

Researching Farming: Crops and Livestock

Objective:

Students will:

- understand that farmers grew various crops and raised different types of livestock, and the type of farm they had depended on their location and the background of the farmer
- learn the history of a particular crop or species of livestock

Materials:

Library with books on farming and specific crops and animals

Online sources for the history of the same

Notepaper and pencil or pen

Word processor, printer

Opening:

The main idea of this lesson is for students to learn about the variety of crops and stock that farms in Illinois grow and raise. We often take for granted the many food products on our table and in our stores. We don't think about the growing of fruits and vegetables, the raising of livestock, and the work that requires. We usually do not know the history of those crops and stock. For instance, we know that Native Americans also grew corn, but did corn always look the way it does today, with large ears and sweet kernels? Do we even know the correct names of all the parts of a corn plant?



Grinding Corn

Your task will be to research and write a report (with images) of one crop or one type of animal that Illinois farmers produce or have produced. For the early farms of Illinois, we have a list of plants and animals that [John Woods](#) saw and/or grew in southern Illinois in the 1820s. In the photographs of the [Sadorus farm](#), the [Sweet Farm](#), and the [Buchholz Farm](#), we have photographs of animals and crops that will give you some ideas for research. Today's newspapers often have farm reports in the Economics section. Your librarian will have some ideas for you.

Procedure:

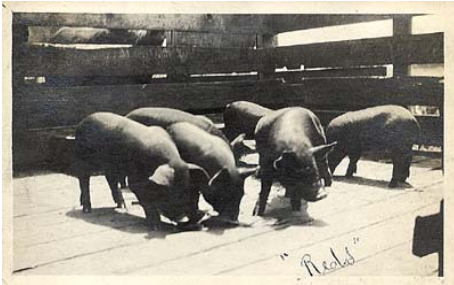
Brainstorm and record on the board what students think they already know about a crop or farm animal. (Choose corn or cows, for example.)

Then brainstorm a list of questions they should answer when they research a plant or animal (see list below).

Students will:

1. Choose a farm plant or animal to research.
2. Use the library and Internet as research tools.

3. Choose among the subtopics to find out about:
 - a. When was the plant or animal first cultivated or domesticated on farms?
 - b. Describe the plant or animal – size, color, shape, weight, special characteristics
 - c. Describe how a farmer takes care of or grows this animal or plant.
 - d. Is the plant or animal the same as it always was, or has scientific advances changed it? If so, how?
 - e. What are the products from this plant or animal?
4. Take notes about their findings; bookmark the Web pages so they can find them again.
5. Follow their teacher's requirements about Bibliography of sources, and format of writing.
6. Save their report on their computer so their group can use it in the final presentation.



Closing:

Ask the class in a short whole class lesson to name some of the plants and animals they studied. Ask them to tell some of the interesting points they learned. This compares to the lists they made at the beginning of this lesson (first item under procedure).

Assessment Suggestions:

Students know the names of many farm plants and animals.

Students can talk about their research plant or animal's description, history, and uses to humans.