

Chapter 5. People as Village Farmers: The Agricultural Wave

Chapter 5. B. Activities

You probably have noticed that there are numerous suggestions for activities in the study questions. In addition, I have listed a number of activities below that I believe will help explain the materials in more depth and engage students in more “hands on” learning.

1. Our Disconnection from Food

- a. Food is one of our most basic of human needs. Yet, we as typical people living in the modern world are far removed from the act of producing our own food. Why is this so?
- b. Look at your own individual life (and your family and community's as well) and explain why you are unconnected to producing your own food.
- c. What do you do instead of this?
- d. What would happen if you couldn't get food at the grocery store?
- e. Discuss this with others.

2. Awareness of Where our Food Comes From

- a. I think learning to become aware of where our food comes from is extremely important today. Do you agree? Why?
- b. Look at a common food that you eat a lot. Make a chart to trace the source of that food. What are all the different people, processes, businesses that go into getting that food from seed to your dinner plate?
- c. Visit a farm or small farmer in your community.

3. Grow Your Own

- a. I believe one of the most important skills that we can learn today is how to grow our own food. Perhaps, not to be master gardeners or knowledgeable farmers, but to know at least the basics of what goes into our mouths! How can we do this?
- b. Perhaps your class or a group of you will be inspired to take up the challenge of starting a project to learn more about producing food.
- c. Perhaps start a small school garden in your school. A community garden at your place of worship, community center, a vacant lot, etc. What goes into this task?

4. Pottery

- a. Agricultural people invented many crafts that we are still familiar with today, one is pottery.
- b. Feel what it would be like to make hand-coiled pottery as did people in the Agricultural Wave. How does it feel?
- c. Research how it was done and make some pots.
- d. Why did women probably invent and make pottery?
- e. What was it used for?
- f. What will you use your hand-made pottery for?

5. String and Textiles

- a. Make items out of string or weave some textiles. For example, weave a simple string skirt, or an ornamental headband.
- b. Why did women probably invent and make string items?
- c. What was it used for?
- d. What will you use your hand-made string or textile item for?

6. Initiation Rites

- a. Initiation rites for boys and girls reaching adulthood were part of the social fabric of agricultural people.
- b. Have students think of an event to demarcate their arrival into adult status, design their own initiation rites to celebrate this arrival.
- c. Create a celebration and perhaps invite parents to the ceremony.
- d. What is the demarcation or threshold that signifies adulthood?
- e. How can it be celebrated?

7. Small Village Farmer

- a. Research the life of a small village farmer.
- b. What is his/her daily life like?
- c. What are the chores, family, religion, etc. of the farmer?
- d. If possible, visit a small farmer in your community. Record in a journal what s/he does on a daily basis.

8. Redistribution Scenario

- a. You are a chief and in charge of redistribution. What factors are you going to consider in deciding who gets the grain collected for redistribution. (need level, will he sell it, others)
- b. What would you use the money for if you sold the grain?
- c. What form of payment will the redistribution item be in? (grain, money, etc.)
- d. Why does redistribution replace reciprocity as an economic system in larger agricultural societies?

9. Slash and Burn Research Project

- a. Why did farmers use slash and burn techniques in the Agricultural Wave?
- b. Did it work well in early agricultural societies?
- c. Is it used today?
- d. Why is it destructive today?

10. Domesticated Animals

- a. Why did agricultural people domesticate animals and not just hunt them?
- b. Research domesticated animals today. What are the top ten domesticated animals? How many are there?
- c. What is the effect on the environment of all these animals?
- d. What is the effect on wild plant and animal species?
- e. Why do we keep domesticated animals today?

11. Interview Farmers

- a. Interview a farmer in your community? If there are no farmers available for an interview select an avid gardener or someone that sells produce at a farmer's market?
- b. How do they view the land? Why do they farm?
- c. What do they think of city dwellers?
- d. What problems do they encounter as a farmer?
- e. What are the rewards?
- f. Think of other pertinent questions you might like to ask.
- g. Share your findings with others outside your local community, perhaps in another country.

12. Magazine Article

- a. Write a magazine article about your interview with a farmer.
- b. Compare and contrast the farmer's life with your life.
- c. Publish your findings for others to view and comment upon.