

CORN HUSKING CONTEST

Overview

This event provides hands-on, meaningful connections for grade 2 students to support their learning of plants. The lesson will engage students through activation of prior knowledge, brainstorming, and scientific discourse. It could be reviewed later in the school year to “set the stage” for the unit 6 “Plants as a Natural Resource.”

Standard Of Learning 2.8: The students will investigate and understand that plants are a source of useful products, and provide benefits in nature.

Associated Skill: Students will classify and identify the sources and uses of plant products, such as fiber, cotton, oil, spices, lumber, rubber, medicines, and paper. (Unit 2, S4)

Materials

Food Service:

- Corn stalk (Lovings)
- Un-husked corn
- Bags of popcorn for winning class
- Tarp or table coverings depending on how event will be executed, trash cans, pans
- Corn-based packaged products: corn starch, ketchup, corn tortilla chips, yogurt, French dressing, spinach salad dressing, etc.

Teacher:

- 1 double set of printed cards per each team of students
- 1 large poster board/paper/marker (or technological equivalent) to record student answers.



Procedure

Have students wash hands prior to beginning activity.

Follow the suggested script below to present the lesson (script and procedure may be modified to suit the student audience and school).

MANAGER: (suggested set-up for each class) Set up a pan or box filled with the corn to be shucked and set it next to a trash can. Have an empty pan on the other side of the trash can for the shucked corn. Set up the corn and trash cans on one end of the black top and have students line up by class on the other end of the blacktop – lining up across from their basket of corn. Put their class name on the trash can. Run the race like a relay. Say go, and the first student in line runs, gets his corn and shucks it and then runs back and taps (or high-fives) the next person in line and then that person runs and picks up an ear of corn, shucks it and so on and so forth. Some students may need help getting the ear of corn started so it is nice to have someone standing by each trash can (yourself, one of your staff, some teachers or custodians). Some students will have to go more than once. The class that shucks all the corn first wins. **Remember to tell the students and teachers ahead of time that this is a competition and only one class wins the prize.** Involve one of your staff members as there is a lot of set-up and take down.

MANAGER:

Welcome to our Second Grade Corn Husking Contest! I'm so glad you're here today to share in some fun activities as we talk about the importance of plants and the many different ways we use plant products in our lives. As a matter of fact, I am sure you have already used many plant products this morning when you put your clothes on, had your breakfast, rode a bus to the school, and worked on your classroom morning assignments! But right now, we will focus on one plant – corn. I'm going to turn it over to one of your teachers, Mr./Mrs. _____ to get us started.

TEACHER:

Good (morning or afternoon), students! Did you know that originally, the word “corn” was used to describe a small seed or a grain of any plant? When Englishmen arrived in America hundreds of years ago and saw Native Americans growing

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crops, they called the most important crop “Indian corn” and this is “corn” as we know it today. Many plants—like corn—are a source of useful products. Let’s think about products you have seen in a kitchen pantry or on your plate that have the word “corn” in their name. I am going to start with an example – a “corndog.” Please raise your hand when you think of another example and I will write a list of the products on a poster paper for everyone to see.

(Possible student responses may include: popcorn, corn flakes cereal, candy corn, corn bread, corn syrup, corn starch, corn oil, corn chips, tortilla chips, etc. Teacher should model and/or provide assistance, as needed.)

MANAGER:

On the table are a large number of products that are made of corn. Some of them have the word “corn” in their names and some don’t. Some are made mostly of corn, and others contain only a small portion of corn ingredients. Let me show you what we have here and you might be surprised at how many products contain corn! (Show students items on the table, one-by-one.) I’m going to turn it over back to your teacher, Mr. /Mrs. _____.

TEACHER:

Look at the list of the corn-based products that we have created today. Many of them - corndog, popcorn, corn flakes cereal, candy corn – sound like a lot of fun. I know another thing with “corn” in its name that sounds like lots of fun – corn maze! But I think it does not quite fit our list of “corn” products. I wonder why. Could anyone here help me?

(Student responses should identify that the items on the list we can eat, but we cannot eat “corn maze.”)

You are correct. The products on our list are EDIBLE corn products, just like fruits and veggies served in our cafeteria every day.

MANAGER:

Speaking of corn served in our cafeteria, we are almost ready to begin our Corn Husking Contest! First, let me tell you a few things about corn. In your classes, you will learn about the edible parts of plants. All plants have leaves flowers, roots, stems, seeds and fruits.

Show them the corn stalk that Lovings brought for you to use for demonstration. If you do not get one, just show them an ear of corn. Point out the leaves, show where the ear of corn is.

The edible part of this ear of corn is the kernel. A corn kernel is the seed of the corn plant. So when we eat corn we are eating the seeds of the corn plant.

There are about 800 kernels in 16 rows of corn. Most corn has 16 rows, but if it doesn’t have 16 it will always have an even number of rows on each cob.

See this hairy fluffy string? It is called the corn silk. It is hard to believe, but there is one silk for each individual kernel of corn. That is amazing!

Corn tastes so good and corn is good for you. It is 100% whole grain and whole grains help us stay healthy. Corn can be used in lots of recipes. Did you know that popcorn is corn that has been dried? When we cook dried corn – it pops!

The corn that you shuck today – yes - this very corn – we will cook and serve for lunch on Friday! Make sure you come for lunch on Friday so you can taste this yummy corn! It’s time to shuck the corn!

SHOW THEM HOW TO SHUCK – some have never done it before.

Review the rules with them, and let the race begin.

Remember the class that wins the race today will receive a bag of delicious popcorn for each student in that class!

Announce the winner.

Thank you so much for joining us today, and remember to come try your corn on Friday!

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Additional Activity for Teachers to Do with Their Classes After the Corn Husking Contest

So far we have talked about EDIBLE corn products. But plants provide for us in many other ways. Let's see if you could think of some products that are made from plants but are not edible. (Possible student responses may include: furniture, paper, pencils, clothes, towels, rubber, medicines, etc.)

I want you to look at the pictures of corn-based products on your tables and identify the products that are NOT edible. (Give students a few minutes to look through the pictures and identify non-edibles: car fuel, corn husk dolls, corn husk basket, corn husk mattress, plastics, cat litter.)

You probably noticed that you were provided with two pictures of each product – two pictures of corn oil, two pictures of popcorn, etc. Before our corn husking competition, let's complete another challenge. I want you to sort the pictures into two groups that we would call "Old Days" and "Our Days." As you know some things came to us from the old days and we still use them today. Some "old days" products we don't use anymore, and of course, we have also created new products that were not even possible back in the old days. So, let's talk about "corn on the cob." Do we use this product in our modern days? (Students answer "yes.") So, we will place a picture of corn on the cob in the pile "Our Days." (Demonstrate and supervise students following your example). Now, let's think how corn on the cob is made. Do you think it was possible to cook corn in hot water or over fire in the old days? (Students answer "yes.") So, we will also place a picture of corn on the cob in the pile "Old Days." Let's identify another picture. How about a corn husk filled mattress? (Students reply "Old Days." Be sure to ask them why they chose that answer.) Great job! So product pictured may be placed in both piles, or in only one pile. Now you and a partner (or team) will sort the rest of your pictures. But first, let's make a prediction: When you sort all of your cards, which pile do you think will have more products – "Old Days" or "Our Days"? (Have students share their predictions. Be sure to ask why they think that way). Ok, teams! You have 5 minutes to complete the sort. I will walk around and check your progress.

(After 5 minutes, provide students with answers [provided] and go over the answers with them. Underline "cool" items, such as corn flakes cereal and popcorn, to emphasize that those products have been used for hundreds of years! These products should go in both piles. Students are likely to place them into the "Our Days" pile only).

So, was our prediction correct? Which pile has more corn-based products – "Old Days" or "Our Days"? (Students will discuss the outcome of their inquiry). Thank you very much for your hard work today! The next time you eat any of these products, thank corn for providing us with them ☺ Perhaps, you would even be interested in going on a scavenger hunt in your own kitchen to look for more corn-based products! And now, it is time for our Corn Husking Contest!

Corn Husk Basket



Corn Husk Dolls



Candy Corn



Corn on a Cob



Corn Bread



Popcorn



Corn Flakes Cereal



Corn Flour



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Car Fuel



Corn Oil



Corn Snacks



Plastics



Cat Litter



Ketchup



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Corn Dog



Corn Husk Mattress



Corn Starch



Corn Chips



Answers:

Old Days (11 cards)

basket
dolls
corn on the cob
bread
popcorn
flour
oil
starch
cereal
chips
mattress

Our Days (16 cards)

basket
corn on the cob
bread
popcorn
cereal
flour,
oil,
starch
chips
candy corn
cat litter
ketchup
corn dog
car fuel
corn snacks
plastic

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