

**ACTIVITY DESCRIPTION:**

Students will compare the laundry methods of the 1800s /early 1900s (specifically 1914) to modern methods. They will be able to see the difference in both the amount and the nature of work that needed to be done to complete this task.

MATERIALS

Antique wash basin
Antique glass washboard
Antique wringer
10 towels and pieces of clothing
Drying rack for clothes
2 buckets for water
Old wringer washer

Make sure you have all items before the students arrive!

BEGIN THE ACTIVITY**What will I be doing?**

*Does anybody know why every Monday was known as “Laundry Day” 100 years ago? This is because most people used to have baths only once a week, on a Saturday night before going to bed so that when they woke up on Sunday morning they would wear their “Sunday best” clothes for going to church. Their dirty clothes would soak all day on Sunday and be washed on Monday--Laundry Day! How does this compare to the way we do things now? How many times a week do your parents do the laundry? How else do you think the life of people from long ago may have been different from ours? **Try to direct the discussion back to water.** What did people use water for? How did they get their water for things like laundry? Did they have water piped into their houses? Since they didn't, how did they wash their clothes? Since earlier people could only wash their clothes at the water's edge (rivers, lakes, etc.) or carry the water (from the lake, river or well) to where the dirty clothes were, it must have been a hard job, right?*

*We're going to try to wash clothes like they did back in earlier times. **Show the students the old washboard and explain how it was used. DO NOT LET THE STUDENTS TOUCH THE WASHBOARD – IT IS GLASS AND MAY BREAK!!!** Let the students put clothes into the old wash basin and push the mechanism back and forth. Explain how water would have to be added and each piece of clothing would have to be scrubbed against the basin. Have them “scrub” each piece of clothing ten to 15 times and then help them to put it through the wringer. When they are finished have them hang it on the rack. Having to wash all your family's clothes like this would be really hard work wouldn't it? The water might also be cold. How would a person get warm water to wash the stains out of clothes? The only way would be to boil water over a fire! Imagine having to not only to carry the really smelly clothes to the water or the water to the clothes, you also had to scrub and wring and rinse. All that plus tending the fire to warm the water! It would take people all day back then to do the laundry! How does that compare with doing the laundry now?*



What can we do?

Water is important for drinking and bathing but it's also important to have clean clothes! Washing machines are much easier to use than doing the laundry by hand, but they can use a lot of water. Depending on the machine, they can use up to 150 to 250 litres per cycle, that's 20 per cent of all the water we use at home! How can we save water and energy when we do the laundry?

- 1. We should only do the laundry when we have a full load to make maximum use of the water we need. If you have a washing machine that has a load level, set the water level only high enough to cover the clothes that you put in.*
- 2. We should set our machines to wash in cold water to save the energy needed to heat the water.*
- 3. We should try to do laundry in non peak hours when demand is low like in the evenings.*
- 4. If possible we should try to purchase energy-efficient front loading washing machines – they can use up to 70 per cent less water!*

WHAT HAVE WE LEARNED?

Not to take water for granted and not to waste water! It can be used for more important things!

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