

Back to the Farm

Objective

Students will develop family trees based on people in their family who have been involved in agriculture.

Background

Our ancestors started farming about 10,000 years ago. For a million years before that people had been gathering wild fruits and seeds and killing small animals for their families to eat. One day someone noticed grass growing where grain had been spilled or stored the season before. The people got the idea to plant the seeds and see if they could grow the crops they needed and wanted. When they placed the seeds in the ground, they started to grow.

Animal husbandry probably began the first time someone managed to tame a wild animal that had been injured or trapped.

People all over the world developed different ways of farming, depending on where they lived. The first colonists in the New World tried to farm the land they found the same way they had farmed in Europe. It didn't work, and they nearly starved. They had to learn to farm like the natives and grow the crops that would grow well in the place where they had come to live.

Back then nearly everyone had to farm and hunt to provide enough food to keep their families alive. The first US census, taken in 1790, listed 95 percent of the people as rural. That changed after the industrial revolution. Farmers had tools that helped them produce more and more food. When too many farmers started raising too much food, food prices fell, and many farmers could no longer earn enough money to support their families. They were forced to leave the farm and find work in the new industries. In the 1930s much of the farmland in our country started to wear out or erode away. Two million farmers were forced to leave their farms then.

Today fewer than 2 percent of the people in this country actually live on a farm or ranch. It is no longer necessary for every family to grow its own food. One American farmer today can feed about 155 people, both in this county and around the world. For every American farmer there are another seven people involved in American agribusiness. That includes thousands of businesses and millions of people who process, deliver and sell food to people all over the world. It includes people who teach agriculture in our state universities and scientists who research the insects and diseases that affect our food supply. It includes bankers who loan money to farmers and ranchers so they can buy the equipment they need, and it includes the people who build and sell that equipment. Agribusiness includes the truckers who haul the cattle to market, the florist who sells a dozen red roses and even the check-out clerk at the grocery store.

Oklahoma Academic Standards GRADE 3

Speaking and Listening:
R.1,2,3; W.1,2. Research:
R.1,3,4; W.1,2,3
Economics: 2,3. Geography:
2B

Vocabulary

agribusiness—an industry engaged in the producing operations of a farm, the manufacture and distribution of farm equipment and supplies, and the processing, storage, and distribution of farm commodities

agriculture—the science or occupation of cultivating the soil, producing crops, and raising livestock

ancestor—one from whom an individual, group, or species is descended

genealogy—the study of family lines of ancestors

Industrial Revolution—the rapid major change in the English economy in the late 18th Century, marked by the general introduction of power-driven machinery

Who is it?

Have class members bring baby or pre-school pictures in which the student is the only one in the picture. Assign a number to each baby picture, then make a list of all the class members. Have students try to match as many names to the baby pictures as possible. Compare results.

Social Studies/English Language Arts

1. Discuss the term “genealogy” with students.
 - Explain how to develop a family tree.
 - Lead a discussion in which you ask students “What would be the purpose of learning your family’s history?”
2. Read and discuss background and vocabulary.
 - Students will brainstorm and make a list on the board of agriculture-related jobs.
3. Hand out student worksheets.
 - Students will take worksheets home to complete, with the help of a family member.
 - Students will draw stars next to the names of family members who work(ed) in an agriculture-related business.
 - Students will share their findings with the class.
4. If students have family members involved in agriculture-related work, invite them to visit the class to answer students’ questions about their work.
 - Students will ask the speaker(s) questions about daily chores.
5. Students will produce written or tape-recorded interviews of family members who have lived on a farm/ranch operation or who work in agribusiness.
 - Students will write reports or produce Power Point presentations based on the interviews and share them with classmates or another class.

Additional Reading

- Atkin, S. Beth, *Voices from the Fields: Children of Migrant Farmworkers Tell Their Stories*, Little Brown, 2000.
- DeFelice, Cynthia, *Under the Same Sky*, Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 2005.
- Marsico, Katie, *Working on a Farm (Junior 21st Century Library)*, Cherry Lake, 2008.
- Orr, Tamra B., *Organic Farmer*, Cherry Lake, 2009.
- Owen, Ruth, *Growing and Eating Green: Careers in Farming, Marketing and Producing Food*, Crabtree, 2009.
- Peterson, Cris, *Century Farm: One Hundred Years on a Family Farm*, Boyd’s Mills, 2009.
- Rylant, Cynthia, and Nikki McClure, *All in a Day*, Abrams, 2009.
- Silverman, Buffy, *Follow That Food: Distribution of Resources*, Heinemann-Raintree, 2007.
- Somervill, Barbara A., *Food Scientist*, Cherry Lake, 2009.
- Trumbauer, Lisa, *Living in a Rural Area*, Pebble, 2005.

Back to the Farm

Fill in the blanks to complete your family tree as completely as possible. Get an adult family member to help. Put a star next to the people who are or were involved in farming or ranching. Circle the people who work in agribusiness.

