

# AGRICULTURE SHAPES KENTUCKY HISTORY

**LEVEL:** 4-6

**SUBJECTS:** Social Studies, Art, Economics, Math, Language Arts

**VOCABULARY:**

Thoroughbred, pemmican, domesticated, food preservation, hybrid, fertilization, game, fowl, hemp, acre

**LEARNING GOAL:**

Students shall develop their abilities to apply core concepts and principles from science, mathematics, social studies, arts and humanities, practical living studies and vocational studies to what they will encounter in life.

**MATERIALS**

10 - ½ foot strips of paper, 4 chairs, art paper, paints and a map of the Eastern United States.

**BACKGROUND**

“Kentucky is often viewed as a region whose fame is rooted in the thoroughbred industry. Punctuating the image of Kentucky are tales of Daniel Boone explorations, historic lore, beautiful forests, mountain feuds, lush foothills and people who enjoy the fine art of hospitality.

However, agriculture – and all that it embodies – is the key to a healthy economy. In reality, Kentucky’s agricultural roots are as old as the state itself. History records that settlers who followed Daniel Boone into the “Dark and Bloody Ground” brought seeds and livestock as part of their luggage.

Those early settlers of the 1700’s and 1800’s fought the battles of survival and cleared space in the forest for farming activity. The rest is history. Kentucky became a state. The settlers became an indelible part of Kentucky history. And, agriculture in the Commonwealth was born.

**OBJECTIVE**

The student will:

-describe agricultural practices of prehistoric Indians in Kentucky.

-develop a supply list for a group of settlers coming to the state to establish farms.

-measure an acre as an example of a basic land measurement.

-identify land and water systems and transportation methods in the Eastern United States which helped Kentucky develop into a strong producer and distributor of agricultural products.

**CONCEPTUAL AREA**

Economics – agricultural systems meet fundamental human needs and are the foundation of national economics.

Historical perspective – throughout history, society has been dependent upon agriculture.

**Billions in Income** – Agricultural productivity contributes about \$3.2 billion in cash receipts to the economy of Kentucky each year. While farming started as “mom and pop” operations across the state many years ago, technology and smart farmers have made the industry economically powerful. However, it was never weak. Traditionally, the source of food and fiber for all who populate the region, agriculture in Kentucky is largely responsible for the founding of at least two of the state’s major cities, Louisville and Lexington.

During the very early 1800’s, farmers/settlers were driving their livestock along undeveloped streets in Louisville, an area now known as Main Street, the thoroughfare which leads modern folks to the heart of the state’s financial center and riverfront attractions. The early appeal of livestock to farmers was the ease with which they could feed grass and easy-to-acquire forage to their livestock, and then sell the animals for profit. That led to the foundation of Bourbon Stock Yards, recognized as the oldest livestock marketing facility in America. From those humble beginnings and muddy streets, sprang a trading and service business base which gave birth to the economic health of Louisville.

Likewise, while Henry Clay and his associates were using Lexington as a base to develop Kentucky’s political future, citizens were busy using the Bluegrass region as productive farmland. They founded Bluegrass Stock Yards, built tobacco marketing facilities and cleared thousands of acres of pasture on the flatlands of the Bluegrass. It should be remembered that the business of agriculture preceded the thoroughbred industry. Again, farming was a foundation for progress.”

**“Agriculture Remains Key To Healthy Economy in Kentucky,” Claude L. Brock, Louisville Courier-Journal, February 7, 1993.**

## **PROCEDURE**

1. The first Kentuckians were prehistoric Indians. They lived among many streams and about cave areas in many parts of the state and did not venture into the more mountainous regions of eastern Kentucky. These first Kentuckians were probably hunters and farmers. Have students examine the lifestyle/management skills of these early inhabitants by having them answer the following questions:

-describe what foods the Indians may have taken from the wilderness (wild game/fowl, fish, berries, nuts). How would this food have been preserved? Show students slices of jerky. Examine that Indians used a similar preservation method to make **pemmican** (lean meat dried, pounded fine and mixed with melted fat). What nutritional needs were met with this mixture? (limited protein, fat calories for energy)

-Indians were also farmers. What crops could they have grown in basically uncleared land? (corn, grains, beans, squash) Would the seeds used by these early farmers have been the same as those used by farmers today? (show students examples of modern **hybrid** seed corn – explain that through agricultural research, scientists have crossed different varieties of corn to develop a seed which had the best qualities of

several varieties including being more reliably productive). Talk about plant fertilization and explain that Indians fertilized their corn by digging a hole, placing a fish in the hole, covering it with soil and then planting the corn seed! Explain that since these seeds were not hybrids, the Indians would need to plant many more seeds to get a sufficient crop. What kind of tools would they have used?

2. The first colonial Americans to cross the Appalachian Mountains were interested in the flat, fertile lands of central Kentucky. They came to the state to farm. In 1774, James Harrod began attempts to establish the settlement of Harrod's Town, now Harrodsburg. This town became the first permanent settlement in Kentucky. Have students develop a **supply list**. What would settlers need to farm in the wilderness?

- What tools must they bring to clear land? (axes, ropes, oxen, physical strength)
- Would the settlers bring **domesticated** animals? What type and for what purposes?
- What food supplies would they carry over the mountains? How long must this supply last?
- What seeds would the farmers bring (corn, wheat, hemp, tobacco)
- What additional supplies would they need? (building, household/cooking utensils, medicines, weapons)

3. A typical farm would have been about 40 acres. To help students visualize the enormity of the task of clearing and farming this much land, have them go out on the playground and measure out **one acre** (160 square rods – roughly the size of a football field):

- a. Have several students make a strip of paper 16 ½ feet long. (16 ½ feet = 1 rod)
- b. Ask students: "If an acre is 160 square rods, what two numbers can we multiply that will equal 160?" (possible answers: 2 x 80, 4 x 40, 10 x 16)
- c. Measure an acre.
  1. take out four chairs to mark the four corners.
  2. place one chair and measure 16 rods – as three students measure, place students a rod apart. When 16 rods are measured, place another chair at that point.
  3. from the second chair, measure 10 rods as described in #2. Place a chair marking 10 rods.
  4. place the fourth chair to mark the fourth corner of the 10 x 16 rectangle. Ask students to look at this area and use their imagination as to the work required to clear 40 acres.

d. In the first part of the 1800's, Kentucky became a trade center for agricultural products (meal, flour, smoked/cured meats, produce, livestock). Livestock (cattle, hogs, mules, horses, sheep) was marketed in the east and south. Flatboats carried produce downtown to Natchez and New Orleans. Louisville became the center of trade in the

state with the advent of the steamboat. Have students examine a map of the eastern United States to identify geographic reasons for Kentucky's development as a strong producer and supplier of agricultural products.

### **RESOURCES**

"Kentucky...Our Land", Connie Minch, UK Cooperative Extension Service; "Growing Up On A Farm...", Darlene Huitema, Cream of the Crop, California Foundation for Agriculture in the Classroom.

### **EVALUATION**

Students demonstrate understanding of historical events which lead to Kentucky's establishment as an agricultural state by formulating descriptions of agricultural practices such as clearing the land, planting crops, hunting, building a cabin and trading. Students demonstrate abilities to measure areas and read maps.

