

The Ox-Cart Man

Book by Donald Hall

Unit study prepared by Suzanne Mazer Stewart and Colleen Yoder

BIBLE

Memory Verse(s)

Read and discuss these verses in relation to *The Ox-Cart Man*.

Proverbs 12:11

"He who tills his land will have plenty of bread, But he who pursues worthless things lacks sense"

Proverbs 14:23

"In all labor there is profit, But mere talk leads only to poverty."

Bible Study: Seasons

Ecclesiastes 3: 1-8 - studying each "season" or "time" and its contrast. Have children recall certain "times" in their own lives.

SOCIAL STUDIES

Geography

This story takes place in New Hampshire. Find NH on a map or atlas. Color or ID its flag.

Nickname: The Granite State

Statehood: 1788; 9th state

Capital: Concord

Biggest City: Manchester

Abbreviation: NH

State Bird: purple finch

State Flower: purple lilac

History: Time Period

This story is set in the early 1800s. Discuss the things that are the same, and the things that are different. Consider making a "Then and Now" chart to compare the 1800s with the time we live in today.

Other Topics for Exploration

There are several historical "trades" that could be explored: blacksmithing (the source of the kettle), harness making, candle making, spinning and weaving, etc. (We made a simple cardboard loom and wove with yarn.) The girls also did some research into samplers and needlework. Another area to explore, especially of interest to my girls, is hearth cooking. (We even found a recipe book in our library that included many recipes for foods we eat now, with directions to make them over a hearth.)

Allow your older student to choose some colonial trades to research-- blacksmith, cooper, tailor, whitesmith, hatter, miller, wheelwright, silversmith, tanner, cobbler, housewright, pewterer, town crier, clockmaker, cabinetmaker, barber, etc.

LANGUAGE ARTS

Creative Writing: Adding Details

You can get creative with this story. Give each character a name, and then take turns telling another story about your particular family member. These can be in the form of a journal or diary entry, telling a little bit about themselves and their day. (Youngest dc dictate theirs, older ones write them out.)

Comprehension & Discussion Questions

1. How did the family survive (how were they able to buy/produce what they needed to live)?
2. Each person in the family contributed to the goods produced. Make a chart of who made what.
3. List the steps in the production of the mittens.
4. Why did the family's jobs change with the seasons? Can your student think of any jobs like that today?
5. Where did the Ox-Cart man go to buy/sell goods?
6. The Ox-Cart man's family was able to produce much of what they needed, however, they couldn't make everything; what items did the Ox-Cart man have to

buy?

7. How would these items be used? Would they help the family produce more goods?

8. What else did the man come home with? (coins in his pockets)

Poetry

This "story" is actually a poem written by Donald Hall. Point out the use of line to your student (why the sentences are "broken" off and don't run as one continual line). Also, look for examples of repetition throughout the story.

ART AND MUSIC

Perspective

There are several different uses of perspective and viewpoint in the story's illustrations. You can use these to either introduce or reinforce this topic if studied in earlier books.

Folk Art

Take a look at some early American folk art, and then contrast it to modern-day folk art. Your library should have some sources for this.

Colonial Art

This book is also a good springboard for a discussion into formal colonial art and artists. (One thing we learned is that during colonial times, painters charged by the amount of the body they had to portray in their portraits. A head was cheaper than a full body, sitting down less than standing up, etc. This is the source of the phrase, "cost an arm and a leg.")

Early American Songs

Learn some early American songs, like "Yankee Doodle" or "In and Out the Needle."

MATH

Counting Money

Review and expand counting money, especially coins. "How many ____ make a dollar? How many pennies in a dime? How much do 2 nickels and 3 dimes make? Which is more, 2 dimes or 2 quarters? etc."

Grocery Budget (Life Skills)

A good lesson for older students is to give them several different grocery fliers, a grocery list and a budget. Can they purchase enough for dinner? Which store has the best prices on ____? Which store has the most expensive ____? Find the average price of _____. (I got this idea because the father/farmer only had so much goods to barter with, and only so much money to spend. He had to somehow acquire the things his family needed with, hopefully, some left over. This modern day equivalent was a real eye-opener for my dc as to just what it takes to feed a family of eight!)

Multiplication

If you have a child learning multiplication tables, ask them to find out how much it would cost to serve X number of people a certain item or items for practice.

Calendar Skills (science and critical thinking, too)

Make a calendar (month by month or season by season) for the Ox-Cart Man's family. You will have to do some research, and you will also have to make some educational guesses; some activities will appear in every month/season. Include any of the following activities plus others you can think of:

shearing sheep

making candles

going to town to buy/sell

picking apples

retrieving honey/honeycombs

maple sugaring

collecting goose feathers

harvesting potatoes

planting vegetables

gathering turnips, cabbages, etc.

carving

taking care of animals
making flax into linen
sewing
spun yarn
knitted mittens

SCIENCE

Farmer's Market

If you have one, go for a field trip visit. If not, there's a wonderful book by Lois Ehlert, titled *Market Day*, that shows a family traveling to market. The book is illustrated with folk art from around the world, so this may tie in with your art lessons, as well.

Farm to Table

Pick one or two of your everyday produce items (such as milk, eggs, potatoes, or even honey) and research the process it goes through today to get to your dinner table.

Go-along books:

Milk: From Cow to Carton by Alike

The Milk Makers by Gail Gibbons

Farm animals

This book is a wonderful way to introduce your student to the different animals that make up the farm. OR you could do a more in-depth study of just one or two. You could also have your student list the animals that lived on this farm and what products each one "gave" to the farmer's family.

Gardening

"In May they planted potatoes, turnips, and cabbages"

Choose some vegetables to plant in your garden this year. If it's planting time, plant outdoors. If the season is right for starting seeds inside, then do that. Chart the growth of your plants in a nature journal. You may even want to compare the different seeds, growth rates, etc. of each plant (if you choose more than one).

Bees/Honey

"While bees woke up, starting to make new honey"

Honey is a sweet fluid produced by honey bees from the nectar of flowers. Honey is put away by bees as a food source. In cold weather or when food sources are scarce, bees use their stored honey as their source of energy.

Here is the process of how honey is made:

A field bee carries nectar in its mouth.

The field bee gives the mouthful of nectar to a house bee at the hive.

The house bees put the nectar inside the hive's six-sided honeycomb cells.

The nectar is mostly water.

After the nectar is inside the cells, it must dry.

The bees fan the cells with their wings.

The bees cover the cells of the honeycomb with wax.

The nectar dries for a few days.

When the nectar thickens, it turns into honey.

Further topics to explore: lifecycle of the honeybee, beekeeping, how bees are necessary in the apple-producing process

Go-along suggestion: *The Honey Makers* by Gail Gibbons

Maple Sugaring

Maple Sugaring begins late in the winter when the temps go above freezing during the day, and below freezing during the night. This gets the sap flowing up the trees (and therefore "running" out the spiles) during the day. During the night, the sap goes back down the tree until the warmth/sunshine draw it back up the tree again. We like to get long "runs", lasting several weeks. In Ohio, the weather is more volatile and the seasons can be cut short abruptly by a warm trend in the weather. When the sap stays up in the trees, the season is over. As the leaves come out, the sap becomes bitter.

You drill holes in trees and lightly tap spiles into them. Some people hang buckets on the spiles. Others use food grade tubing from spile into 5 gallon buckets that sit on the ground at the bottom of the tree. Some people extract sap with a vacuum,

but this is potentially harmful to the trees. You can roughly expect a quart of syrup per tap.

It takes about 40-60 gallons of sap to make one gallon of syrup. It depends on the brix level (or sugar level) of the sap. Sugar maple trees have a higher sugar content than other maples. The sap is gathered daily and put into holding tanks which is then fed into large evaporators. The evaporator boils the sap down quickly. Some are heated with wood and in a little building called a sugar shack.

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