

In the Good Old Days

Wyoming Social Studies, Language Arts

Objectives:

- Students will learn how the changes in daily household activities over generations reflect our society's changing relationship to food and fiber.

Background:

Old Mac Donald's children would be surprised if they visited a family today. 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 only 2% of the population in the United States involved in agriculture, most children get milk from cartons, strawberries from a bag 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 are 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 Mac Donald 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!"

Activity Procedure:

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



Standards

Social Studies

History & Nature of Science in
Personal & Social Decisions:
3.1A, 3.2A

Time Continuity & Change:
4.2, 4.3

Language Arts

Speaking & Listening:
3.1, 3.2, 3.3., 3.4



Materials

- Inventory sheets

Estimated Time

60 Minutes

Grade 2

notes:

2. Explain to the students that you have prepared an inventory sheet to see the types of agricultural activities they have done. Tell the students some of the activities on the list may seem like novelties, but they were a way of life for their parents or grandparents. Pass out the inventory sheet and give them time to read it over. Explain that they may add two or three additional old-fashioned farm activities to the list.
3. Tell the students that they will now get a chance to survey their classmates to find out which activities they have done. When you say “Go,” they will move around the room trying to talk to everyone in the class. When they find a student who has done a particular activity, they should write his or her name on the inventory sheet in the blank space after the name of that activity. For example, if Jane has milked a cow, her name would go in the blank space after ‘milked a cow’. The object of the activity is to find as many different people who have done different things. Once they have added an individual’s name to their inventory, they should move on and question another classmate. (Even though Jane may have done ten of the activities on the list, her name should appear in one place only.)
4. Explain that you will set a time limit for this activity and that you, too, will participate. Your participation will enable you to gauge how quickly the students are working, determine how they are interacting, and decide when to stop the activity. When the time is up, gather everyone and ask them to count the number of spaces they filled with different names.
 - Did anyone fill them all?
 - Who had the highest number?
 - Which student has performed what they consider the most unusual task on the list?
5. Complete the inventory by reviewing each activity on the sheet. Read the list and ask students to raise their hands if they have done a particular activity.
6. Pass out a second inventory sheet which has been modified slightly to use as homework. Explain that the students will conduct a similar survey with their families. Point out that at the top of the sheet it will ask “Have you ever?” And there will be a list of activities. At the end each activity, there will be three columns. The first column is for their response to the question, the second for their parents’ and the third for their grandparents’ or older neighbors’ response.

7. For example:

Have you ever:	You	Parents	Grandparents
1. Milked a Cow			
2. Gathered Eggs			
3. Sheared Sheep			
4. etc.....			

8. After the students have done their homework, review their families' responses. Keep a tally of the number of students who have done each activity compared to the number of parents and grandparents. 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 grow their own food?
- Make their own clothes?
- Where do these necessities come from today?

9. 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:

- 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 State Department of Agriculture at 777-7321 or extension office for assistance.)
- Try doing some of the activities on the worksheet with your class, such as natural dyeing or making jam or butter.
- Make up inventory sheets 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.

Materials Adapted from Project Seasons, Shelburne Farms, Shelburne, VT.

vocabulary:

- *agriculture*
- *community*
- *harvest*
- *chores*
- *inventory*
- *survey*

In the Good Old Days-Inventory Sheet

FIND SOMEONE WHO HAS:

1. Carded and/or spun wool (name) _____
2. Dyed yarn with plant dyes _____
3. Fed a pig _____
4. Gathered eggs _____
5. Gone barefoot for a week _____
6. Been hunting or fishing _____
7. Taken a sleigh ride _____
8. Knit a pair of mittens _____
9. Sewn a patchwork quilt _____
10. Pressed cider _____
11. Made jelly or jam _____
12. Churned butter _____
13. Milked a cow _____
14. Planted a garden _____
15. Plucked a chicken _____
16. Shucked corn _____
17. Split fire wood _____
18. Watched a horse being shod _____
19. Dipped candles _____
20. Baked bread _____

