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Gold in California!

During the gold rush in California, an ounce of gold was worth sixteen dollars. The gold itself, in the form of flakes, dust, or nuggets, was used by the miners in place of paper currency to buy the goods and services they needed.

Use the conversion chart below to figure out how much gold you would need to buy the things a Forty-Niner would need in the mining camps.

Weight/Mass

1 pound (lb) = 16 ounces (oz)

1 dram (dr) = 27.343 grains (gr)

1 ounce (oz) = 16 drams, or 437.5 grains (gr)

1 grain (gr) = 0.0036 drams (dr)

Which of these would you need to buy? Choose carefully, and then calculate the amount of gold necessary for each purchase. How long do you think it would take you to mine the amount of gold needed? Check your answers with other members of your class.

Flour...\$1.00 a pound _____

Saleratus (baking soda)...\$1.50 _____

Bear Steak...\$2.00 _____

Bread...\$1.00 a slice _____

Candles...\$1.00 each _____

with butter...\$2.00 _____

Sowbelly and Beans...\$1.00 a bowl _____

Hay...8 cents a pound _____

Eggs...\$1.00 each _____

Rifle...\$35.00 _____

Boots...\$20.00 _____

Onions...\$1.50 a pound _____

Salt Pork...50 cents a pound _____

Blanket...\$50.00 _____

Hot Tub Bath...\$10.00 _____

A Night in a "Hotel"...\$20.00 _____

Picks and Shovels...\$20.00 each _____

Hammer...\$10.00 _____

Nails...50 cents each _____

Riverboat fare from Sacramento City to San Francisco...\$25.00 _____

Mining Camp Simulation

Preparation: Paint several dozen pebbles gold, to be used as “nuggets.” Hide the “nuggets” in a predetermined “mining area” on the playground, in or near a sandbox. Make cornbread, miner’s stew, and sowbelly and beans ahead of time. (See recipes on page 75.) Groups could do the cooking at school, or the cooking may be done at home. Foods should be ready to enjoy as part of the simulation activities.

- Have on hand several balance scales for students to use in weighing “gold.”
- As a class, decide on a name for your mining camp before the simulation begins.
- Divide students into “mining companies” and explain their roles in the simulation. Allow these cooperative groups enough time to divide up tasks and take on roles for the simulation activities.

Activities

Newspaper

Design and produce a newspaper for your mining camp.

What will your newspaper be called?

What kind of news articles will it have?

Who will advertise? For what kinds of products and services?

