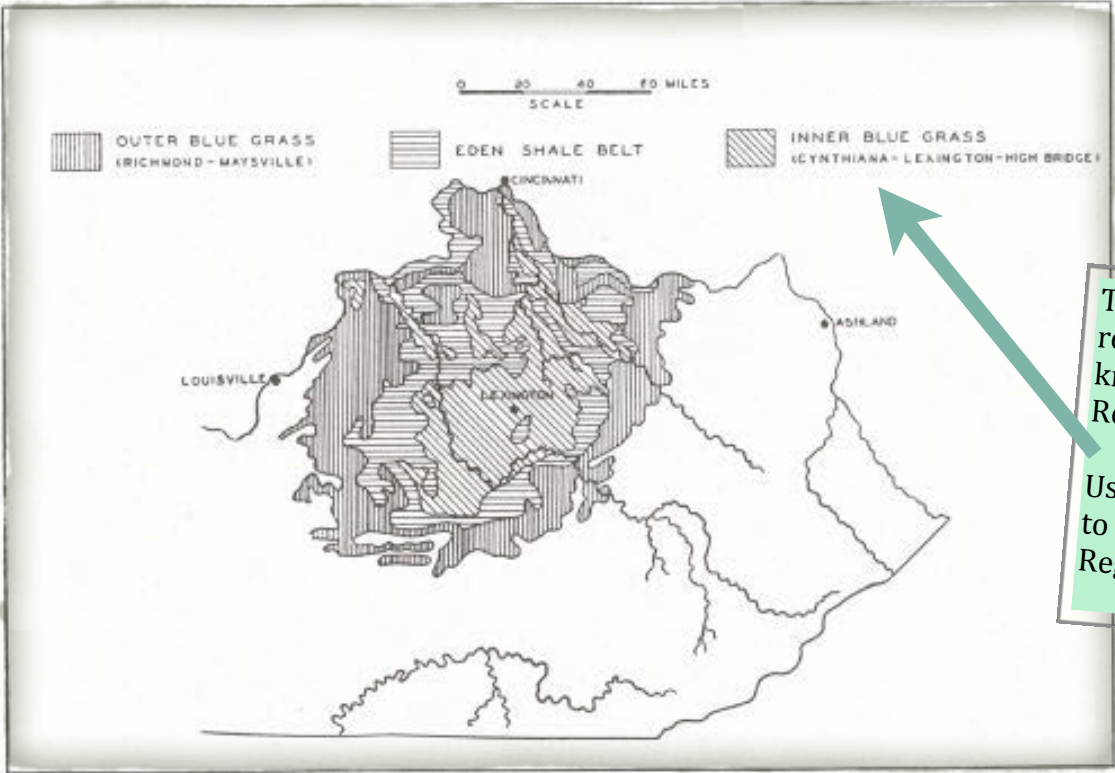


Question: The settlers moved from other states to Kentucky. They were not **native**, or born, in Kentucky. Are you a native Kentuckian? If not, where are you from?



Horses in Early Kentucky

Early settlers discovered that Kentucky is a great place to raise horses. Why is this state such a great place to raise horses? Why are they so strong?



It's the limestone under the earth! The Bluegrass Region has rich soil with limestone underneath. Limestone contains calcium and other **minerals** that help horses to have strong bones. Many people in this **era** needed horses for transportation, farm work, and for the popular sport of horse racing.

Question: What else has calcium in it that helps your bones grow strong?



Horse Racing in Early Kentucky

Horse racing was popular in the early United States since it was one of the few organized sports. The first type of horse racing that became popular was short quarter-mile sprints with Quarter Horses.

Quarter Horse racetracks were only one quarter mile, straight paths because clearing the dense forests of Kentucky was very difficult. Therefore, to compete in Quarter Horse racing, horses needed to be fast sprinters.



This is Spinner, an American Quarter Horse at the Kentucky Horse Park. Come visit him and other American horse breeds!
Photo courtesy of Jim Shambhu, Kentucky Horse Park.

Lexington built its first racetrack in 1789. Horse racing became so popular in Lexington that the city had to **ban** horse racing in many of the streets!

Question: What is your favorite sport to watch? Who is your favorite team?



Additional Resources and Activities

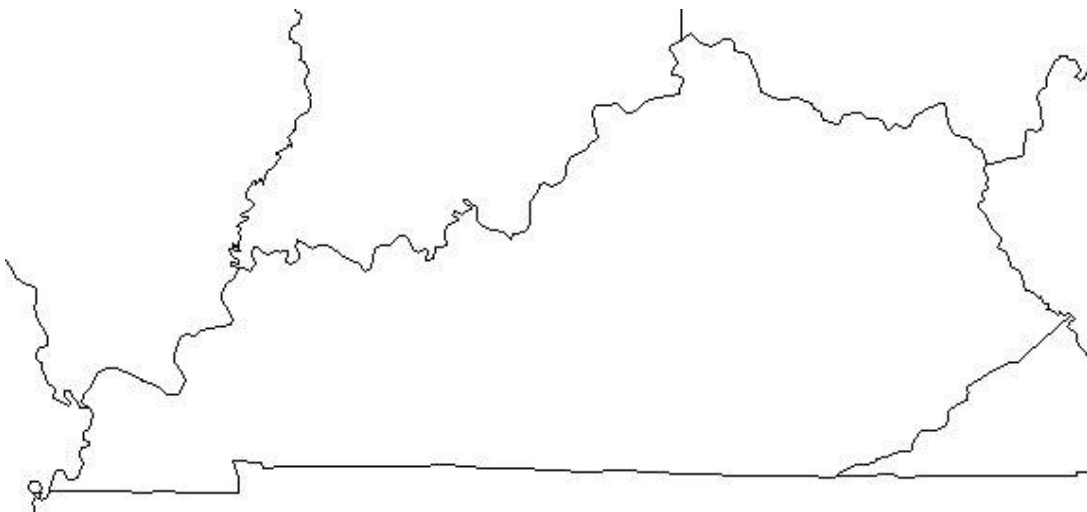
Vocabulary

- **Ban:** not allow, prohibit
- **Era:** a time period in history
- **Fertile:** able to make or produce many crops
- **Frontier:** an area settled by people that is near wilderness
- **Kentuckian:** a person from Kentucky
- **Mineral:** a material that is naturally made by the earth
- **Native:** a person born in a certain place
- **Settlement:** a new area or place where people live

Geography!

Directions: Fill in the map with the following four geographic places in Kentucky. Use an atlas to help you find each location.

• Lexington • Cumberland Gap • Kentucky River • Cumberland River



Coloring Activity!

What do you think an early American Quarter Horse racetrack looked like in 1790? Do you think the track was very flat or do you think it was surrounded by trees? What color are the horses running in the race? Use your imagination!

On the **next page**, draw a picture of what you imagine an early American Quarter Horse racetrack would have looked like in 1790.



Quarter Horse Racing in the 1790s

Name: _____ Date: _____

