

Oral History of Illinois Agriculture



Children on the Farm

Illinois State Museum



[Http://avbarn.museum.state.il.us/](http://avbarn.museum.state.il.us/)

Children on the Farm Stories

Children who grew up on farms had to help their parents by doing chores every day. There was certain work that children were expected to help with. Included were feeding chickens and pigs, milking cows, weeding gardens, preparing food, cleaning the house, and picking crops. These chores promoted responsibility and really helped the parents get all the work done that needs doing on a farm.

The AVBarn oral histories are full of stories about childhood farm work. Below are a few examples. They make very interesting beginnings for story-writing with dialog.

Right: The Reid family farm kitchen in the 1960s.



Sample Interviewees' Stories about Childhood Chores

Special points of interest:

- Introduction
- Sample Interviewees' Stories
- Activity
- To Parents and Teachers
- Learning Standards
- Resources

Dr. Doug Parrett, an animal scientist, describes his childhood fear of the huge sows when it was his day to feed them. <http://avbarn.museum.state.il.us/viewclip/2991>



Allyn Sweet and his Pig, 1895

Emma Snodgrass recalls how sick she and her sister and brother became after picking castor beans, which are poisonous. (Minutes 7:51 – 10:35 of Segment: Farm-related Work, Crops, and Activities) (<http://avbarn.museum.state.il.us/viewclip/1333>)



Castor Bean Plant is grown for its oil, which is used in medications and industrial products. Also grown as an ornamental, the plant contains ricin, a

Sample Stories, cont.

Marie Williams relates how scared she was when she had to descend into the cistern and clean it when she was ten. (Segment on Family Farm, Childhood work, and Family Background, minutes 5:50 – 8:40)



<http://avbarn.museum.state.il.us/viewclip/947>

Not all the stories reflect negative feelings. Jack Sarff reminisces about trapping rabbits and selling them for 50 cents each. Eva Clough was proud that at age five she could sweep floors as well as an adult.

Other oral histories, including the new ISM video interviews, contain information and images of children working on farms, feeding animals, and doing FFA activities. Search on “children’s work” and “chores.” Narrow the search in a clip search by choosing categories and sub-categories.



Allyn and Cullen Sweet plowing in 1895

Activity

Watch and listen to oral history interviews of farmers by searching on the topic of childhood and children’s roles, chores, and activities, taking notes.

Discuss what children’s lives were like on the farm, for instance, a typical day of getting up early, milking cows or feeding chickens, eating breakfast, walking to school, returning in the afternoon for more chores. Explore the difference between girls’ and boys’ chores.

Do other research (in the Avbarn, other online sources, and from print sources) about a job or “chore” performed by a

child on a farm. With all your knowledge, write a short story (1-3 pages) about a child and his/her job that incorporates the facts learned.

Think about how the interviewee viewed these chores – fun, boring, difficult, scary, etc. and incorporate this attitude into the story. With the help of images, describe the physical aspects of the chore – where on the farm they occurred, the time of day, the weather conditions, the time required, any special clothing or equipment needed.

Search the ISM Agricultural gallery for images, or use your imagination

and draw or paint your illustrations using the images for help with details.

Write these stories by hand or on the computer. Save the illustrated files as .pdfs for distribution to family and friends by email.

Be adventurous and **make a digital story** in MovieMaker or iMovie with a series of images, drawings, and text with a voiceover narration! (see activity on Digital Storytelling)



Gardening in diapers in the cucumber patch on the Dougan Dairy Farm



Bucket-feeding the calves on the Bridger Farm in the

To Parents and Teachers

Rubric: The story has a beginning with setting and character introduction and description, a middle with a conflict or challenge that is worked out, and an ending showing how the conflict was resolved or a change that occurred (there are hints in the interviews, such as comments made, tone of voice, laughter or sighs).

Descriptors of performance from Illinois Standards for Writing

3B - Students who meet the standard can compose well-organized and coherent writing for specific purposes and audiences.

Use pre-writing strategies (e.g., webbing, brainstorming, listing, note taking, outlining, graphic organizers).

Establish and maintain focus/organization within and across paragraphs (coherence/cohesion).

Write using organization (e.g. introduction, body, conclusion) and elaboration (second level support) that demonstrate coherence.

Use figurative language.

Use appropriate transitional words and phrases to connect and unify key ideas.

Edit and revise content.

Select effective formats for publication.

Use available technology (e.g., word processing, desktop publishing, electronic dictionary/glossary, printing).

National Learning Standards for Technology and Language

National Language Standards 8: Technology use

Students use various technologies and information sources to gather and synthesize information and create and communicate knowledge.

- Wikis: If class has a wiki, upload stories to a page (or individual's wiki page) to create an e-book.
- Make a pdf of class stories to post on the class Web site.
- For older students, create a digital story using student-made slides and voiceover with iMovie or Movie-maker software. Include audio, images, graphs, captions.

Writing

5 Students employ a wide range of strategies as they write and use different writing process elements appropriately to communicate with different audiences for a variety of purposes.

6 Students apply knowledge of language structure, language conventions (e.g., spelling and punctuation), media techniques, figurative language, and genre to create, critique, and discuss print and nonprint texts.

7 Students conduct research on issues and interests by generating ideas and questions, and by posing problems. They gather, evaluate, and synthesize data from a variety of sources (e.g., print and nonprint texts, artifacts, people) to communicate their discoveries in ways that suit their purpose and audience.

8 Students use a variety of technological and information resources (e.g., libraries, databases, computer networks, video) to gather and synthesize information and to create and communicate knowledge.

Illinois Learning Standards

ISBE Language Arts Standards – Listening

Late Elementary: 4A2a: demonstrate understanding of the listening process by summarizing and paraphrasing spoken messages orally and in writing.

ISBE Language Arts Standards – Writing

Late Elementary: 3C2a: write for a variety of purposes and audiences.

More Resources About Children on Farms

Learn more about life on the farm from the Museum's online collection of photographs of the Sadorus Family, Farm, and area in Champaign County taken between 1898 and 1912.

<http://www.museum.state.il.us/ismdepts/art/sadorus/>

And also at

<http://www.museum.state.il.us/ismdepts/art/collections/sadorus-exhibit/>

Books

Artley, Bob (2000). *Once Upon a Farm*. Pelican Publishing Company, Inc. ISBN: 1565547535. Young Adult. Nostalgic story of farm life by a retired farmer based on his memories of growing up and farming

Bial, Raymond (1995). *Portrait of a Farm Family*. Houghton Mifflin Publishing ISBN: 0395699363. Ages 9-11. Portrays the life of the Steidinger family on the farm.

Clemens, Terri (1994). *American Family Farm Antiques*. Wallace-Homestead Book Company.

Hunt, Irene (1981 reissue). *Across Five Aprils*. Berkeley. ISBN: 0425102416. Young adult. A boy is left to run an Illinois farm during the Civil War.

Partridge, Michael (1973) *Farm Tools*. New York Graphic Society.

Peck, Richard (2000). *Long Way from Chicago*. Puffin

books. ISBN: 0141303522.

Young Adult. In 1929 Chicago kids go to spend time on a small Illinois farm.

Peck, Richard (2001) *Fair Weather: A Novel*. Dial Books. ISBN: 0803725167. Young Adult. Teens from a small farm in eastern Illinois visit relatives in Chicago in 1893 and go to the World's Fair. Compares rural and city life, especially for females.



Autumn in Illinois
Frances Badger (1904 - 1997)
tempera on illustration board, circa 1936
10 1/4 x 39 1/4 inches
Gift of the Artist