

The Open Suitcase Series – Program Description

The History of Agriculture on Prince Edward Island

The program “The History of Agriculture on Prince Edward Island” explores the history of the primary industry on Prince Edward Island and its origins, development, resources, and changes over time.

Listed below are descriptions of the topics covered and the contents of the suitcase. Also included is a complete list of suggested activities and questions for critical thinking to complement the program.

The written material covers the following topics:

Introduction

Prior to farming, societies survived through hunting and gathering. How was farming discovered? How did this change the way societies functioned?

Early Farming on Prince Edward Island

Agriculture is one of the Island’s primary resources and has been for many years. The early Mi’Kmaq people, who were native to the Island, were hunters and gatherers. It was the French who brought farming with them when they settled in the first few decades of the 1700s. What did the French need to do in order to make the land farmable? What were some of the struggles they faced?

Farming under British Rule

After the deportation of the Acadians, Prince Edward Island was settled by Scottish, Irish, British, and United Empire Loyalists, all under British Rule. The majority of these settlers had no education or experience when it came to farming and struggled greatly to make a living. What obstacles did they face? What lessons did they have to learn? Why was the potato a popular crop?

Farming as a Way Life

What were the roles of men, women, and children on the farm? Although planting and harvest only happened at certain times of the year, there was still much work to do. Learn about the different jobs and chores involved in running a farm. Even experienced farmers are faced with challenges. What might some of these be?

Government Intervention Improved Agriculture

Absentee landowners caused many troubles for Islanders desiring to make a living from farming. This was a troublesome issue up until Prince Edward Island joined Confederation in 1873. Prior to this, the colonial government attempted to improve conditions for farmers by creating a number of Agricultural Societies. What were some of their objectives?

Moving into the Twentieth Century

In the early days of the twentieth century, the Island government established the Department of Agriculture to look after the growing needs of the industry. Discover the impact of advancing technologies such as tractors, chemical fertilizers, and specialized rather than mixed farming. What are some examples of specialized farming?

Farming in the Twenty-First Century

Many issues impact the farming industry today. What role is global warming playing? How does the government view the troubles of farmers? How do the struggles of Island farmers affect the non-farming community?

Questions for Critical Thought and Ideas for Further Exploration

Introduction

- Why do people desire to live in urban rather than rural areas?
- How would growing food rather than hunting and gathering, change a person's lifestyle? What would it be like to go back to hunting and gathering? What would have to change?

Early Farming on Prince Edward Island

- What struggles did early farmers encounter on Prince Edward Island? What might have been their biggest complaint?
- What made the beginning of farming on P.E.I. significant? Had these settlers ever farmed before?

Farming under British Rule

- Why did the British use a landowner system? Who did it benefit? For whom was it a disadvantage?
- Explain why early settlers looked to farming for survival even though they had no experience or knowledge of this type of work. How did they learn? What frustrations might they have faced?

Farming as a Way of Life

- Farmers often worked together, helping each other in what was known as working bees.
- Is this common in urban job settings? If not, what causes this difference?
- Why might the S.P.U.D. society have believed the potato to be unfit for human consumption?
- Did farmers have a good quality of life? Why or why not?

- What would be some advantages of being a farmer? What would be some disadvantages?

Government Intervention Improved Agriculture

- Why were farmers not content with renting their land from landowners?
- In which ways did the government help farmers? How does this compare to how they are helping farmers today?
- Were the societies formed to assist in improving Island farming beneficial? How would their objectives impact farmers? How would farming have to change?
- Why would exhibitions and fairs encourage farmers to improve the industry?

Moving into the Twentieth Century

- Government formed a Department of Agriculture to manage agricultural affairs. How would this improve situations as opposed to being directed by societies?
- Compare mixed and specialized farming. What are some of their benefits, downfalls, challenges, etc.?
- How would the Island be different today if it was still ninety percent farmland?
- The Island gradually moved into having fewer, but larger farms. What were some of the benefits of this change? What were some of the downfalls?

Farming in the Twenty-First Century

- How will the government's decrease in funding to farmers impact Island farms? How will it in turn impact Islanders?
- Many farmers are struggling to make a living, and with tough economic times, many people are struggling to find enough money to buy their food. What are some of the causes and consequences of this issue? How might it be resolved?
- Why are the struggles and issues experienced by farmers, problems for all Islanders?

Suggestions for Activities

1. Have students keep track of what they eat and drink for one day and record what farm products went into the making of these foods.
2. Introduce the identification game included in the program kit. Can students identify the animal or plant that was the source of a food product?

3. Have a class discussion about how much each student's family supports Island farmers in their buying habits. Do they make a conscious effort to support local or even Canadian producers?

4. Plan a classroom lunch that has to be made up entirely of locally produced food.

5. Discuss the impact the primary industry of farming plays in creating other sector jobs. Here is an example: A dairy farmer with a herd of sixty cows can directly or indirectly affect other jobs the following ways. A herdsman can make a living as a farm worker. A mill worker produces feed for the animals. A truck driver delivers the feed to the farm. An office worker prepares the invoice for the feed. Labourers build the mill and mill equipment. Factory workers build the milking machines and storage milk tanks. Salesmen sell the milking equipment. Technicians install the equipment in the farmer's barn. Veterinarians care for the animals. Dairy workers produce the milk products. Store clerks handle and sell milk. The list can be continued. We are all interdependent.

6. Have a local farmer come into the classroom and talk about farming on the Island and some of the challenges.

7. Take a class tour of the Pioneer Farm in Glenwood owned by Judy and Jim Bertling to experience what farming was like when a family grew its own food and sold the excess. The phone number for the Pioneer Farm is 859-2228.

8. Read the book *The Biography of Tomatoes* to discover how the changing technology of farming and the production of food are affecting the very quality of what we eat.

9. Suggest *The Farming Game* as a means of learning about the economics of farming.

10. Investigate the following websites to see how some foods are produced.

<http://www.freepatentsonline.com/7108878-0-large.jpg>

<http://www.neighborlyfarms.com/process.html>

11. Read the book *In the Barn*. Have students compare early farm implements to those made with modern technology.

12. Read the article in the box about digging for mussel mud.

13. Take a field trip to the International Fox Museum and Hall of Fame located in the Armoury Building, 33 Summer Street, Summerside. Tour information available from Wyatt Heritage Properties at 432-1298.

14. Look at the archival pictures in the box and have a class discussion on how things have changed.

Items in the suitcase

Besides the written material contained in the binder a number of other materials have been gathered for the suitcase that will increase the student's understanding of the agricultural industry and how it has evolved over time.

In The Barn: Written by Bobbie Kalman, this book is part of the Historic Communities series published by Crabtree Publishing. It tells the story of the barns built by pioneers to house their animals and crops. It describes the chores of the different seasons and explains how the barn played a part in the social lives of people. The book is filled with colourful photographs and illustrations.

The Biography of Tomatoes: Written by Adrianna Morganelli, this book is part of the series How Did That Get Here? published by Crabtree Publishing. It tells the story of tomatoes including what they are, how to grow and harvest them, the different varieties that exist, pests and diseases that affect them, and their future. This book is filled with colourful photographs and illustrations.

The Biography of Wheat: Written by Jennifer Lackey, this book is part of the series How Did That Get Here? published by Crabtree Publishing. It tells the story of wheat including what it is, where it is grown, what helps and hurts its growth, its history and future. This book is filled with colourful photographs and illustrations.

The Farming Game (board game): This educational game, produced by the Weekend Farmer Co., is used in schools around the world to teach students some of the ins and outs of farming. Students can decide between different types of farming, including cattle, grain, fruit, etc. They will learn the finances involved by trying to eliminate debt, and also discover the nature of planting and harvesting.

The Farming Game (PC version): This educational game, produced by the Weekend Farmer Co., gives students the chance to give farming a try via computer. All the challenges and lessons of the classic board game are found in this updated computer version.

Find Your Food: For the first time in history, more people are now living in urban rather than rural areas. Because of this, many students are unaware of the origins of many of the foods they consume. This matching game teaches students where they get the foods they consume. Students will learn to link cucumbers with pickles, potato chips with potatoes, jam with strawberries, eggs with chickens, hamburger and cheese with cows, bacon with pigs, ketchup with tomatoes, etc. This game consists of colourful laminated photos.

Articles: The binder containing the written program *The History of Agriculture on Prince Edward Island* also contains many articles, advertisements, and journal excerpts relating to the agricultural industry. This allows students to learn, from original sources, some of the struggles farmers faced over time. It helps students see the influence of technology

on the development of farm equipment such as the potato grader, mowers, cream separators, etc. Many articles look at the Island's main export crop, the modern agri-tourism popularity, and the various dairies that have been here over the years including The Ideal Dairy Ltd., Purity Dairy Ltd., Maple Leaf Dairy Ltd., and Amalgamated Dairies Ltd. Also included is a publication by David E. Weale entitled "The Mud Diggers."

Photographs: The binder also includes numerous pictures related to the agricultural industry: farm scenes from the early 1900s; 1930s photographs of Perfection Dairy; an early milkman doing deliveries; pictures relating to fox farming; the PEI Bag Company; Island Farm Equipment, etc. These pictures provide students with a visual representation of how the industry has developed over time.

Photo CD: All of the photographs are also provided on a CD for easy classroom viewing.