

Corn Then and Now

Objective

Students will read about the importance of corn in our lives and in the lives of ancient people. Students will locate ancient cultures that used corn on a map of Central and South America. Students will research to learn about corn traditions and growing practices, then and now. Students will research some corn myths and legends and act them out.

Procedures

1. Read and discuss background and vocabulary. (See separate file on the Corn Page.)
 - Discuss the vocabulary either before the discussion, as an introduction, or after the discussion, with a focus on context clues.
 - Ask students what they know about corn, early civilizations' dependence on it, and how corn influenced ancient beliefs, culture, and religion.
2. Discuss and list the early Native American civilization of North and Central America (Mayan, Incan, Mound Builders, Cliff Dwellers, Pueblo, Aztec, Olmec, Zuni, Anasazi, Cahokia, etc.)
 - Discuss locations of civilizations on your list.
 - Students will find the locations on a world map.
 - Students will use encyclopedias or other resources to find the approximate dates of each civilization and develop a time line for the civilizations.
3. Divide students into groups for discovery and study.
 - Each group will choose one of the civilizations listed in the previous discussion.
 - Review “Are Your Sources Reliable?” included with this lesson.
 - Groups will use online and library resources to discover and report on the importance of corn for the chosen civilizations. Students will consider the following questions as they conduct their research:
 - How and where did the people plant corn?
 - How was corn used in people's daily lives (food, products, storage, etc.)?
 - Who took care of the corn (planting, weeding, harvesting, storage)?
 - What were some beliefs about corn? Were there any ceremonial rituals associated with corn?
 - How did the abundance or lack of corn affect the growth or demise of the culture/civilization?
 - Students will report on selected civilizations by recording information on a class graph, with the questions along the side and the civilizations listed on the bottom.
 - Students will compare and contrast the information gathered.
4. Students will track the movement of corn from the region where it originated. How did European colonists adapt corn to their needs?
5. Students will use online or library resources or interview a farmer or county Extension educator to learn about modern growing practices for corn.

Oklahoma Academic Standards

GRADE 4

US Regional Geography: 1.D; 3;4. US Regional History: 1,4
Speaking and Listening: R.1,2,3; W.1,2. Critical Reading and Writing: W.1,2. Vocabulary: R.1,3,5. Research: R.1,2,3; W.1,2,3. Multmodal. R.1; W.1,2

GRADE 5

Speaking and Listening: R.1,2,3; W.1,2. Critical Reading and Writing: W.1,2. Vocabulary: R.1,3,5. Research: R.1,2,3; W.1,2,4. Multmodal. R.1; W.1,2

GRADE 6

World Geography: 1,2,4,5. World Culture: 3.A,B. Human Systems: 4.1
Speaking and Listening: R.1,2,3; W.1,2. Critical Reading and Writing: W.1,2. Vocabulary: R.1,3,5. Research: R.1,2,3; W.1,2,3. Multmodal. R.1; W.1,2

Materials

computer and/or resource materials

large class map of North and Central America

atlas or access to maps for individual students

miscellaneous materials for dramatizations

Students will compare the modern practices with the traditional ancient practices.

6. Each group will use an online search engine or the library to find a myth/legend about the history of corn.
 - Students may select a myth or legend from the list included with this lesson or research to find their own myth or legend about corn.
 - Students research online or in the library to find the legend and record where it originated.
7. Students will work together in their groups to prepare a skit, rap, song, etc., to present the myth or legend to the class.
 - Presentations should be no longer than three minutes and involve every group member.
 - Groups should prepare costumes, visuals, and necessary props for their presentations.
8. Provide each student with the worksheet included with this lesson listing corn myths and legends. There is space provided for students to record additional myths and legends.
9. As a conclusion, students will complete a Venn diagram using background information, their research and worksheet information to compare the history of corn through myth and legend and the role of corn in our lives today.
10. Students will use online or library references or interview members of an Oklahoma tribe to find out which Oklahoma tribes have corn as an important part of their traditions. Students will report on the traditions.

Extra Reading

- Braman, Arlette, and Michelle Nidenoff, *Secrets of Ancient Cultures: The Maya—Activities and Crafts From a Mysterious Land*, Jossey-Bass, 2003.
- Brown, Dale, ed., *Mound Builders and Cliff Dwellers*, Time-Life, 1992.
- Courlander, Harold, and Enrico Arno, *People of the Short Blue Corn: Tales and Legends of the Hopi Indians*, Henry Holt, 1996.
- Curry, Jane Louise, *The Wonderful Sky Boat: And Other Native American Tales from the Southeast*, McEldery, 2001.
- Fussell, Betty, *Story of Corn*, University of New Mexico, 2004.
- Hakim, Joy, *The First Americans, Third Edition: Prehistory—1600 (A History of the US, Book 1)*, Oxford, 2002.
- Hamilton, Virginia, and Barry Moser, *In the Beginning: Creation Stories From Around the World*, Harcourt, HMH Books for Young Readers, 1991.
- Hunger, Sally M., and Joe Allen, *Four Seasons of Corn: A Winnebago Tradition (We Are Still Here)*, Lerner, 1996.
- Johnson, Sylvia, *Tomatoes, Potatoes, Corn, and Beans: How the Foods of the Americas Changed Eating Around the World*, Atheneum, 1997.
- Landau, Elaine, *Corn (True Books—Food and Nutrition)*, Children's 2000.
- Mann, Elizabeth, and Amy Crehore, *Macchu Picchu: The Story of the Amazing Inkas and their City in the Clouds (Wonders of the World Book)*, Mikaya, 2000.
- Nielsen, Michelle I., *The Biography of Corn (How Did That Get Here?)*,

Crabtree, 2007.

Parke, Marilyn, and Sharon Panik, *A Quetzalcoatl Tale of Corn (Legends From Mexico and Central America)*, Good Apple, 1992.

Politi, Leo, *Three Stalks of Corn*, Aladdin, 1994.

Rhoads, Dorothy, *The Corn Grows Ripe*, Puffin, 1993.

Shemie, Bonnie, *Mounds of Earth and Shell: Native Sites: The Southeast*, Children's, 1994.

Sherman, Pat, and R. Gergory Christie, *The Sun's Daughter*, Clarion, 2005.

Wells, Rosemary, *Through the Hidden Door*, Puffin, 2002.

Wood, Tim, *The Incas (See Through History)*, Viking, 1996.

How Reliable Are Your Sources?

When conducting research, make sure you use reliable information from legitimate sources. Reliable information is well-researched from sources that are well-respected and as objective, or neutral, as possible. The best way to find legitimate sources is to go to the library and use scholarly journals, reference books and other well-researched sources.

Another place to find information is the Internet. Conducting research on the Internet is convenient, but it can also be tricky. There are many thousands of Web pages that have little actual content and are mainly links to other pages, which may be links to other pages, and so on. Anyone can post anything to the Internet. To make sure you have found a reliable source of information, ask yourself these questions:

1. Who is responsible for the Web site? Is the Web page associated with a reliable organization, such as a university or a government agency? What interest does the organization responsible have in the information presented. For example, will the organization profit from the information presented?
2. Who wrote the information? If the author is not listed or has no credentials, it may not be a credible source. Pay attention to the author's credentials or experience. Is the source really an authority on this particular matter or someone with an impressive title that has no connection to the subject matter?
3. When was the information written? Is it current? Is it still relevant?
4. Are there other sources that agree with statements made on the site, or do other sources contradict this source? In that case you may need to search further. It's always a good idea to gather more than one source.
5. Are any sources cited? If the author does not document anything, then the information may simply be someone's opinion. If statistics used come from a survey, how was the data gathered? Who conducted the survey or poll? Was the sample representative of the population? How many were surveyed? What percent of the population?

When choosing between the library and the Internet keep in mind that up to 90 percent of the contents of college library collections are not on the Internet. Because of copyright laws it is too expensive to put all scholarly work on the Internet. This means that the most comprehensive source of information is still the library.

Name _____

How Reliable Are Your Sources?

Website Name	What organization is responsible for the site?	When was it written?	Who is the writer?	What are the sources cited?	How did you find the site?	Legitimate site or questionable?

Name _____

Corn Myths and Legends

Name of Legend	Native American Culture	Place of Origin	Involvement of Humans and Animals	Religious Beliefs	Male-Female Roles
The Hermit, or the Gift of the Corn					
The Signs of Corn					
The Forgotten Ear of Corn					
How Corn Came to the Earth					
The Coming of Corn					
Corn and the Sauk and Mesquakie Indians					