

In the Good Old Days

Grade: Sixth - Seventh Grades

Subject: Social Studies, Math

Objectives: How significant of events in American agricultural history has changed American society and the lives of her citizens.

Standards:

Recognizes the effects of the United States expansion on different regions of the U.S.

Recognizes different periods of change.

Draws conclusion from statistics. Interprets/constructions graphs, charts and tables.

Materials Needed:

Growing a Nation CD and/or U.S. history textbook

Inventory Worksheet (attached)

Procedure:

In the “good old days” a country kid would help milk the cows, collect fresh eggs, feed the pigs and pick some berries for breakfast. Today with less than 2% of the population in the United States involved in agriculture, most of your students get milk from cartons, strawberries from a box in the freezer, and their morning routine involves nothing more than choosing their favorite box of cereal from the cupboard. Their connection to their food has been reduced to a visit to the grocery store. But things may be changing. Farmers’ markets are springing up everywhere, bringing fresh produce, meat, dairy products and baked goods even to city dwellers. Community supported agriculture programs involve people in growing and harvesting their own food. Everywhere plots of land are being set aside for community gardens with local libraries checking out tools along with books to get people started growing some of their own food. Many schools are developing innovative educational programs centered on school gardens. And throughout the country, farm ‘bed and breakfasts’ have become popular. Some even offer family vacations where you can become “Old MacDonald” for a week. So even if you don’t live in the country, take the opportunity to become part of agriculture today, and enjoy “the good new days”!

1. Ask the students whether daily life chores have changed since their parents were children. Ask your students to share their parents’ or grandparents’ childhood stories about things they did around the house that is no longer done today. Are there activities that the students do today that might some day seem dated to their children or grandchildren?



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2. Explain to the students that you have prepared an inventory worksheet to see the types of agricultural and everyday activities they have done. Tell the students some of the activities on the list may seem like novelties, but they may have been a way of life for their parents or grandparents. Pass out the inventory worksheet and give them time to read it over. Give them the option of adding a few items to the list.
3. Ask students to complete the worksheet by putting a check in the box if they have done the activity.
4. Next ask them to see if they can find someone in the class that has done the activity, and then write his or her name in the space. Have all the items been done by the students in class?
5. Tell the students that they will now get a chance to survey their parents and their grandparents. Assign students to complete the worksheet at home by filling in the names of their parent or guardian and if necessary a grandparent or neighbor over 65 to fully complete the worksheet.

When the homework is returned, graph the differences between the generations together as a class. Count the number of activities the students did compared to those their parents and grandparents did. What kind of differences do the students notice? How many students have grown their own food? Made their own clothes? Where do these necessities come from today? Explain to the students that these differences indicate the changes that have taken place over time regarding our relationship to agriculture and our connection to food and fiber production.

Additional Activities:

1. Have your class become pen pals with a farmer to learn about daily chores and activities done on modern farms. Consider a local farmer if no one in your class lives on a farm; otherwise, contact someone farming in another part of the country for comparison. (Contact your County Farm Bureau office for farmer contacts.)
2. Try doing some of the activities on the worksheet with your class, such as natural dyeing or making jam or butter.
3. Make up inventory worksheets for other subjects or topic areas. It is a good way to see how much your students know about a particular subject before starting a unit.

Additional Resources:

Explore Iowa Agriculture. CD-Rom and lesson plans. To order, call 515-225-5512.

Farm Bureau Kids website – www.farmbureaukids.com

Growing a Nation. DVD and lesson plans. To order, call 515-225-5512.



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Worksheet: In the Good Old Days

Find some one who has:	Myself (Checkmark)	Classmate (Name)	Parent or Guardian (Name)	Grand Parent (or an adult over 65)
Carded and/or spun wool				
Dyed yarn with plant dyes				
Fed a pig				
Gathered eggs				
Gone barefoot for a week				
Been hunting or fishing				
Knit a pair of mittens				
Sewn a patchwork quilt				
Pressed cider				
Made jelly or jam				
Churned butter				
Milked a cow				
Planted a garden				
Plucked a chicken				
Shucked corn				
Split fire wood				
Baked bread				
Used food ration coupons				
Ate only at home for an entire week				
Used a rotary dial phone				
Played a vinyl record album				
Programmed a VCR				
Played a video game				
Downloaded music from Internet				





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