

Daniel Boone Picture Book

Lesson Materials

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Daniel Boone was born November 2, 1734, in Berks County, Pennsylvania. Sometimes, an alternate birth date is listed because the Boone family used an outdated calendar system and recorded Daniel's birth on October 22. Daniel was the sixth of eleven children born to Squire and Sarah Boone, both Quakers. Boone's father had grown up in England but had immigrated to the New World as a teenager.

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As a child, Daniel was responsible for taking the family's cattle into the woods to graze each day. Daniel loved wandering the woods with the cows. The outdoors fascinated him, and he spent his days studying small birds and game, which he hunted with a homemade "herdsman's club." Daniel begged for a rifle and became an expert marksman. At thirteen, he provided a steady supply of fresh game for the family's meals.

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Daniel Boone did not attend school. His older brother's wife taught him to read and write. Though he mastered the basics, Boone's grammar and spelling remained poor. Boone could sign his name, though, which set him apart from most frontiersmen, who used an "X" for their signature.

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Around 1750 the Boones moved to North Carolina and settled in the Yadkin River valley. The Native Americans who lived and hunted there did not like sharing their land with the settlers. Fights frequently broke out between the two groups, and Boone joined the county militia to help defend the settlements.

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In 1755, Daniel Boone went to fight in the French and Indian War. The war erupted in 1754 when France and Britain began fighting over territory in North America. It was called the French and Indian War because the Native Americans fought mostly alongside the French. At the time, the colonies had yet to gain independence from England, so the settlers fought alongside the British.

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Boone joined British Major General Edward Braddock on his march to attack Fort Duquesne, a French fortification located in present-day Pittsburgh. George Washington—then a young colonial militia leader—also joined the march. During the trip, Boone worked as a wagoner alongside a trader named John Findley who had trekked to the Native American villages in Ohio and beyond. John told Boone about a place the Native Americans called “Kentucke”—a hunting ground packed with deer, buffalo, bear, and turkey. As the men neared Fort Duquesne, they were overpowered and suffered huge losses. Boone grabbed a horse from his wagon team and escaped, eventually returning to North Carolina but dreaming of Kentucky.

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Boone married Rebecca Bryan on August 14, 1756. Together they had ten children, six sons and four daughters. For the next several years, he made his living as a hunter and trapper. Boone disappeared for days, and sometimes months, into the Appalachian Mountains. Deer hides-used for clothing-were always in demand.

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Boone's teamster friend, John, sought him out and asked Boone to accompany him on a trip to Kentucky. Joined by four others, they set out in 1769 and crossed through the Appalachians via the Cumberland Gap. Few white men had dared to cross the mountains. The men built a base camp near what is now Irvine, Kentucky, and spent several months hunting and exploring the great wilderness.

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Boone traveled the frontier wearing buckskin leggings and a loose-fitting shirt made of animal skin. On his leather belt he attached a hunting knife, a hatchet, a powder horn, and a bullet pouch. Many images portray Boone wearing a coonskin cap, which was popular with trappers. Boone preferred wide-brimmed beaver felt hats to keep the sun out of his eyes.

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The Shawnee captured Boone's hunting party several months into the expedition. They claimed the area as their hunting ground and believed anything caught there belonged to them. The Shawnee took the men's supplies and deerskins. Boone escaped and finally returned home in March 1771, penniless and empty-handed.

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In 1775 a friend hired Boone to cut a path into Kentucky for a new settlement on land purchased from the Cherokee. Boone led about thirty axmen through the wilderness to clear a path, which eventually became a route to the new frontier and was called the Wilderness Road. When the group reached the Kentucky River, they built a fort and called it Boonesborough. Other settlers followed, and Boone brought his family, too.

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Life on the frontier was dangerous. Native Americans frequently attacked Boonesborough, hoping to drive the settlers back east. In 1776, Boone's daughter Jemima was kidnapped by a small group of Shawnee and Cherokee men while canoeing on the river. Boone led a rescue party that retrieved Jemima and her friends two days later.

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Boone was captured by the Shawnee in 1778. Impressed with Boone's scouting and hunting skills, the Shawnee chief adopted Boone as one of his own. Boone lived among the Shawnee for four months before escaping and returning to Boonesborough. By 1798, Boone had lost all of his land in Kentucky due to title errors and debt.

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In 1799, Boone decided to move farther west, into the land that is now Missouri but at the time was called Upper Louisiana. He built a canoe from a six-foot poplar tree so he could move some household items by river. Boone made the journey with his wife, two of his daughters and their husbands, and son Daniel Morgan Boone. Several other Kentucky families came along, and son Nathan Boone soon followed.

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Spanish authorities, eager to have settlers in the area, granted Boone 850 acres in the Femme Osage District, now part of St. Charles County. He was made a commandant, or syndic, of the Femme Osage District. As a syndic, Boone settled disputes that arose among the area settlers. He became famous for holding court under a large tree on his son Nathan's land. This tree was known as the "Judgment Tree."

In 1804, Boone lost his land claims after Spain had transferred the territory to France, which in turn sold it to the United States. Boone remained in the area, living on land family members had secured. Rebecca Boone died in 1813, and Boone spent his remaining years living with his children. In 1820 painter Chester Harding visited Boone and painted the only known portrait made during his lifetime. Daniel Boone died at Nathan Boone's home in Defiance, Missouri, on September 26, 1820. He was buried next to his wife in a Marthasville-area cemetery.

Excerpts from *Famous Missouri Explorers: Daniel Boone (1734-1820)*, the State Historical Society of Missouri,
<http://shs.umsystem.edu/famousmissourians/explorers/dboone/dboone.shtml>.



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