

Grade Level

**5**

Class Periods

**1**

## Goals/Objectives/Student Outcomes:

Students will:

- Learn about Iowa's corn production and corn products.
- Compare and contrast farm life of a farm woman now and in the 1920s.
- Create an art project portraying Iowa farm culture or complete a creative writing project using selected vocabulary and complete an appropriate illustration.

## Materials:

1. Chalkboard
2. Transparencies of "Farmhouse Then and Now" (See attachment)

Option #1 art project:

1. Shoe boxes for diorama
2. Scraps of paper, yarn, pipe cleaners, etc.
3. Colored construction paper
4. Spools, buttons, toothpicks, small print fabric scraps, etc.

Option #2 art project:

1. Story writing paper
2. 12"x18" construction paper or oak tag
3. Crayons and markers
4. Loose kernels of corn and school glue

## Background:

Here are some ways farming has changed in the past 150 years. For more details about the subject, read these issue of *The Goldfinch*: Spring 1993 (vol. 14, no. 3) and February 1990 (vol. 11, no. 3).

Animals roamed through the field until farmers put up fences. Now, many farmers who raise cattle and hogs for sale keep them in special barns and feed them special food to make them grow fast.

Women on farms used to weave all of the cloth and sew the family's clothing. They had to wash all the clothing in a large pot or barrel. Now, most clothes are purchased, and automatic washers quickly do the job that once required long hard work by hand.

Families on farms once grew all of their own fruits and vegetables and obtained meat, milk, eggs, and butter from their animals. Now, farmers, like those who live in town, may have gardens, they buy most of their food from grocery stores. While some people on farms still keep chickens, the number of people who do is much less than it used to be.

Men on farms once did field work using oxen or horses to pull the implements. Now, farmers rely on tractors and many other kinds of manufactured equipment to plow, plant, and harvest their crops.

Farm women used to spend all their time on the farm cooking and performing their chores and household tasks. To earn extra money they sold eggs and cream. Older girls sometimes hired out to other farms to help with chores and sent their wages back home to help out their families. Now, many farm women have jobs off the farm, where they earn much more than they could by selling eggs and cream.

## Procedure:

1. Ask students to name the number-one crop produced in Iowa (corn). Begin by brainstorming on the chalkboard all the ways Iowa's corn products are used. (sweet corn on the cob, corn bread, cornmeal mush, corn syrup, oil, cereal, etc.).

Today there are over 360 different uses for corn products. Corn is even used in paint, paper products, batteries, clothing, mouthwash, and shampoo! More than 100 different food items in U. S. supermarkets are made from corn. Today in Iowa we produce 1.7 billion bushels of corn every year, as compared to 400 million bushels produced in 1929.

Write down both figures. Discuss why production has increased and what effect this has on Iowa farmers, Iowa farm women, and Iowa's environment.

2. The Iowa farm woman of long ago spent many hours in the spring, summer, and fall involved in corn-related activities. Many still do. List what jobs or tasks she might have done that had to do with corn (helping to plant, cultivate, and harvest field corn, driving tractors, pulling wagon loads of corn, operating machinery, picking and shucking sweet corn, canning it or freezing it). How many of these activities have the students helped with themselves?

3. Using transparencies of The Goldfinch drawing of an Iowa farm house, compare the kitchens of today and yesterday where an Iowa

farm woman might cook and prepare corn and corn products. Try to find the contrasting items:

### Farmhouse Now and Then—Answers

THEN/NOW

no telephone in kitchen/telephone in kitchen

kitchen floor of wood with a rug/kitchen floor of tile

freestanding stove/built-in electric stove with fan and hood

icebox/electric refrigerator and freezer

no television/television (color and cable options)

pitcher of water and basin/sinks with running water (hot and cold in same faucet!)

no dishwasher/dishwasher

old style bed/modern water bed

kerosene lamp/electric lamps

closet/extra bathroom

coal heating stove/heat from gas-fed furnace

front door with glass pane/wooden door to keep heat inside

porch has posts and fancy trim work/porch is wide and clear

Project time: Be sure to have popcorn popping to munch while working on these art activities.

#### Option #1—Farm House Diorama

Create an Iowa farm house — similar to the "THEN" house — on transparency. Use a shoe box to complete a room such as the kitchen or bedroom. Make the scene complete using scraps of fabric, paper, yarn, spools, buttons, toothpicks, or whatever can be found. Old magazines or pictures from antique magazines would be very helpful. Work alone or in pairs and describe your scene to the class orally. Would an Iowa farm woman keep busy in your house? What would she do?

#### Option #2—Creative Writing Story and Illustration

Create a story using the following words: Corn, hybrid, tassel, corn cob, corn husking, harvest, yield, corn crib, and popcorn. Include an Iowa farm woman as one of the characters in your story. Write an adventure having to do with corn. When writing, proofreading, and editing are finished, prepare an illustration of the story on a large sheet of paper. Use kernels of corn in a creative way to decorate the illustration. Post these in the room.

## Assessment of Outcomes:

Did students contribute to group discussion on corn products and production?

Evaluate Iowa farm house dioramas for historical authenticity, neatness, and creative effort.

Evaluate creative writings on use of vocabulary, theme, and content, as well as quality effort and accompanying illustration.

## Extensions and Adaptations:

Research ethanol. What is it? How is it used? How is it manufactured? What are the benefits of ethanol? Why doesn't everybody use it?

Research corn production in Iowa. What are optimal growing conditions? What is seed corn? Why don't we eat it? Why do people detassel certain rows of corn? Why doesn't a machine do it?

## Resources:

*The Goldfinch* 11 (February 1990).

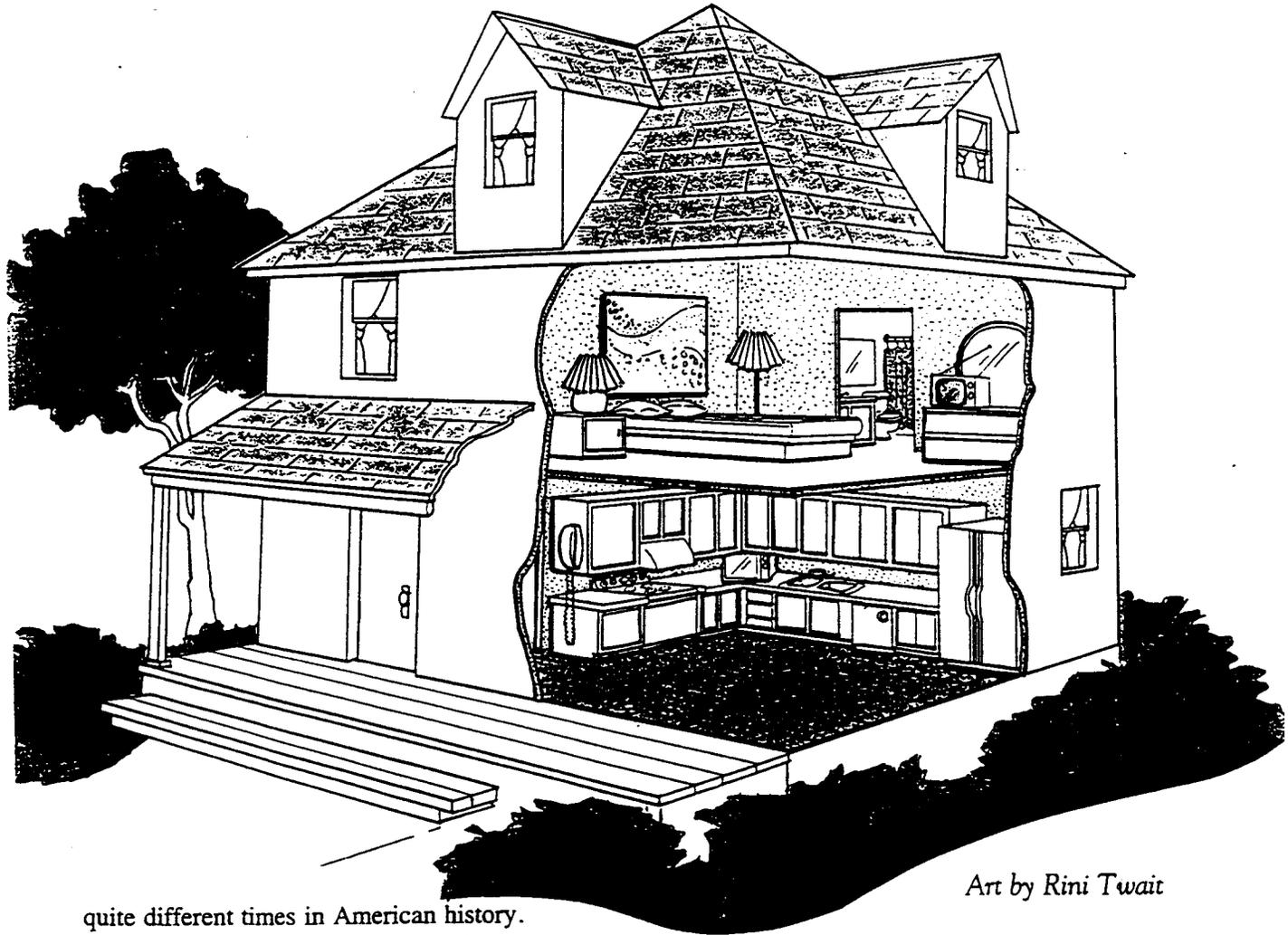
*The Goldfinch* 14 (Spring 1993).

# Farmhouse —Then



STYLES AND INVENTIONS CHANGE the ways we live. The household goods and appliances in these houses give us a look at two

# and Now



quite different times in American history.

Can you name ten pairs of items that show the changes.

