

PRACTICAL LIFE - HOUSING

During our housing main lessons, we built a wigwam which stands about three feet high. We made a thick base of clay, covered it with thin plastic and then soil. Sturdy branches were set vertically deep into the clay and were tied together with jute at their upper tips. Then we wove smaller, more flexible branches horizontally between the vertical branches. We lined the wigwam with scraps of leather which we hung between the branches. With jute we sewed birchbark together and covered the outside of the wigwam. Another skin covered the door opening. Our wigwam is snug and strong.

This main lesson study concluded with a two-week period devoted to the brick apartment house. Concrete is such a remarkable substance that I composed this riddle in its honor:

You will not find me in a quarry,  
Nor in seas nor heavens starry.  
Yet like rock I'm solid, strong,  
To rocky families I belong.  
Since building houses first began,  
I'm only made by hands of man!

What am I?

- Gail Klar, Grade 3  
Rudolf Steiner School  
New York City

- - -

Building projects undertaken by third grade classes at Kimberton have included a brick retaining wall for the school garden, a dam in our creek, a bridge across the creek, and for next year, perhaps a log cabin!

- Barbara Hartshorn  
Kimberton Farms

- - -

"Every day I wake up and look out at the world,  
For my windows are open and far do I see...."

This anapest walking verse became the starting point of our housebuilding unit. Every day I wake up in my house, in my room, in my bed, in myself. Then we discussed how the animals wake up in their homes. From that, we studied the different homes of different peoples of the world.

- Margaret O'Brien  
Detroit

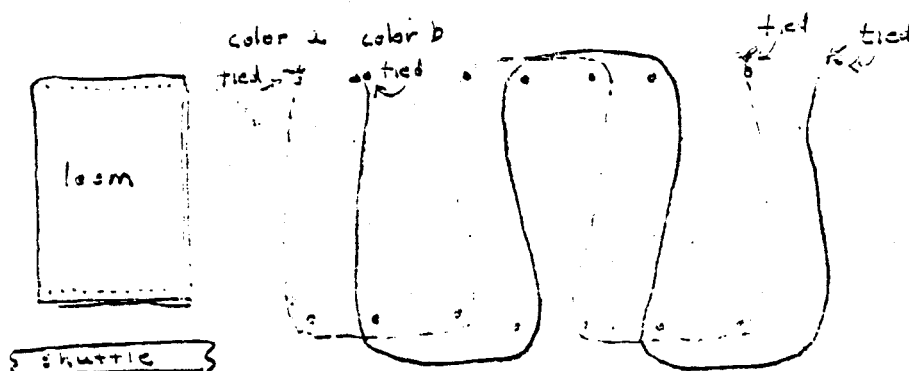
- - -

## PRACTICAL LIFE - HOUSING - BIBLIOGRAPHY

A World Full of Homes, William A. Burns  
Animal Homes, George F. Mason  
Indians of the Plains, Rachles & Ewers  
Indians' Secret World, Robert Hofsinde  
True Book of Houses, Katherine Carter  
How A House is Built, Lawrence Benenson

## PRACTICAL LIFE - CLOTHING

In the second of our Living on the Earth blocks of study, we made a small loom from a piece of wood about 6"x6" with fifteen nails along the top and fifteen along the bottom. We also made a shuttle. We used two colors of yarn and set up the loom as the illustration shows:



(The warp is formed by winding one color around three nails, skipping one, then around three more, etc. The second color winds around three, skipping one. The weft can be alternating colors, or anything you wish.)

The squares we have thus made will be sewed together for a table cloth. Other projects included hemming handkerchiefs and making moccasins. The cost of the latter came to about \$2.50 a pair. These moccasins can be worn as indoor shoes or for eurythmy; the pattern is available for 15¢.

We had a demonstration of the spinning wheel, carding, and lap spinning (the children could try all of these). Each child received a piece of wool, cotton, camel hair, hemp, and silk which they taped to a page in their books. I brought in examples of various fibers so that we could examine the different materials. We learned how synthetics are made. Everyone designed his own factory or laboratory to make synthetic thread - we had a profusion of test tubes, electrical gadgets, oxygen tanks, etc!

We finished the block with the history of a shirt, in which we followed, wrote down, and illustrated the steps necessary to produce a shirt today, from the farmer growing the fiber or the shepherd shearing the sheep or the scientist making the synthetic thread to the customer buying the shirt in a store.

A poem we learned at this time to show what man can do with his hands is this one by Mary Rubach:

Two hands we have with fingers four,  
How hard it would be if there were more.  
And yet we need them all with the thumb, too,  
To do all the things that we want to do.

We can paint and clench and shake and mould,  
We can press and lift and stroke and hold,  
We can push and pull and wave and beckon,  
With both hands we can even reckon!

When we have tools we can do much more,  
With a spade we dig, with a drill we bore,  
With a knife we cut, with a fork we eat,  
With a spoon we stir, or our bread we beat.

With two needles we knit, with one we sew,  
If it has an eye in which the thread will go.  
With a crayon we draw, with a brush we paint,  
Our colors can either be strong or faint.

All these things men alone can do,  
For of legs and feet we have only two.  
And our hands and arms we carry free  
The world and our fellows to serve worthily.

- Mel Belenson  
Toronto

- - -

#### PRACTICAL LIFE - CLOTHING - BIBLIOGRAPHY

Story Book of Things We Wear, Petersham  
Man is a Weaver, Elizabeth Baity  
The Cotton Book, William C. Pryor  
Silkworms and Science, Elizabeth K. Cooper.

\* \* \*

#### PRACTICAL LIFE - FARMING

Last summer we harvested the wheat, oats, and barley that we had sown in second grade. In our Farming block we threshed the grain, using little flails that I had made; this was done rhythmically to a song and verse. We practiced in the classroom before going to work in the barn! Then we winnowed, ground the

grain, and we each baked a loaf. We learned the grace:

Before the loaf, the snowy white flour,  
Before the flour the mill,  
Before the mill the wheat and the shower,  
The sun and our Father's will.

A visit to the blacksmith and a day maple sugaring were scheduled this winter; in late May we shall spend a week at the Farm School. Our class is in charge of the school compost pile.

- John Barnes, Grade 3  
Hawthorne Valley

- - -

Monika Kochoweic, of our biodynamic garden, had some very pictorial stories for the seven grains, stories which touch on the planets, the temperaments, and a little geography. There was also a short song for each grain.

Our small farm was helpful. We milked the cow, fed her, cleaned and brushed her, cleaned her stall, took the straw and manure to the compost piles, and watched various stages of composting. This spring we are gardening.

To honor our daily bread, we cook soup each day and serve it with peanut butter and whole wheat bread and milk. We all eat the same thing, together. It has been a great help to finicky eaters as well as others. We use our own mugs, soup cups, and cloth lunch mats. We wash our own dishes and put them away. This has made for a very pleasant lunch hour. We invited the fifth grade to share lunch one day. Each third grader invited a particular fifth grader by written invitation and acted as host when his guest came. All enjoyed it thoroughly.

- Marge Ward, Grade 3  
Sacramento

- - -

#### FROM FURROW TO BREAD

On golden waves of nostalgia light-filled memories of grade three waft through my harried eighth grade soul. Those were the days when time seemed to stretch into eternity. There was a time to sow and to reap, a time to grind and sift, a time to bake and to eat. There was time.

To get down to earth, I am writing this to share with other third grade teachers the joys of the main lesson block on farming, and to encourage them to live it to the full. Do not skimp. The time spent experiencing with body and soul the vital activities

of farmer, miller, and baker will remain a treasure forever.

How did I do it so that five years later I can still wax enthusiastic over it? It began in the classroom in early spring when we thought about the farmer who is now watching sun, moon, clouds, and earth for the right time of preparing the soil for seeding. His knowledge of the soil, we learned, must be intimate, and through him we learned about the characteristics of sandy, loamy, and clayey soil. Everything pointed to the appreciation that a good farmer is in tune with the forces of earth and cosmos.

These discussions crystallized into a prose dialogue between the farmer and the sun, the air, the water, and the earth, which we wrote, illustrated, and recited. Now we were sufficiently prepared to go out to a farm to help with the ploughing and disking, both with tractor and horse, and to sow our wheat by hand in the broadcast manner of pre-machinery days. When the harrows had worked the seed into the soil we recited the poem, "Mother Earth" to ask a blessing for its growth. Of course, throughout this time we also sang "I Will Go With My Father A-Ploughing." Unaccountably, we neglected to say "The Ploughman's Charm", an unfortunate omission. (These three verses are all from The Key of the Kingdom.)

During the growing season some children visited the farm on weekends with their families and reported back on the growth of the wheat. In early September we prepared ourselves for the harvest with the poem "Harvest" from Singing Words, and then returned to the farm to cut the wheat with sickles. We made several carefully bound sheaves for display at Thanksgiving. Back at the school, the wheat was threshed with homemade flails, and also by driving a team of 'oxen' over it in endless circles. The team was composed of four children who joined their right hands and formed an eight-footed wheel. They stamped - oh, how they stamped! - over the straw. Amazingly, the kernels remained whole.

On the next windy day the heap of chaff and kernels was winnowed. The blanket method was found to be too erratic, but we achieved good results when we let the mixture drop by hand into a big box from a height of about four feet.

Then came the grinders, old-fashioned coffee grinders as well as a regular muscle-powered grain grinder. How the children vied with one another to show their prowess on the big grinder! They loved to sit in groups of twos and threes through every recess, coffee grinders in laps, steadily grinding away.

This process was followed by silent sifting, for we wanted not only whole wheat flour but also some fine flour and some bran. Some of the most awake children were drawn to this silent activity as if their salvation depended on it. Once the flour was in the bag, we went to visit an old reconstructed mill and investigated how the waterwheel turned the magnificent all-wood mechanisms and the big grind stones. There we bought some hard wheat flour to mix with our soft flour for baking bread.

During these days we rehearsed a musical play extolling the work of the farmer, miller, and baker. Then crowning it all came the main event: baking. Every child baked a loaf, and the mouth-watering smell of so many fresh-baked loaves proved nearly irresistible. Patience and control, however, were exercised, and we ate only one loaf. The rest we kept for the next day, for we had invited the parents to attend the performance of our play which ended with - great surprise! - the magical appearance of the loaves out of an oven into which only imaginary dough had gone.

We have baked bread again since then, though not nearly often enough, and we also made our own unsalted butter. The whole experience was one of the highlights of our "learning through doing" years.

- Helmut Krause, Grade 8  
Toronto

- - -

The children heard the continuing story of a boy named Ben and his experiences growing up on a farm. Many aspects of the story were incorporated: for our grammar study of nouns, verbs, and adjectives we used the activities and descriptions of a working farmer on his farm; nature study came in with the passing of the seasons and plant and animal life; in geography we found the importance of the directions in building a chicken coop, for example. We said this grace before meals: (by Molly V. Hieder)

For our daily bread we thank thee, Father.  
We thank the sun and moon and stars,  
We thank the wind and frost and rain,  
We thank the earth, we thank the grain,  
We thank the beasts and all farming men.

- Margaret O'Brien  
Detroit

- - -

PRACTICAL LIFE - FARMING - BIBLIOGRAPHY

For reading aloud: Farmer Boy, Laura I. Wilder  
For children : Hay For My Ox, Isabel Wyatt

Diary of An Early American Boy, E. Sloane  
A Museum of Early American Tools "  
A Reverence for Wood "  
American Barns and Covered Bridges "  
Our Vanishing Landscape "  
A Prairie Boy's Summer, William Kurelek