



DUNDAS  
MUSEUM &  
ARCHIVES

# DISCO

“I learn!”

## GRADE 3 SOCIAL STUDIES

### Chores and Challenges: A Day in the Life of a Child of an Early Dundas Settler

*This education module complements Strand A-  
Heritage And Identity: Communities In Canada, 1780–1850*

Can you imagine your grade 3 teacher living at your house? Or what about adding and subtracting numbers using an early form of computer called an *abacus*? The only book you had was a *hornbook* and, yes, part of it was made with the horn of a cow! There was much more to do than make your bed in the morning: there was wood to chop for the stove and water to fetch from a nearby river. And after school a young boy might work in a grist mill, a blacksmith shop or repair the split rail fence using a *froe*. A young girl might set about her chore of *heckling* some flax or perhaps tending to *The Three Sisters* growing in the garden.

No electricity; no indoor plumbing; no grocery stores! Life for the child of an early settler in Dundas was far different than today. Guided by the DMA’s resident historian, Professor Interrogo, your class will step back in time 200 years to the household of an early settler. There was no time to be lazy: everyone – parents and children – had responsibilities to ensure the survival of the family. Students will have the opportunity to split wood with a *froe*, carry buckets with a yoke, and try using a heckling comb.



**1** A yoke (above) was used to carry pails of water.  
The froe was used for splitting wood.



**2** This heckling comb at the museum was part of  
the process of turning flax into linen.

One of the most fascinating aspects of early settler life was producing cloth. Through video presentations and some hands-on activities, too, your students will learn about *retting, rippling, braking, scutching, heckling, spinning and weaving* – the various stages of turning flax into linen. They'll also discover that not all spinning wheels work the same way.

Although there were no part-time jobs at the grocery store, young men would often work after school at the blacksmith's forge or at the cooper's. The museum's vaults have a fine selection of early barrel making tools.



**3** *The Great Wheel. This is the one Sleeping Beauty would have pricked her finger on.*



**4** *Early settler children learned to read using a hornbook.*

Unlike today, children were not forced to attend school. Chores at home were far more important. And in some rural areas, school was just too far away. When children did attend school, all the students were in one room, often with a dirt floor, greased paper for “windows” and a wood- or coal-burning stove for warmth. Your class will experience a short lesson on using an abacus and try writing on a slate.

They'll also learn some of the rules that both students and teachers had to obey. Did you know that a male teacher was permitted to go out on a date only one night a week? Well, two if he went to church!

*From The Ontario Curriculum, Social Studies Grades 1-6; History and Geography, Grades 7 & 8, 2013, this Education Module offered by the DMA addresses the following expectations: A1.1, 1.2, 2.1, 3.2, 3.3 (pp. 86-88).*