Lesson Plan: Tennessee Farmers and Tennessee’s Agriculture

Grade: Fifth Grade
Subjects: Tennessee History, Social Studies, English Language Arts
Time Required: 3 Class periods (50-60 minutes)
Author: Ethan Holden—Teaching With Primary Sources—MTSU

OVERVIEW
Agriculture, perhaps more than any other single factor, has shaped the economy, culture, and politics of Tennessee. Prior to the Civil War, Tennessee was a state of national agricultural importance. With the ending of the Civil War and Reconstruction, Tennessee entered a new era of agriculture that saw the establishment of smaller farms and the rise of tenant farming and sharecropping. World War II brought prosperity to the region again as farmers were called upon to support the war effort. However, since the end of World War II, the number of farms has declined by nearly two-thirds while the average size of the farm has nearly doubled. This reflects the increasingly commercial orientation of agriculture in Tennessee, a departure from the small, sustenance based family farm of the past. Now, with the explosive growth of Tennessee, the future of farming in the state once again faces a period of intense change and reorientation.

This lesson plan, focusing on three distinct points in time, encourages students to think about the history and development of Tennessee agriculture and how that development in turn has shaped our society and culture. By tracking change over time, students will come away with a deeper and more complex knowledge of the role of agriculture in Tennessee history.

UNDERSTANDING GOAL
Students will understand the history of agriculture in Tennessee and understand the ways in which Tennessee agriculture has changed over time.

INVESTIGATIVE QUESTION
How has agriculture in Tennessee changed over time, and how has that impacted Tennessee’s culture and development?

CURRICULUM STANDARDS
Fifth-Grade Tennessee History
5.41: Examine the issue of slavery in the three grand divisions and the impact their differences had on Tennessee’s secession from the Union.
5.48: Describe the effects of the Great Depression on Tennessee and the impact of New Deal policies in the state (i.e., Tennessee Valley Authority and Civilian Conservation Corps).
5.49: Describe Tennessee’s contributions during WWI and WWII, including: the conversion of factories to wartime production, the importance of Oak Ridge, and the influence of Tennesseans.
5.53: Compare and contrast the three grand divisions of Tennessee in terms of the following: major industries (e.g., Eastman, FedEx, Nissan), Tourism (Bristol Motor Speedway, Civil War sites, and Graceland), agriculture and livestock (soybeans in West TN, tobacco in MT, and dairy in ET), geography (Gulf Coast plains, Nashville basin, Highland Rim, Cumberland Plateau, Great Valley, Great Smoky Mtns)
**OBJECTIVES**

Students will:
- Understand the agricultural history of Tennessee.
- Compare and contrast different era’s of Tennessee’s agricultural past.
- Read and summarize key points from a variety of sources
- Develop and write a response to a prompt, synthesizing the information learned from a variety of texts and sources.
- Analyze contemporary articles for information.
- Connect historical information and narratives with contemporary sources and information.

**RESOURCES AND MATERIALS**

**TENNESSEE AGRICULTURE, 1849-1909**

1. *A list of the members and officers of the House of representatives. Prepared by John Wallis and Elijah Butler, doorkeepers. Containing the names; birth-places; ages; residences; post-offices; whether married, single, or widower, places of board* [1849]

2. *Image 1 of A Committee having been appointed by the National Union League of Tennessee, Council No. 1, to prepare a Memorial to their fellow-leaguers, the following is respectfully submitted . . . Nashville, Tennessee, Dec. 4th, 1863.*

3. *I feed you all!* [1875]

4. *A preliminary agricultural map of Tennessee based on the distribution of geological formations.* [1896]

5. *Elementary agriculture of Tennessee, with practical arithmetic* [1909]


1. *The day book., April 27, 1917; Candidate for congress (General Walter Faulkner) and a Tennessee farmer. Crossville, Tennessee* [1938]

2. *Construction work at the TVA's Douglas Dam, Tenn., [1942]; Image 5 of Conversation with 60 year old white female, White Pine, Tennessee (Transcript) [1977-1978]

3. *Planting corn along a river in northeastern Tennessee [1940]; Knox County, Tennessee (Tennessee Valley Authority (TVA)). Farm boy uses an electric drill at Farragut Agricultural School [1942]*

4. *Mrs. Elizabeth E. Miller Excerpt [1938]; The nonpartisan leader., January 24, 1921, Image 12*

**TENNESSEE AGRICULTURE: MODERNITY, 1950 TO THE PRESENT**

1. *NASDA Tennessee Department of Agriculture*

2. *A Look at Tennessee Agriculture*

3. *Farm Bureau: Tennessee Farm Facts*

4. *Middle Tennessee’s farmland is vanishing, and so are billions in economic benefits*

5. *East Tennessee dairy farmers struggling with contract issues, falling profits*

6. *Middle Tennessee farmers feeling pinch of tariffs*
**Resources and Materials (cont.)**

*Materials*
- Tennessee State Seal
- Primary Sources Packet
- E-S-P Analysis Worksheet
- Personal Access to Internet capable device
- Student access to internet capable device (optional)
- Primary Source Analysis Tool

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Tenant farmer moving his household goods to a new farm, Hamilton County, Tennessee [1937]

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<td>E-S-P Analysis Sheet: ______ out of 20</td>
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**DAY ONE: TENNESSEE AGRICULTURE, 1849-1909**

**Note**
A background and contextual knowledge of the Civil War and Reconstruction is recommended before exploring this lesson plan. Our lesson plans on *secession in Tennessee* and *Reconstruction and the Fourteenth Amendment* are great for introducing your class to some of the themes you will explore in the following activities.

| Step 1 | Divide your students up into groups. Give each group an image of the Tennessee State Seal and a Primary Source Analysis Tool. After they have analyzed the image, have your students report out on their findings. What is present on the Seal? What do these symbols mean to you? Why do you think these symbols are present on the Seal? What can this tell us about the importance of agriculture in Tennessee? |
| Step 2 | Next have your students engage in a class discussion to establish and explore the context for this day’s lesson. What do we know about Tennessee history (i.e. major events, people, etc.) from 1849-1909? Encourage your students to name as many as they can remember. |
| Step 3 | After your students have answered the question, you may need to fill in some gaps to provide a broad historical context for the period. Have your students consult their textbook if needed. |
| Step 4 | Next, divide your students up into four groups. Each group will analyze a series of selected primary sources to learn about agriculture in Tennessee during this lesson’s time period. Be sure that each student in each group has a copy of the E-S-P Analysis Worksheet. These worksheets will also be a part of your students’ evaluations. Before your students begin, model one source from the Tennessee Agriculture, 1849-1909 section using the E-S-P Analysis Worksheet with the entire class. |
| Step 5 | Once your students are in their groups, remind them of the investigative question, “How has agriculture in Tennessee changed over time, and how has that impacted Tennessee’s history and development?” It may be helpful to display this question on the board. |
| Step 6 | Give each group one source from the Tennessee Agriculture, 1849-1909 section (pages 1-5 in Primary Source Packet). Allow your students approximately 8-10 minutes to analyze their primary source. |
| Step 7 | After your students have worked through their primary source, assign each group a number if they do not already have one, numbering each group off one through four. After numbering off, have your students form entirely new groups with at least one member from group one, two, three, and four in each new group. Instruct them to share their sources with the remainder of the group members. |
**Day One: Tennessee Agriculture, 1849-1909**

**Step 8**
Display each of the sources assigned in this activity. Have your students report out, to the rest of the class, their findings on the primary source. Next ask the class the following questions:

1) How are the sources alike? How are they not alike? What are some common themes that we see?

2) Is agriculture mentioned in each primary source? What does your source say about Tennessee agriculture?

3) What did you learn about Tennessee agriculture from 1849-1909? What did you find interesting?

**Step 9**
After the general discussion is complete, have your students return to their seats. The following assignment can be given as classwork or homework, depending upon the needs of you and your students.

Each student will answer the following question: “How did agriculture impact life in Tennessee between 1849 and 1909?” based on information learned during the E-S-P analysis activity and class discussion. This lesson plan recommends three or less paragraphs, though the teacher can adapt the length to fit their needs.

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**A List of the Members and Officers of the House of Representatives.**
Prepared by John Wallis and Elijah Butler, doorkeepers.
Containing the names; birthplaces; ages; residences; postoffices; whether married, single, or widower, places of board. 1849
| Step 1 | Have your students engage in a class discussion to establish and explore the context for this day’s lesson. What do we know about Tennessee history (i.e. major events, people, etc.) from 1930-1950? What do we know about Tennessee’s economy during this same time period? Encourage your students to list as many items as they can remember. |
| Step 2 | After your students have answered the question, you may need to fill in some gaps to provide a broad historical context for the period. Have your students consult their textbook if needed. |
| Step 3 | Next, divide your students up into four groups. Each group will analyze a pair of primary sources to learn about agriculture in Tennessee during this lesson’s time period. Group one will receive Pair One, group two will receive Pair Two, group three will receive Pair Three, and group four will receive Pair Four. Be sure that each student in each group has a copy of the E-S-P Analysis Sheet. These worksheets will also be a part of your students’ evaluations. |
| Step 4 | Once your students are in their groups, remind them of the investigative question, “How has agriculture in Tennessee changed over time, and how has that impacted Tennessee’s history and development?” It may be helpful to display this question on the board. |
| Step 5 | Give each group their assigned pair of sources from *The Great Depression, The New Deal, and the Coming of Modern America, 1930-1950* group (pages 6-13 in the primary source packet). Allow your students approximately 8-10 minutes to analyze their primary source. |
| Step 6 | After your students have worked through their primary source, assign each group a number if they do not already have one, numbering each group off one through four. After numbering off, have your students form entirely new groups with at least one member from group one, two, three, and four in each new group. Instruct them to share their sources with the remainder of the group members. |
| Step 7 | Display each of the source assigned in this activity. Have your students report out, to the rest of the class, their findings on the primary source. Next ask the class the following questions:  
1) How are the sources alike? How are they not alike? What are some common themes that we see? |
Candidate for congress (General Walter Faulkner) and a Tennessee farmer. Crossville, Tennessee [1938]

Construction work at the TVA’s Douglas Dam, Tenn. [1942]

**Step 7 Cont.**

2) Is agriculture mentioned in your primary source? What does your source say about Tennessee agriculture?

3) What did you learn about Tennessee agriculture from 1930-1950? What did you find interesting?

**Step 9**

After the general discussion is complete, have your students return to their seats. The following assignment can be given as classwork or homework, depending upon the needs of you and your students.

Each student will answer the investigative question “How did agriculture impact life in Tennessee between 1930 and 1950?” based on information learned during the E-S-P analysis activity and class discussion. This lesson plan recommends three or less paragraphs, though the teacher can adapt the length to fit their needs.

**Farm Women's Problems**

What a Survey of Ten Thousand Farm Homes Shows About Women’s Work

The United States Department of agriculture has made a national survey of the home-work of women and the results of this survey have been embodied in a large report which is now in the hands of the people, and is entitled "Women in Agriculture." It is

The average farm woman works 18 hours a day in summer and 16 hours in winter. The average woman has an eight-hour home to take care of. The majority of them have to feed their own steers and carry their own water. Ninety-six per cent do their own washing and the same number do their own sewing. Only 16 per cent have any hired help at all during the year and those only for short periods. Almost none report any hired help the year around.

These findings were secured from an actual survey of 10,000 farm homes in the northern and western states, made by the United States Department of agriculture in connection with state agricultural colleges.

Turning to the farm work outside the house the report shows that 16 per cent of the women helped to milk and that nearly all had some farm work, such as haying, cutting for livestock or poultry.

Statistics per cent of the farm families have automobiles and 22 per cent have telephones, the report shows. That the League makes for progress is shown by the fact that in the Middle West 30 per cent of the farmers have automobiles and 40 per cent have telephones, while on the Atlantic coast only 40 per cent have autos and 60 per cent phones. That autos and phones are necessities rather than luxuries is shown by the fact that the average farm home is a mile and one-half from a school, six miles from a high school, three miles from a church, five miles from a market and nearly six miles from a doctor.

The nonpartisan leader, January 24, 1921, Image 12
### DAY THREE: TENNESSEE AGRICULTURE: MODERNITY, 1950 TO THE PRESENT

**Note**
This last section in the series provides the teacher an opportunity to allow their students, now equipped with knowledge on Tennessee agriculture at two points in time, to explore the full changes and effects of modernity on Tennessee agriculture. It is recommended that your students have access to an internet capable device. While we suggest the following sources, the teacher may also wish to substitute those sources with local ones if they are available.

**Step 1**
Have your students engage in a class discussion to establish and explore the context for this lesson plan. What do we know about Tennessee history (i.e. major events, people, etc.) from 1950 to the Present? What do we know about Tennessee’s economy during this same time period? Encourage your students to name as many as they can remember.

**Step 1**
Begin the class by showing your students pictures of Mayfield Ice Cream, Little Debbie snacks, Purity Dairies, and JFG Coffee. The teacher can also bring in containers of these products if they would rather have a physical display. Ask your students what they think that these products all have in common. After fielding their answers, reveal that these are all companies based in Tennessee and that they all rely on Tennessee agricultural products.

**Step 3**
While they are in their groups, have your students access these three website on Tennessee agriculture and statistics. We have also provided excerpted copies in the primary source packet (pages 14-16). If you do not have access to internet capable devices, provide one physical copy of each web page to each group. Have your students read through the articles and take notes. Encourage them to keep the following questions in mind: Are the articles positive or negative about Tennessee’s agricultural outlook? Is there a consensus in the articles about Tennessee agriculture? What does the future of Tennessee agriculture look like according to these sources?

**Step 4**
Next, have your students search “issues facing Tennessee farmers” in a search engine. Have each group select an article to read, using the Primary Source Analysis Tool to record their findings. If you do not have access to internet capable devices, we suggest using the following three articles for your students: “Middle Tennessee’s farmland is vanishing, and so are billions in economic benefits”; “East Tennessee dairy farmers struggling with contract issues, falling profits”; “Middle Tennessee farmers feeling pinch of tariffs”. Excerpted copies are also available in the primary source packet (pages 17-19). Encourage them to think of these articles as primary sources speaking to the present state of Tennessee agriculture. If the teacher has access to local articles, this is a great opportunity to work in local history.

**Note**
For step 5, it may also be beneficial for the teacher to preview the articles that the students select for their analysis. While it is interesting to see what the students can find, some articles may be politically oriented or inappropriate for use in the classroom.
### Day Three: Tennessee Agriculture: Modernity, 1950 to the Present

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<th>Step 5</th>
<th>Have your students report out on their analysis of the articles. Once the groups have presented their findings, lead a general class discussion. How are the articles different from one another? How do these articles compare to the previous websites about Tennessee agriculture? Are they different or similar? What are some connections that you can make between these article and the previous two units on agriculture that we have covered so far? Do these articles match your ideas and conceptions of agriculture in Tennessee? If so, how, and if not, why? What does the future of Tennessee agriculture look like according to these articles?</th>
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<td>Step 6</td>
<td>Next, pull up <a href="#">Tennessee’s Seal</a> once more for more class discussion. Now that your students have completed this lesson, ask them again about the Seal. Why do you think this seal is representative of Tennessee’s history? Do you think that agriculture is important enough to Tennessee to put on the Seal? How has agriculture in Tennessee changed over time, and how has that impacted Tennessee’s culture and development? Would you alter or change the Seal? Why or why not?</td>
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<tr>
<td>Step 7</td>
<td>After the general discussion is complete, have your students return to their seats. The following assignment can be given as classwork or homework, depending upon the needs of you and your students. Each student will answer the investigative question “How has agriculture in Tennessee changed over time, and how has agriculture impacted Tennessee’s history and development?” based on notes from their E-S-P Analysis Sheets and the paragraphs they wrote for day one and day two. This lesson plan recommends three or less paragraphs, though the teacher can adapt the length to fit their needs.</td>
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Carrie Severt milks a cow one-handed at her farm in Alleghany County, North Carolina [1978]

Major land resource area, Tennessee [1981]
EXTENSION IDEAS

Because this lesson plan covers so many different subjects and topics in American and Tennessee history, there are many extensions available to teachers.

1) Now that your students are familiar with the agricultural history of Tennessee, have them reconsider the Tennessee State Seal. Based on the materials they have reviewed thus far, have them recreate the State Seal. It can feature agriculture or other aspects of Tennessee’s economy or culture. The redesign of the State Seal should come with a two-three paragraph paper describing the symbolism on their seal and the reasoning behind choosing that symbolism. The teacher can then either have students present their seals to the class or create gallery walk for other teachers and students.

2) Agriculture and music oftentimes go hand in hand. After all, why would people not sing about their experiences? Have your students search through the Alan Lomax collection of audio recordings and search for a song that deals with agriculture or the agricultural experience. Then have your students pick one of their favorite songs about agriculture and compare the two songs. After they have compared the two, have your students then write their own song about agriculture based on the information that they learned in this lesson plan. Encourage them whenever possible to incorporate local history or their own personal/family experience.

3) Coordinate with a community resource to organize a field trip for your students. For example, the local archives could have a collection of pictures, biographies, or memoirs about local agriculture. By organizing a visit, either on site or the archivist coming to your classroom, you can deepen the students understanding of agriculture as it applies to their community and personalize an otherwise abstract narrative.

4) Encourage your students to interview local farmers. This provides your students a great opportunity to hear the experiences of local farmers firsthand in addition to building oral history skills. Once your students have interviewed their farmer, they can then write a short paper about their subject. The teacher can then gather all of these papers and create a website with that information on it for the students, teachers, parents, and community members to access.

5) Reach out to your local farmers, companies, 4H, or other agricultural entities/clubs to come and speak in your classroom. Additionally, the teacher could also reach out to see if they can schedule a field trip to these sites. This is a good chance your students not only to interface with agriculture in their community, but also for them to understand how agriculture works.

6) Have your class start their own small garden or grow their own plants. Instruct your students to also keep a journal of their attempt and the challenges, triumphs, and solutions they encountered/came up with to ensure the garden or plant grows. This also provides an opportunity to engage in cross curricular instruction with your agriculture teacher or your local 4-H club.

Think about how your Tennessee agriculture primary source ties into economic issues (e.g., wages, trade, standard of living, etc.), social issues (e.g., race, gender, etc.), and political issues (e.g., laws, policy, voting, etc.) of the time. Fill in your observations & reflections in the appropriate columns below. If you can’t think where to put a comment, write it in the miscellaneous box below.

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