

Life on the Farm: 1917

Grade: Elementary

Purpose/Objective: Students will understand what farm life was like in Cache Valley at the turn of the century.

Lesson Plan:

1. **Introduction:** Discuss the following questions as a class. Notice which group(s) have the most yes answers and determine the reasons for that.
 - a. Who lives on a farm?
 - b. Who has grandparents that have a farm?
 - c. Who has visited a farm?

2. **Introduction Discussion:** A lot of people worked on farms around the turn of the century (1900) in a rural area like Utah. There were big cities back then too, like New York City, where there were factories, but in this area most people made their living by farming. (*Extension discussion:* What is the difference between rural and urban areas?)
 - In 1900 two-thirds of Utahans lived in rural areas. There were 19,387 farms with an average size of 212 acres. (**Source:** Agriculture in the Classroom—USU Extension http://extension.usu.edu/aitc/teachers/secondary/pdf/changes_challenges/cc16.pdf)
 - In 2006, there were 15,100 farms with an average size of 768 acres. (**Source:** USDA National Agriculture Statistic Service http://www.nass.usda.gov/Statistics_by_State/Utah/Publications/Annual_Statistical_Bulletin/Pdf/ab07/pg36.pdf)
 - a. What are farms like today? [What types of equipment do farms use? What crops are grown? What does everyone do in the family (like chores)?]
 - b. What would you guess farms were like in 1917? [Same questions as above]
 - c. Explain what farms were like in 1917.
[Use Teacher Resource Information: Farming]

3. **Activity (Chores):** Children contributed to the family farm by helping with a variety of chores. Discuss the importance of these chores and what children did to help the family. [Use Teacher Resource Information: Children on the 1917 Farm]
 - a. What chores do you have today? How does this help your family? Which chores would you like to do more? Why?

- b. Explain that **making butter** was one of the chores children would be responsible for. Students will make butter by using small jars and shaking cream in them.
 - Items needed:
 - a. small glass jars (The number of jars depends on the number of students. Students may work in pairs if you do not have enough jars.)
 - b. whipping cream
 - c. Explain the process of making butter. In 1917 most farms would have a milk cow. Every morning and evening the cow had to be milked. After the milk had cooled off, the farm family would skim the cream off the top (they would use a cream separator if they owned one). Once they had separated the cream they were ready to make butter.
 - d. Put a small amount of whipping cream in each jar. Have students shake their jars until butter forms. The fat part of the cream will stick together, forming the butter. The milk part is called buttermilk and this can be used in cooking for things like pancakes or biscuits.
 - e. Once the butter was formed, they would “wash” the butter by pouring clean water on it to get the extra buttermilk out so it wouldn’t go rancid. (If you eat the butter right after you make it, you will not have to worry about this step.)
 - f. You may want to have rolls or bread so the students can eat the butter they made.
4. What Did Kids Do For Fun?: Explain that after all of the work was done, kids would have the chance to play with some of their toys or play games. [Use Teacher Resource Information: Entertainment and Recreation]
- a. **Discussion Questions:**
 - What types of games do you like to play?
 - After learning about some of the games from 1917, are there any games/songs you play that kids would have played then?
 - b. **Play a game.** Play one of the 1917 games.
 - c. **Sing a song.** Sing songs that were around in 1917.
5. Interview: Have students interview an elderly neighbor or relative (someone born before 1920 would be great because that is around the time for the 1917 Farm; but 80 years old or older would be okay).
- a. Students may want to cover these and/or other topics:
 - What they did as a kid. Ask them about their chores, what they did for fun, what school was like, what their family was like, and any other interesting aspects of their life as a kid.
 - Find out if their family lived on a farm or how they made their living. How did they cook, what did they eat, what kind of animals did they have?

- What was the best thing about when they were a kid? What was the hardest thing about when they were a kid?
6. Catalog Page Activity: (This activity is also featured for our Harvest program in the fall in the Lesson Plans section)
- a. Instruct the students to bring to class two pages from a catalog or from an internet shopping site. One page should show clothes that they want. The second page should show toys that they want.
 - b. In class, talk about what it was like to be a kid in 1917.
 - *As a Pre-Visit Activity*: Ask the students what they think kids did in 1917. After you write their answers on the board, talk about what different things children did in 1917 (See previous activities).
 - *Post-Visit Activity*: Ask the students what they remember what children in 1917 did. They may want to draw pictures or write about some of the activities the children participated in.
[Use Teacher Resource Information: Children on the 1917 Farm]
 - c. Have students get their pages they brought from home and pass out two 1917 catalog pages (see links under 1917 Farm lessons under Teacher Resource Information). Tell students these are pages from a Sears Catalog from around 1917. Explain that catalogs were a popular and useful way for farm families to get supplies, clothing, and toys. [Information can be found in the Teacher Resource Information: Mail-Order Catalogs]
 - d. Have the students look at the catalog pages from 1917. Answer the following questions:
 - List at least five items that are for sale from the catalog pages. For each item, explain and answer the following:
 1. Briefly describe the item.
 2. How much does it cost?
 3. How is that toy/clothing item different than the same type of item today?
 - Which item from 1917 would you be most interested in buying? Why? How much do you think that item would cost today?
 - What kinds of toys/clothing do you think were popular in 1917? Why?
 - After looking at the catalog/internet website pages from today and the catalog pages from 1917, what are some similarities and differences in items? How do you think things have changed for kids over the years?

The following activities may work best as a post visit activity or after all of the Farm lessons have been covered.

1. Writing Activity (Diary):
 - a. Have students complete the diary activity. [See worksheet below]
 - i. Students will write diary entries as if they were kids in 1917. Have students talk about the things that they would be doing, such as chores, what life is like for them, what they did with their friends, etc.

2. Art Activity: Have students draw pictures of what life would be like on the farm in 1917.
 - a. Possible Picture topics:
 - i. What do you do for chores?
 - ii. What games do you play?
 - iii. How does your family cook?
 - iv. What kind of house do you live in?
 - v. What kind of pets do you have?
 - vi. What do you do for fun?
 - vii. How do you get around?
 - viii. Where do you get your food?
 - ix. What did they do for chores?
 - x. What games did they play?

Standards: 1st 1:2, 1st 2:1, 2nd 1:3, 2nd 2:1, SS 4:1

Use in the Classroom: Compare/Contrast, Writing, Discussion, Kinesthetic

Diary Worksheet

Name: _____ Date: _____

Directions: Imagine you are a child living on a Utah farm in the year 1917. Write a page in your diary about your life on the farm. You could write two or three entries explaining the things that you do each day. (Suggestions: What chores did you do? Who did you play with or talk to? What did you do with your friends? What did you hear about WWI? What was everyone else in your family doing? What was your house like? What was your farm like?)

Dear Diary,