

# Learning About Farming in Oklahoma

## Using Primary Sources

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# Learning About Farming in Oklahoma Using Primary Sources

**Grade Level:** 4–5    **Subjects:** Social Studies, Information Literacy

**Duration:** 1 hour

**Description:** The purpose of this lesson is to make students aware of the various types of primary source documents that can be used to discover facts about agriculture and farming on Oklahoma.

## **PASS—Oklahoma Priority Academic Student Skills**

**Social Studies 1.1** Demonstrate the ability to utilize research materials, such as encyclopedias, almanacs, atlases, newspapers, photographs, visual images, and computer-based technologies. (Grade 4)

**Social Studies 5.1** Identify major historical individuals, entrepreneurs, and groups, and describe their major contributions. (Grade 4)

**Social Studies 1.1** Locate, gather, analyze, and apply information from primary and secondary sources using examples of different perspectives and points of view. (Grade 5)

**Information Literacy 1.3** Identify and use a range of information sources.

## **Goals:**

- Students will gain an appreciation of the farmer’s way of life from Territorial times to the present.
- Students will be introduced to primary sources of information, such as photographs, diaries, letters, journals and newspapers.
- Students will gain appreciation for the unique perspective primary source documents offer.

## **Objectives:**

- Students will examine photographs and other primary resources related to farming life.
- Students will explain the significance of these documents to a researcher.
- Students will analyze and evaluate the documents.
- Students will learn the difference between primary and secondary sources.

## **Assessment:**

Students will complete the “Primary or Secondary Source” worksheet, analyze a photograph using the “Photograph Analysis” worksheet and answer questions about an autobiographical article using the “Harvest Time in 1908” worksheet.

## **Primary Materials:**

- Photographs of farmers, their equipment and crops.
- Classroom display of books with photographs of farming life.

## **Optional Resources:**

- “Using Primary Sources in the Classroom” provided on The Learning Page by the Library of Congress at [www.memory.loc.gov/learn/lessons/primary.html](http://www.memory.loc.gov/learn/lessons/primary.html)
- “The Historian’s Sources” provided by the Library of Congress at [www.memory.loc.gov/ammem/ndlpedu/lessons/psources/pshome.html](http://www.memory.loc.gov/ammem/ndlpedu/lessons/psources/pshome.html)
- Oklahoma Department of Agriculture webpage [www.oda.state.ok.us/about.htm](http://www.oda.state.ok.us/about.htm) which provides an overview of Oklahoma agriculture.

- Oklahoma Ag in the Classroom website [www.clover.okstate.edu/fourh/aitc/](http://www.clover.okstate.edu/fourh/aitc/) which includes numerous lesson plans related to Oklahoma agriculture.

**Procedure:**

Have students discuss what they know about farming and agriculture in Oklahoma. Ask them how they know what they know. Have students list the various sources of information they use to learn about topics, such as books, diaries, letters, journals, speeches, interviews, oral histories, autobiographies, biographies, newspapers, television, magazines, the Internet, etc.

Distinguish between primary and secondary sources. Have students identify some of the strengths and weaknesses of each. Explain that some sources may include either primary or secondary information, such as a television report of an event after the fact or a newspaper report and interview with a participant in an event.

Primary sources offer an individual's unique thoughts and impressions about their experiences, not someone else's interpretation or analysis of them. Primary sources allow us to get close to a person or event and help us see and understand what happened from a particular perspective.

Present photographs of farms, farming equipment and activities to the students or have students find photographs from books in the book display or library. Ask them to tell you what they see in the pictures. Use the Photograph Analysis worksheet. Also consider the following questions:

- What is the date of the photograph?
- Who created the photograph?
- Why was it created?
- Was this photograph posed or taken in a studio?
- Are there distinguishing marks on the photograph or captions with notes or dates?
- What does this photograph tell about the life of a farmer?

Ask students if they think these photographs are an accurate representation of what was happening at the time they were taken.

Ask students to imagine what a farmer's life was like one hundred years ago. Have them name the different tasks farmers might perform, such as planting seeds, harvesting crops, taking crops to market, etc. Consider what types of primary sources a farmer might have or create, such as a diary or letter, a photograph, a map or drawing, a receipt or bill of sale.

Have students discuss the information they could learn from these items, such as the cost of a product at a given time, the current style of clothing, or an individual's personal account and opinion about an important event. Ask student to identify places where they might find historical records in their community, such as a museum, historical society, or library.

Discuss what primary sources students have or create that provide clues about their lives. Examples include birth certificates, baby books, photographs, report cards, medical records, letters, emails, diaries-handwritten or on the Internet, etc. Consider what other evidence exists, such as items in their desk or objects in their house, such as trophies or art work. Have students discuss how people will know in 10 years or 100 years what happened today.

Ask students to identify organizations that create primary sources. Discuss with students the places in the community that keep records, both current and historical, such as city and county offices, schools, libraries, museums, businesses, newspapers, historical societies, etc.

Have students complete the "Primary or Secondary Source" worksheet. Note that the last 2 items, (website and newspaper article) could be either primary or secondary sources. Have students select a photograph

about cowboys and complete the "Photograph Analysis" worksheet. Ask students to read the passage describing the photograph shown on the poster and answer the questions on the "Harvest Time in 1908" worksheet.

### **Vocabulary:**

Autobiography	The history of a person's life written by that person.
Biography	The history of a person's life written by another person.
Diary or Journal	A daily written record of a person's experiences and observations.
Oral History	An interview with an individual who participated in or witnessed an important event. Interviews are often taped and transcribed.
Primary Source	An actual record that has survived the past, such as a diary, letter, photograph, film of an interview, etc. Primary sources may be published, such as books, advertisements or government reports or unpublished, such as personal letters, wills, deeds or report cards.
Secondary Source	A record that was created after an event occurred, such as a textbook or encyclopedia. Secondary sources often offer interpretation or analysis of events using information gathered from primary sources.

### **Further Suggestions:**

- Invite a member of the Oklahoma Historical Society to visit the classroom to talk about farming life in Oklahoma. Contact Mike Adkins, Director of Education, at [madkins@ok-history.mus.ok.us](mailto:madkins@ok-history.mus.ok.us) or 405-522-5248.
- Take a field trip to the Oklahoma History Center (opening November 2005) to visit the Farm and Ranch exhibit. For more information, visit their website at [www.ok-history.mus.ok.us/mus-sites/masnum01.htm](http://www.ok-history.mus.ok.us/mus-sites/masnum01.htm) or call 405-522-5248.
- Take a field trip to a local museum or historical society to see what types of primary source materials are included in the collection. If a visit is not possible, ask a staff member to visit the classroom to present information and encourage students to visit the museum or historical society with their families.
- Ask students to select a family photograph, preferably one taken before they were born. Have them discuss the photograph with a family member using the "Photograph Analysis" worksheet as a guide.
- Invite a farmer or person whose work relates to agriculture to visit the class to talk about their work.