

Lesson Plan: Maine Agriculture

This lesson was developed by Maine Historical Society for the Seashore Trolley Museum as a companion curriculum for Teddy Roosevelt, Millie, and the Elegant Ride by Jean. M. Flahive (2019). The lesson corresponds with themes and topics covered in Chapters 1, 2, 6, 9, 10, 12, 18, 20, 24, 25.

Objectives:

- Students will practice the skills involved in analyzing primary sources.
- Students will be able to describe the shift from small family farms to commercial farming in Maine.
- Students will be able to identify the major agricultural industries and products historically associated with Maine.

Essential Questions:

1. What are Maine's major agricultural products?

Materials:

- computers with internet access for teacher and student use – teachers and students will need to access Maine Memory Network (www.mainememory.net) to examine the documents used in this lesson and may want to **access Additional Recommended Resources** (see below)
- pen/pencil
- poster making supplies – paper, crayons/markers/colored pencils, scissors, glue/tape, etc.
- copies of **Maine Agriculture Poster Rubric** (below)
- copy (or copies) of *Teddy Roosevelt, Millie, and the Elegant Ride* by Jean Flahive – might be useful for students to have copies on hand, but not imperative for the completion of the activities in this lesson

Timeframe:

Will vary depending on length of class period, class size, etc.; 2-3 days/class periods recommended.

Procedure:

1. Ask students to brainstorm, ***What are some of your favorite foods?*** Record their answers on the classroom white board or a similar and equally visible place.

2. Ask students to next brainstorm, ***What are some foods that people think of when they think of Maine?*** Record these answers as well while keeping their list of favorite foods visible.

Answers will vary, but may include: blueberries (and blueberry products like preserves, pies, etc.), potatoes, seafood (lobsters, lobster rolls, scallops, clams, chowder, etc.), whoopie pies, fiddleheads, maple syrup, Needham candies, brown bread, baked beans, red hot dogs, Italian sandwiches, ployes, doughnuts. Note if any of the answers from their favorites list are also thought of as “Maine” foods.

3. Ask students to next brainstorm, ***Where does your food come from?*** Answers may certainly include “supermarket”, “restaurants”, which are all acceptable, but push students to also consider where do those places get the foods they sell? This question will probably make many students realize that they often don’t always know the exact source of their food.

4. Ask students to look at the lists they’ve created and to think about the foods they love, the foods of Maine, and where it all comes from. Ask them, ***How hard is it to get any of these foods at any time?*** For example, can they find fresh blueberries in January? How about a fruit that doesn’t grow in Maine, like oranges? Are those easy to find any time of year? Explain to students that because of the technology and the economy that we have today in the United States, we don’t think much of going into a restaurant or grocery store and finding almost anything that we could want or need at any time. But in Maine in the early 1900s, when people like Millie and her family were alive, people were used to food being much more local and seasonal; you ate what was grown nearby and when it was in season. Ask students, ***Why do you think that was the case?*** Answer will vary, but make sure they understand that before electricity, modern refrigeration, modern shipping (trucks, planes, etc.) preserving food and keeping it fresh to travel around the world before it spoiled was a challenge.

5. Explain that in the **early 1900s, nearly 40% of Americans lived on farms**, just like the Thayers. Today, farm workers make up just over 1% of the U.S. population. Though there are fewer farms in the U.S. today, today’s farms are typically much bigger operations than the Thayer’s family farm.

a. Suggested images to help illustrate early 20th century farming from Maine Memory Network:

i. [Nonesuch Farm, Scarborough, ca. 1900](#)

ii. [Farming, Denmark, 1911](#)

iii. [Whitney Farm, Harrison, ca. 1880](#)

6. Explain that **most farms in Maine in the mid-1800s were small family farms** that produced a variety of crops, most of which were for use by the family and its animals. After the Civil War, when New England began to see more **changes with the addition of railroads and new technology**, farming started to change. Family farms did not disappear but began to be outnumbered by larger operations that specialized in crops such as **sweet corn, dairy products, potatoes, apples or poultry**.

a. Suggested images to help illustrate Maine farming from Maine Memory Network:

i. [Cutting corn, Fairfield, 1916](#)

- ii. [Smith Farm, New Limerick, ca. 1925](#)
- iii. [Cows, Spring Brook Farm, Cumberland, ca. 1930](#)

7. Explain that relatively small dairy farms, like the Thayer's farm, have been found in all parts of Maine the state since early European settlement. **The Maine Agricultural Society**, organized in the first decades of the 19th century, and its successors sponsored agricultural shows so farmers could learn about different breeds of dairy cows and new farming techniques. Trolley companies' freight service played an important role in maine agriculture as well; they picked up milk containers along the railway line. Many lines through rural communities had "milk platforms" where the dairy farmers put their commercial containers for pick up by the electric railways. The 30-mile stretch of the Portland-Lewiston Interurban had at least 8 specific milk platforms. The Aroostook Railroad's freight service included transporting railroad boxcars full of potatoes.

8. Explain to students that they are going to look closely at **the history of the agriculture of a different Maine food**. They can choose the food/industry that they are the most interested in – **blueberries, potatoes, dairy foods** - and they will use Maine Memory Network and a few other websites (see **Additional Recommended Resources** below) to do their research. When their research is complete, they will **create a poster about that food/industry and how it has been farmed in Maine for a classroom food museum**. Refer students to the **Rubric** (see below) for how their poster will be assessed.

9. When posters are completed and displayed in the classroom museum, instruct students to **explore the museum and examine each poster**.

10. **Conclusion/Exit ticket**: Ask students to share **one thing they learned about (1) dairy, (2) blueberry, and (3) potato farming in Maine**.

Extension Activities:

1. Ask students to interview a Maine farmer, or invite a Maine farmer to the classroom to talk about their work and what they think the future holds for agriculture in Maine.

Additional Recommended Resources:

Maine Memory Network exhibits, stories, slideshows:

[Maine Eats: the food revolution starts here](#)

[Blueberries to Potatoes: Farming in Maine](#)

[Laboring in Maine](#)

[The future of potato growing](#)

[Growing up on a potato and dairy farm](#)

[Aroostook Potato Harvest: Perspective of a Six-Year-Old](#)

film:

[Harvesting blueberries, ca. 1930](#)

Aroostook County Tourism

[The Maine Potato](#)

University of Maine:

[Blueberry History](#)

Maine Agriculture Poster Rubric

Standard	4 – exceeds standard	3 – standard met	2 – approaching standard	1 – does not yet meet standard
Research	Successfully used Maine Memory Network, and other recommended sources to find accurate and appropriate information and navigates within the database easily without assistance.	Successfully used Maine Memory Network and other recommended sources as needed to find accurate and appropriate information.	Occasionally used most of the appropriate resources to find information.	Did not utilize any appropriate sources to find information.
Content	Information is accurate and clearly relates to the main topic and includes many supporting details and/or examples.	Information is accurate and relates to the main topic, supported with at least 2-3 important facts.	Information is mostly accurate and mostly relates to the main topic. Few details and/or facts are given.	Information is inaccurate and/or has little or nothing to do with the main topic.
Poster Graphics & Images	Graphics /images go well with the text and there is an excellent mix of text and graphics. Excellent use of historical images as reference.	Graphics /images go well with the text and there is a good mix of text and graphics. Makes use of historical images as reference.	Some graphics /images go well with the text and but there may not be a good mix of text and graphics and/or little use of historical images as reference.	Graphics /images do not go with the text, poor mix of text and graphics and/or no use of historical images as reference.
Poster Attractiveness and Text	The poster is exceptionally attractive in terms of design, layout, neatness, mechanics, spelling/grammar. It is easy to read and very informative	The poster is attractive in terms of design, layout, neatness, mechanics, spelling/grammar. It is easy to read and informative.	The poster is acceptable but may need some improvement in terms of design, layout, neatness, mechanics, spelling/grammar. It is mostly easy to read and informative.	The poster needs significant improvement in terms of design, layout, neatness, mechanics, spelling/grammar. It is difficult to read and/or is not informative.
Sources/Bibliography	An accurate list is kept of all the sources used for the information and graphics in the poster.	An accurate list is kept of almost all the sources used for the information and graphics in the poster.	A partial list is kept of most the sources used for the information and graphics in the poster.	List of all the sources used for the information and graphics in the poster is missing or mostly incomplete.

total: _____

Maine Learning Results for Social Studies (2019):

Social Studies, Grades 6-8 – History: Students draw on concepts and processes using primary and secondary sources from history to develop historical perspective and understand issues of continuity and change in the community, Maine, the United States, and world.

- **History 1:** Students understand major eras, major enduring themes, and historic influences in the history of Maine, the United States, and various regions of the world by: **(F1)** Explaining that history includes the study of past human experience based on available evidence from a variety of primary and secondary sources; and explaining how history can help one better understand and make informed decisions about the present and future. **(F2)** Identifying major historical eras, major enduring themes, turning points, events, consequences, and people in the history of Maine, the United States, and various regions of the world. **(D2)** Analyzing major historical eras, major enduring themes, turning points, events, consequences, and people in the history of Maine, the United States, and various regions of the world.

Common Core State Standards: English Language Arts Standards » History/Social Studies » Grade 6-8:

Key Ideas and Details:

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RH.6-8.2

Determine the central ideas or information of a primary or secondary source; provide an accurate summary of the source distinct from prior knowledge or opinions.

Integration of Knowledge and Ideas:

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RH.6-8.7

Integrate visual information (e.g., in charts, graphs, photographs, videos, or maps) with other information in print and digital texts.

Range of Reading and Level of Text Complexity:

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RH.6-8.10

By the end of grade 8, read and comprehend history/social studies texts in the grades 6-8 text complexity band independently and proficiently.