Harvest



INTRODUCTION: (All introductions written by Ellie and her partner)

Foxes class have been researching the history of farming and we would like to share with you some of the facts we have found out. The first group will present a brief history of farming.

HISTORY OF FARMING: Written by Devon, Justin, Alex

Farming has existed since at least 100AD. As the Roman culture was beginning to be adopted throughout the UK, Romans introduced innovations such as ploughs, scythes and even a corn harvester.

By the time it was 350AD, the countryside had been cleared of wild woodlands and the landscape was changed to allow arable production and sheep farming.

By the time the Anglo Saxon’s ruled, records began to be kept, but by 1300AD, the open field system was beginning to struggle and farm land reduced in size.

In 1400AD there was a great famine and both this and the plague had an impact on farming practices.

A recent population growth in 1600AD meant that farming became really important so that food shortages could be dealt with.

By the Victorian times, railways, road systems and machinery transformed both the landscape and the farming traditions.

INTRODUCTION:

The next group will explain where Victorian farms were located.

LOCATION: Written by Billy, Mark

The countryside remained the main areas if farming, but buildings were constructed and began taking over the green land.

Because rural villages were small, the farming land remained smaller and were not as large as they had been in past times.

Despite this, the farming industry was growing, because the changes in technology meant that more could be farmed using machinery rather than by hand.

INTRODUCTION:

Now you will learn about what crops were grown and how.

CROPS: Written by Harry W + Ben M

Corn, wheat and meal were grown. Tractors were used to spread the seeds, rather than the workers having to walk around the field and spread it by hand. In autumn tractors also helped the people to harvest the crops, so that the farmer could sell the grain and make some money.

Some crops needed different climates to grow, so some farmers grew fruit and vegetables instead of grain. Other farms produced meat and the new transport system meant that food could be delivered fresher. Towns were growing rapidly and the people wanted a more diverse diet, so the farming industry became an important part of everyday life.

INTRODUCTION:

The fourth group will begin to explain how people in Victorian times farmed.

HOW THEY FARMED: Written by George Ben S

The first farmers worked by hand and this was especially true for the poor, but in Victorian times farmers used equipment such as: ploughs, spades, hoes, scythes and animals such as horses, cows, sheep and goats were also used.

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Hoes were used to turn over the soil and scythes were used to cut the crops down.

Scythes are still used by some people today and are shaped like a half moon so that it could be swung and swept across the crop, cutting it down with a sharp blade.

Sacks would be loaded onto wagons and people would often stabilise the crops by sitting on top of the sacks.

They also used tractors and threshing drums. Most rich farms had farm workers to do the work rather than the farmer.

Animals used were fed on wheat or hay and a mixture of oats. Sometimes they slept on cow manure!

In general the animals were cared for very well and given food and water every day. Plough horses were given nose bags to eat from.

INTRODUCTION:

The next group will be talking about the equipment used.

EQUIPMENT: Written by Ellie, Lucy B, Ben, Caeden

As the previous group explained, farmers used hoes, shovels, forks and scythes by hand to cut down the grain, but other farmers owned bigger equipment such as tractors – which they used to take the grain from the fields back to the barns, or machines such as the threshing machine.

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The threshing machine cut up the crop into smaller pieces, whilst separating the grain from the husk. This made it a lot quicker as in the past it had been done by hand.

The problem with using machinery was that less farm workers were needed. This caused starvation and many people rioted against the farmers who had them.

Many of the machines used steam to power them as this had been developed as part of the Industrial revolution.

INTRODUCTION:

Now you will find out who worked on the farms.

WORKERS: Written McCauley, Robert

Farmers used both machines and people to help them farm. On some farms children and adults would work – sometimes up to 12 of each. This would mean that they could earn money to buy food for their families.

Children would help out in the fields sometimes using rattlers to try and keep the birds off the crops, but others would be given the most dangerous jobs as children were not protected in Victorian times.

INTRODUCTION:

So what are the similarities and differences between farming today and in the past? Listen to the last group to find out.

SIMILARITIES AND DIFFERENCES: Written by Harriet, Brad, Lucy K, Harry, Sammi, Daniel

Farming in Victorian times sometimes contrasted greatly with farming today. During Queen Victoria’s reign, at first, tools were simple and basic such as hoes and horse pulling ploughs, however eventually machinery was used such as the tractors which we still see being used on farms today along with threshing machines.

Did you know that sheep dogs were used to herd farm animals, just like they are today and produce such as eggs, milk and wool were available then, as they are now.

As today, Victorian farmers collected corn after the harvest in order to make flour, bread, cider, ale and wine from fruit such as elderberries, yet today grape remains the most common fruit used in wine.

Perhaps the biggest differences we researched was the use of children to work in farms. Victorian children worked on farms from the age of 6 and were given dangerous jobs to do, yet today it would be against the law and schools are attended instead.

Living conditions for farmers in Victorian times could be cramped and often basic compared to today’s farms, and the wages differed too. In Victorian times the most efficient farmers would earn about 6 shillings a week – in today’s currency this would convert to about 30p.

Farms today can be on a much bigger scale than in the Victorian times, but just like then, the harvesting of food remains one of the most important jobs, because without food we, like some did in the Victorian times, would starve.

The final similarity we found out about was that because food was so crucial to everyday life, harvest would be celebrated. The harvest festival as we know it today began in 1843, when the Reverend Robert Hawker invited parishioners to a special thanksgiving service for the harvest at his church at Morwenstow in Cornwall. They very much enjoyed the event and insisted on celebrating again the following year. The idea soon caught on and rapidly spread to other parts of the country.

In Victorian times, at the start of the harvest, communities would appoint a respected man as their 'Lord of the Harvest'. He would be responsible for negotiating the harvest wages and organising the fieldworkers. At the end of the harvest there was the church service and a feast, or a big meal, called a Harvest Supper. A goose stuffed with apples was eaten along with a variety of vegetables and there were games and celebrations.

CONCLUSION:

We hope you have enjoyed finding out about harvest in the past and we hope you have enjoyed our harvest celebration today!

Prayer – Written by Tom D

Now let us pray and reflect – hands together and eyes closed

Harvest is when we celebrate the food and vegetables that are provided from God.

Today we have shown our thanks in words, poems and pictures, and songs.

We must also appreciate the farmers around the world, who work hard to produce the delicious food we eat.

Help us to be thankful that tonight we go home and enjoy a meal, whilst others on our earth may not have the chance to eat.

May we work together to look after our world and be grateful for the harvest our earth and God gifts to us each year.

Amen

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