

Farmer Boy

Overview

For 70 years, children and adults have delighted in the *Little House* books by Laura Ingalls Wilder. It was in 1932, at the age of 65, that Laura Ingalls Wilder published her first book, *Little House in the Big Woods*. During the next ten years she published seven more books describing her girlhood days as a pioneer on the western prairies. In the *Little House* series, Mrs. Wilder has not only enchanted her readers with her skillful storytelling, but she has been able to pass on to us the wonderful legacy of our American Past.

There is one book in the *Little House* series that is not about life on the prairies. *Farmer Boy*, written by Mrs. Wilder in 1933, is the story of Almanzo Wilder, Mrs. Wilder's husband, and his life growing up on a farm in northern New York. *Farmer Boy* describes the life of nine-year-old Almanzo and his family through the changing seasons. Through this story, the reader is able to observe the intricacies of life on a farm near Malone, Franklin County in the year 1866.

In preparation for your visit to The Farmers' Museum, and the tour **Farmer Boy**, this packet includes a set of lessons and activities. These will provide you and your students with an opportunity to become acquainted with Almanzo Wilder and his life in 1866 in northern New York State close to the Saint Lawrence River.

In lesson 1, students will focus on Almanzo and his life in 1866. Students will look at the numerous activities Almanzo was involved with on a daily basis. During the lesson, students will categorize these activities and then compare and contrast life in the nineteenth century to their own lives.

In lesson 2, students will focus on the changing seasons. Students will explore the changing seasons and analyze the cause and effect it had on farmers in 1866 and the cause and effect seasons have on us today. Working in teams, students will compile a list of activities in which Almanzo was involved with seasonally. Each team will write and illustrate a storybook about their topic.

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What to Expect During your Tour

Tour Theme: To explore The Farmers' Museum and Village using the book *Farmer Boy*, by Laura Ingalls Wilder.

Tour Format: Upon arrival, each tour group is assigned a Museum Teacher.

- Tours depart the Main Barn of The Farmers' Museum and include an introduction to the museum and a visit to at least five buildings in the historic village.
- During the tour students participate in a role-play activity, a game and a hands-on activity.
- Following the conclusion, groups return to the Main Barn.

Tour Objectives = NYS Learning Standards:

1. **Social Studies Standards 1.2**
Important beliefs and traditions illustrate the connections and interactions of people and events across time and from a variety of perspectives
 - recognize how traditions and practices were passed from one generation to the next
 - distinguish between the near and distant past
2. **Social Studies Standard 1.4**
The skills of historical analysis include the ability to weigh the importance, reliability, and validity of evidence
 - consider interpretation of issues in history and understand the differences in these accounts
 - explore different experiences, beliefs, motives, and traditions of people living in NYS
 - view historic events through the eyes of those who were there
3. **English Language Arts Standard 2.2**
Speaking for literary response
 - responses to literature that make reference to the plot, characters, ideas, and vocabulary
 - explain the meaning of literary works with some meanings beyond the literal level

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Lesson 1

Introducing Almanzo Wilder

Overview

In this lesson, students will become acquainted with Almanzo Wilder, the protagonist of the book: *Farmer Boy*, by Laura Ingalls Wilder, and explore his childhood in Malone, New York in 1866. Students will then compare growing-up in 1866 with their lives today. The **Activity Worksheet** will help guide the students in reading for information and creative expression. The **What do You Think? Worksheet**, an analysis worksheet, provides students with the opportunity to learn why an activity from the past may be seldom practiced today. As a conclusion to the lesson, students will present their findings.

Learning Objectives

- To use a piece of literature to study life in the past.
- To categorize activities from the past.
- To compare and contrast the life of Almanzo Wilder in 1866 to life today.

Curriculum Connections

1. English Language Arts Standard 1.1
Listening and reading to acquire information and understanding.
 - gather and interpret information from children's reference books
 - make appropriate and effective use of strategies to construct meaning from print, such as prior knowledge about a subject
2. English Language Arts Standard 2.2
Speaking and writing to acquire and transmit information.
 - present information clearly in a variety of oral and written forms
 - select a focus, organize a point of view for oral and written presentations
3. Social Studies Standard 2.4
The skills of historical analysis include the ability to investigate differing and competing theories.
 - consider different interpretations
 - explore traditions in different periods of history

Resources Used

Farmer Boy, by Laura Ingalls Wilder. Harper Collins Publishers, NY: 1971. Text Copyright by Laura Ingalls Wilder, 1933.

Before You Begin

If students will be reading on their own, gather copies of *Farmer Boy* for each member of your class or be sure the library has an adequate supply.

Make copies of the **Activity Worksheet** for each student in your class. You may wish to make several copies for each student.

Make copies of the **What do You Think Worksheet** for each student in your class.

Procedure

1. Begin the class by finding out how much the students already know about Laura Ingalls Wilder and the *Little House* series. Inquire if the students have read any of the books or if they have seen the television series. Allow time to discuss what they already know.
2. Find out if the students realize that one of the books in the *Little House* series does not take place in the western region of the United States, but rather takes place in northern New York. That book is *Farmer Boy*, the story of Almanzo Wilder, a young boy growing up in the year 1866 in Malone, New York.
3. Introduce the lesson.
 - Students will read the book *Farmer Boy*, as a class or individually.
 - At the end of each chapter, students will use the **Activity Worksheet** to note, by category, the activities that Almanzo was involved in.
 - The Activity Worksheet is divided into the following categories:
 - Column 1: School Activities
 - Column 2: Chores
 - Column 3: Family Activities
 - Column 4: Leisure Activities
4. Read chapter 1 as a class and allow it to serve as an example.

Example:

 - Column 1: family boards the teacher, study from primer, students in one room
 - Column 2: 0
 - Column 3: family shares lunch at school
 - Column 4: playing in the snow
5. At the completion of the book and the **Activity Worksheet**, students will circle the activities that they participate in today. Examples might be eating pancakes, playing in the snow and walking to school.

6. Compile a classroom list of the circled activities. Ask the students if there are any differences in the way that these activities are enjoyed today and the way that Almanzo participated in such activities in 1866?
7. Discuss the activities that were not included on the list. Why were they excluded? Are there inventions that make the activities easier or even obsolete?
8. Each student will choose an activity that was not on the list and complete the **What do You Think Worksheet**. Examples might be going to school in a one-room schoolhouse or travelling by wagon.
9. For conclusion, each student will present their findings from the **What do You Think Worksheet** for the class in the form of a story, poem, poster or chart.

Further Exploration

- Create a bulletin board illustrating life on the Wilder Farm.
- Cook a Wilder meal.
- Create a bulletin board of similarities and differences between life today and life in 1866.
- Write to the Almanzo and Laura Ingalls Wilder Association to gain more information about the Wilders in Malone, New York. The address is:
The Almanzo and Laura Ingalls Wilder Association
P.O. Box 283
Malone, NY 12953
- Research your hometown in 1866 and compare it to Malone, New York.
- Create a classroom research project to learn more about Laura Ingalls Wilder.
- Hold a *Read-a-Thon* to see how many of Laura Ingalls Wilder's *Little House* books the students can read within a set period of time. Make sure that copies of the book are readily available before making the assignment. Or, read the books as a class.
- Hold a Fourth of July Celebration or a Fair as was held in Almanzo's time.
- Learn about games played in 1866 and play as a class.
- Watch an episode from the television series: *Little House on the Prairie*.
- Have students imagine they live in 1866 and write a journal entry depicting a typical day as they see it.

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Lesson 1
Activity Worksheet

Name: _____

Chapter	School Activities	Chores	Family Activities	Leisure Activities

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Name: _____

Lesson 1

What do You Think Worksheet

Activity: _____

Why is this activity so important to Almanzo? _____

Why is this activity seldom practiced today? _____

Can you think of an activity that you are familiar with today that is similar? _____

Would you have liked this activity if you lived in 1866? _____

Why or Why not? _____

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Lesson 2

The Changing Seasons

Overview

In this lesson, students will become acquainted with Almanzo Wilder, the protagonist of the book: *Farmer Boy*, by Laura Ingalls Wilder, and explore his childhood in Malone, NY in 1866. Students will explore the four seasons and the role they played in farm life in 1866. Students will work in teams to analyze each season and note the activities that were specific to each in 1866. As a conclusion, research teams will create a storybook about their season to share with the class.

Learning Objectives

- To use a piece of literature to study life in the past.
- To note that life in the past was much more dependent upon seasonal changes.
- To work as a team to accomplish a research project and a storybook.

Curriculum Connections

1. English Language Arts Standard 4.1
Oral communication in formal and informal settings.
 - Take turns speaking to respond to others' ideas in conversations on familiar topics
2. English Language Arts Standard 2.1
Speaking and writing to acquire and transmit information.
 - present information clearly in a variety of oral and written forms
 - select a focus, organize a point of view for oral and written presentations
3. Social Studies Standard 2.4
The skills of historical analysis include the ability to investigate differing and competing theories.
 - consider different interpretations
 - explore traditions indifferent periods of history

Resources Used

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Before You Begin

Students will have completed reading *Farmer Boy*.

On the board make 5 columns with Spring, Summer, Fall, Winter and Changes at the top of each.

Have students divided into 5 work teams.

Make 5 copies of the **Seasons Worksheet**.

Have supplies on hand for the creation of storybooks.

Procedure

1. Begin the lesson with a discussion of the four seasons. Ask the students to note the characteristic of each season. Write their responses on the board under the appropriate heading.
2. Ask the students to think about the changes in each season. Ask them how the change in seasons affects them personally and write down their comments on the board under Changes.
3. Ask the students how the changing season affected people 150 years ago. How were Almanzo and his family affected by the changing seasons?
4. Divide students into their 5 work teams and assign each team one of the following topics: Spring, Summer, Fall, Winter, or All Seasons.
5. Working together, each work team should complete the **Seasons Worksheet**. Note, each season has its own chapter in the book.
6. Once the **Seasons Worksheet** is complete students will use the worksheet as a writing guide. Each work team will create a classroom storybook about their season. The book will be written from Almanzo's perspective.
7. At the completion of the storybooks, a representative from each work team will read the story to the class.

Further Exploration

- Create a classroom bulletin board that looks at each of the four seasons and the characteristics of each.
- Write a play based on a chapter of the book.

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Lesson 2
Seasons Worksheet

Name of the Season: _____

What work had to be done at this time of year? _____

What role did each member of the family play in doing the work? _____

What kinds of tools or objects did they use in 1866? _____

What did the family do for fun at this time of year? _____

What made this season special or different? _____

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