

## Rural/Urban Lifestyles Literature Lesson

Adapted from a Lesson by Vicki Carlson from Rio

**Grade Level:** 11 - 12

**Subject(s):** Language Arts

**Resources:**

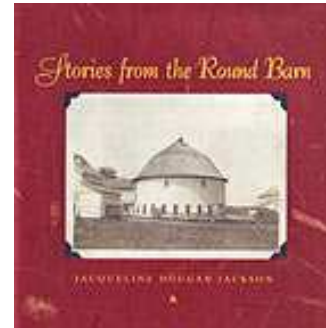
Illinois State Museum's Oral History of Illinois Agriculture database - <http://ohia.museum.state.il.us/>

<http://www.wikispaces.com/site/for/teachers>

[http://www.jstor.org/sici?sici=0002-](http://www.jstor.org/sici?sici=0002-1482(193801)12%3A1%3C67%3ATDOARF%3E2.0.CO%3B2-Z&cookieSet=1)

[1482\(193801\)12%3A1%3C67%3ATDOARF%3E2.0.CO%3B2-Z&cookieSet=1](http://www.jstor.org/sici?sici=0002-1482(193801)12%3A1%3C67%3ATDOARF%3E2.0.CO%3B2-Z&cookieSet=1)

Sherman, Caroline B., The development of American rural fiction. *Agricultural History*, vol. 12, no. 1, 1938, pp. 67-76.



Copies of *Our Town* and *Stories from the Round Barn*.

**Objective:** Students will be able to write an analysis in a wiki-based research unit on issues of rural/urban lifestyles by integrating their fictional and non-fictional primary and secondary sources on the subject.

**Description:** This lesson is designed for a junior or senior level English class as part of a thematic literature unit entitled "Rural-Urban Lifestyles." This unit begins with a **pre-survey** and discussion of views about differences between life in rural and urban areas. It is followed by the **literature study** of the following works: *Our Town* by Thornton Wilder (play featuring events between 1901 and 1913, written in the 1930s.) and *Stories of the Round Barn* by Jacqueline Jackson, who grew up on a farm in southern Wisconsin in the 1930s. <http://jacqueline-jackson.com/materials/previouspub.htm>

**Activity:** Students will compile a list of rural/urban lifestyle issues as they read their two works of fiction. This list might include: transportation and other infrastructure issues, availability of consumer goods, educational opportunities, concentration of population, preservation or loss of traditions and customs, cost of living, income production, attitudes toward land, animals, work, etc. This article on the Website of the International Federation of Agricultural Journalists lists many topics to consider: [www.ifaj.org/fileadmin/user.../IFAJWebFeatureAngst05\\_08\\_or.pdf](http://www.ifaj.org/fileadmin/user.../IFAJWebFeatureAngst05_08_or.pdf)

Next they will do research to determine if this fiction reflects what actually happened. After compiling a list of issues that affect people in both rural and urban areas, students will choose an issue to research. Using First Search, students will locate articles and compile an annotated bibliography of five articles related to their chosen issue.

Collaborative searches of the Oral History of Illinois Agriculture audio-video database will then provide primary sources of information on this issue in the words of Illinois farmers who were interviewed between 1975 and 2009, telling their life experiences from 1895 to the present. Students will use their research articles to verify and confirm the information in the oral histories. They will determine if elements in the fictional stories reflect any of the farmers' experiences. Jacqueline Jackson's video oral history is in this database.

Each student will search independently and post findings and ideas to a **wiki**, which they will design and organize by topic. During the research stage members will communicate through the wiki in order to find as many strands as possible. At a specified deadline, students will analyze the material gathered in the wiki. They will retake the pre-survey as a **post-survey**. See form below. They will analyze the results, **summarizing** what they learned during the unit about rural and urban lifestyle issues, and whether and how works of fiction reflect reality.

#### **ISBE/National Standards:**

##### **Language Arts.**

**11-12.5.A.5b:** Research, design and present a project to an academic, business or school community audience on a topic selected from among contemporary issues.

**2.B.5b:** Apply knowledge gained from literature as a means of understanding contemporary and historical economic, social and political issues and perspectives.

**Assessment:** Students will be evaluated according to the following:

Quality of discussion and assignments during literature study (40%)

Quantity and quality of research completed as evidenced by entries to the group wiki.  
(40%)

**Descriptors for 5B** — Students who meet the standard can analyze and evaluate information acquired from various sources.

1. Identify information most pertinent to task.
2. Develop simple conclusions based on inductive and/or deductive reasoning.
3. Defend relevant information by linking it to the problem and/or area requiring clarification.
4. Cite all source(s) of quoted and borrowed information.
5. Develop a bibliography and a works/sources cited page using an appropriate format.

## **Pre- and Post-Survey on Rural-Urban Lifestyle Issues in the United States**

Evaluate these statements using your current knowledge of lifestyles of townspeople and rural people in the first half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century:

1. Town and country dwellers consider ownership of land to be very important.  
☐ strongly agree  
☐ agree  
☐ disagree  
☐ strongly disagree
2. The work ethic in rural people is stronger than in town dwellers.  
☐ strongly agree  
☐ agree  
☐ disagree  
☐ strongly disagree
3. Electricity, indoor plumbing, electricity, and telephones came earlier to townspeople's homes.  
☐ strongly agree  
☐ agree  
☐ disagree  
☐ strongly disagree
4. Children of townspeople had more leisure time and found more things to do in town than country children.  
☐ strongly agree  
☐ agree  
☐ disagree  
☐ strongly disagree
5. The crime levels of town and country were about the same.  
☐ strongly agree  
☐ agree  
☐ disagree  
☐ strongly disagree
6. Children in towns received a better education than country children.  
☐ strongly agree  
☐ agree  
☐ disagree  
☐ strongly disagree

7. There was less dependence on cash in rural areas than in towns.  
\_\_\_\_ strongly agree  
\_\_\_\_ agree  
\_\_\_\_ disagree  
\_\_\_\_ strongly disagree
7. Farm children worked harder than town children at chores.  
\_\_\_\_ strongly agree  
\_\_\_\_ agree  
\_\_\_\_ disagree  
\_\_\_\_ strongly disagree
8. A variety of food was more available in the towns than on the farm.  
\_\_\_\_ strongly agree  
\_\_\_\_ agree  
\_\_\_\_ disagree  
\_\_\_\_ strongly disagree
9. Farm people valued independence more than townspeople.  
\_\_\_\_ strongly agree  
\_\_\_\_ agree  
\_\_\_\_ disagree  
\_\_\_\_ strongly disagree
10. Both town and rural people helped their neighbors in time of need.  
\_\_\_\_ strongly agree  
\_\_\_\_ agree  
\_\_\_\_ disagree  
\_\_\_\_ strongly disagree
11. Women in towns had an easier life than farm women.  
\_\_\_\_ strongly agree  
\_\_\_\_ agree  
\_\_\_\_ disagree  
\_\_\_\_ strongly disagree
12. Men on farms did more dangerous jobs than townsmen.  
\_\_\_\_ strongly agree  
\_\_\_\_ agree  
\_\_\_\_ disagree  
\_\_\_\_ strongly disagree