

Garden Guard

Objective

Students will use assorted old clothing for math sorting, graphing, probability, and other math activities. Students will make scarecrows from the old clothing. Students will write about their scarecrows.

Background

Ever since farmers first began placing seeds in the ground, they have been troubled by animals—raccoons and deer—and by crows and other birds out to steal their crops. Although the scarecrow has come in many different forms and had many different names, its job has always been to scare these thieves away.

The ancient Greeks carved wooden statues to look like the god Priapus, whose face was so ugly Greek farmers believed it frightened birds away from their wheat fields and grape vines. Japanese farmers hung rags, old meat and fish bones from sticks and set fire to the sticks. The smell kept birds and other pests out of the rice fields. In some places farmers scared the birds away with cloth hung so it would flutter in the wind or noisemakers that would rattle or bang. In other places the bodies of birds that had been captured and killed were hung from poles as a warning to others that might consider nibbling away at the farmer's crops.

The earliest scarecrows we know of were living human beings. Over 3,000 years ago, Egyptian farmers along the Nile River began hiding in their fields with nets to trap migrating quail, which were eating their wheat crops. Hundreds of years later, in medieval England, young boys, called "birdscarers," would patrol the fields and chase the birds away. Bird scarers continued to patrol English fields until early in the 1800s.

Among the Pueblo tribes of the American Southwest, grown men hid in cornfields to scare birds away. Among the Muscogee (Creek) people, entire families were chosen to watch over the tribal fields.

Among the first English colonists in North America, family members would take turns staying up nights to watch over the corn crop. As settlers moved west and began developing larger and larger fields, they began to create human-looking scarecrows stuffed with straw.

Many gardeners today place inflatable snakes or owls in their gardens to scare birds away. Some hang milk bottles or aluminum pie pans that spin in the wind. Over the years we have come to understand that birds can be helpers in the garden. They are natural predators of many insects that can damage a family garden. Many people who place scarecrows in their gardens today do so for nothing more than following an ancient tradition of always having someone on guard in the garden.

Oklahoma Academic Standards

PREKINDERGARTEN

Number & Operations: 1.1; 2.1,2,4; 3.1. Algebraic Reasoning: 1.1. Data & Probability: 1.2. Speaking and Listening: R.1,2,3,4; W.1,2. Critical Writing

KINDERGARTEN

Number & Operations: 1.1,2,5; 2.1. Algebraic Reasoning: 1.1. Geometry & Measurement: 2.2,3,4. Data & Probability: 1.1,2,3. Speaking and Listening: R.1,2,3,4; W.1,2. Critical Writing

GRADE 1

Number & Operations: 1.4,8; 2.1. Data & Probability: 1.1,2,3. Visual Art: 3.1,2; 4.4. Speaking and Listening: R.1,2,3,4; W.1,2. Critical Writing: 1,2

GRADE 2

Number & Operations: 2.5,6. Algebraic Reasoning: 2.1,2. Data & Probability: 1.1,2,3,4. Visual Art: 3.1,2; 4.4. Speaking and Listening: R.1,2,3,4; W.1,2. Critical Writing: 1,2

Materials

old or unwanted articles of clothing

brown paper bags

markers

newspapers, paper sacks, shredded classroom paper trash or plastic bags for stuffing

Vocabulary

medieval—relating or belonging to the Middle Ages

Muscogee (Creek)—a Native American people formerly inhabiting eastern Alabama, southwest Georgia and northwest Florida and now located in central Oklahoma and southern Alabama

Priapus—an ancient Greek god whose face was so ugly Greek farmers carved wooden likenesses of him to frighten birds away from their wheat fields and grape vines

predators—animals that live by preying on others

Pueblo—any of some 25 Native American peoples, including the Hopi, Zuni, and Taos, living in established villages in northern and western New Mexico and northeast Arizona. The Pueblo are descendants of the cliff-dwelling Anasazi peoples and are noted for their skilled craft in pottery, basketry, weaving, and metalworking.

Math

1. Divide students into groups and provide a random assortment of clothing for each group.
 - Each group will sort the clothing items according to size, color, tops or bottoms, etc., and explain how the items were sorted.
 - Students will use tally marks to count the number of shirts, pants, etc., and develop bar graphs or pictographs to compare the groups.
 - Students will use the clothing items to construct addition and subtraction facts.
 - Students will write addition and subtraction number sentences to represent the facts they have constructed from the clothing items.
 - Students will determine how many scarecrows they can make with the clothing items available.
2. Place all the clothing in one pile.
 - Students will take turns pulling an item from the pile.
 - On the chalkboard, record the item, its color, pattern, fabric, etc.
 - After several students have pulled items from the pile, students will determine the probability (more, less, or equally likely) of pulling a plaid shirt, blue jeans, etc., from the pile.

Visual Art

1. Divide students into groups to build scarecrows.
 - Create the scarecrow's face on one side of a paper bag.
 - Stuff the bag to make the face fuller.
 - Add other features, as desired, to personalize the scarecrows.
 - Stuff the clothing to make the scarecrow's arms and legs.
2. Each student will bring in an extra set of clothes, stuff them with newspaper and arrange them in their seats for Open House.
3. Create a real scarecrow for your school garden or outdoor classroom.
 - Select a site where the scarecrow will not shade plants.
 - Drive a 6-foot long board into the ground, and nail a 3-foot board to it crosswise for the shoulders.
 - Place a 2-foot board farther down to form hips.
 - Draw the sleeves of a shirt over the top crossbar to form the upper part of the scarecrow's body.
 - Fasten a pair of pants above the bottom crossbar to form the legs.
 - Stuff the clothing with straw.
 - Tie the ankles and waist of the pants and the cuffs of the shirt to prevent the straw from slipping out.
 - During the year you may add some additional straw to keep your scare-crow in great garden form.
4. Students will work in pairs to draw outlines of themselves on butcher paper. Students can then draw in their clothes and facial features and display them in the hallway. This is also good for student-of-the-month activities.

English Language Arts

1. Read and discuss background and vocabulary.
2. Students will write brief descriptions of their scarecrows.
 - Students will name the scarecrows.
 - Students will describe the gardens or fields they guard.
 - What are the scarecrows' wishes, and how might they be fulfilled?
3. Set up a scarecrow show.
 - Assign categories (most lovable, meanest, silliest, etc.)
 - Invite other classes in to view the scarecrows.
 - Class members will serve cookies and punch to their guests and present them with a brief overview of the history of scarecrows.
4. Offer to set up a seasonal display in the library, using the scarecrows your class has made.
 - Students will choose books about gardening or harvest time and write short reviews to go with the display.
5. Students will write the steps for making a scarecrow.
6. Students will conduct interviews with the scarecrows, using the following questions:
 - Do you get hungry?
 - What happens when the weather is bad?
 - What happens if a crow lands on your shoulder?
7. Students will pretend to be scarecrows and write letters trying to persuade the farmer to let them have a break or a weekend off.

Physical Activity

1. Play “garden tag,” as follows:
 - One player is chosen as chaser.
 - The chaser may tag any opponent who is not touching the ground with his or her hand (as if digging in the garden).
 - A tagged player becomes the new chaser.
 - Players usually do not stay in the stooped position too long, but if one does, the chaser may stand within three to four feet of that student and count to three.
 - If the player does not move, he or she is considered tagged and becomes the new chaser during the next round of play.

Extra Reading

- Brown, Ken, *The Scarecrow's Hat*, Peachtree, 2011.
- Brown, Margaret Wise, *The Little Scarecrow Boy*, HarperCollins, 2005.
- Henkes, Kevin, *My Garden*, Greenwillow/HarperCollins, 2010.
- Rylant, Cynthia, *Scarecrow*, Sandpiper, 2001.
- Stevenson, Robert Louis, and Gyo Fujikawa, *A Child's Garden of Verses*, Sterling, 2007.

Music

(to the tune of “I’m a Little Teapot)

I’m a little scarecrow, raggedy and worn.
I wear a hat and a shirt that’s torn.
When the crows come
I wave and shout
“Away from my garden!”
Get on out!”