

# Chapter 10

## History and Geography

### Mama's Mama

Mama's Mama on a winter's day,  
Milked the cows and fed them hay,  
Slopped the hogs, saddled the mule,  
And got the children off to school,  
Did a washing, mopped the floors,  
Washed the windows and did some chores,  
Cooked a dish of home-dried fruit,  
Pressed her husband's Sunday suit,  
Swept the parlor, made the bed,  
Baked a dozen loaves of bread,  
Split some wood and lugged it in,  
Enough to fill the kitchen bin,  
Cleaned the lamps and put in oil,  
Stewed some apples she thought might spoil,  
Churned the butter, baked a cake,  
Then exclaimed: "For Mercy's Sake,  
The calves have got out of the pen!"  
Went out and chased them in again,  
Gathered the eggs and locked the stable,  
Returned to the house and set the table,  
Cooked a supper that was delicious,  
Afterwards washed all the dishes,  
Fed the cat, sprinkled the clothes,  
Mended a basket full of hose,  
Then opened the organ and began to play,  
"When You Come to the End of a Perfect Day."

Author Unknown

How do people adapt to their environment around them? Do you see the connection here between history and geography?! It's possible to teach geography without even realizing it. Of course, maps are naturally a part of both history and geography. But cultural aspects are an important part of geography, also. As you study history, be aware of all the geographic implications and build on them when possible. The next two activities are hands-on projects that help to capture the history/geography cultural connection. These examples are from

American history. You can find many more projects that show life in other lands and during other time periods.

Learning about everyday life in early America is interesting and exciting! Think about our country's forefathers: What did they do? How did they live? Learning about our heritage is a valuable pursuit. Making things we take for granted will opens our eyes to what life in early America was really like!

# History & Geography

## Project # 1

### Candle Making

Thomas Tusser wrote in England in the 16th century in his *Directions to Housewives*:

“Wife, make thine own candle,  
Spare penny to handle.  
Provide for thy tallow ere frost cometh in,  
And make thine own candle ere winter begin.”

### Background

In early America, housewives had a choice of two methods of making candles. They could make molded candles. To do this, they would use a candle mold, which was a metal object with several hollowed out candle shapes in it. They would place a wick in the mold and pour melted wax around the wick.

The other method, the one you will use, is called “dipped” candles. Housewives in colonial days would most likely never make just one candle at a time; they would have a holder on which several wicks could be suspended at one time. A housewife would probably be making a whole winter’s supply at once.

### Wax

Beeswax was preferred for candle making in colonial times. Other choices for making candles included animal fats, which were smoky and tended to smell bad, and bayberries, which are waxy berries from the bayberry bush. Bayberries were plentiful, smelled good, and tended to burn slowly and not smoke. The berries were picked in late Fall when they were ripe. They were boiled and the fat that rose to the surface was skimmed off. When the fat congealed it was green. It would then be remelted and made into candles.

Beeswax is made in a honeycomb by bees. It is not as smoky as candles made from animal fat and does not smell bad. Actually, it still smells faintly of the honey. If the beeswax were straight from the honeycomb, it would need to be cleaned.

**CAUTION! MELTED WAX IS VERY HOT!**

## History and Geography Project #1 (continued)

### Materials

- ♦ 2 plugs of beeswax
- ♦ Wick
- ♦ Double boiler or saucepan and mug
- ♦ 1 cup of ice cold water
- ♦ Newspaper to protect the work surface

### Directions

1. To make your candle, place your beeswax in a mug and then into the top half of a double boiler; put water in the bottom half. If you don't have a double boiler, put the wax in a mug and place the mug in a small saucepan that is filled with enough water to come about half way up the mug. Boil the water.
2. Melt the wax.
3. Remove from stove.
4. Carefully dip the wick into the melted wax and then into a cup of ice water. Repeat this until your candle is the size and shape you want. If it doesn't turn out right the first time, it's okay! It can be easily melted again and re-dipped.
5. When it is the desired size and shape, it's ready to burn. Pour a little melted wax on a plate and stick your candle to it or cut and trim the bottom to fit into a candle holder. Trim the wick between 1/4" and 1/8".

### Tip

Be sure to protect any furniture before burning your candle as it will drip.

### Extensions

1. Read about the whaling industry. Certain whales were prized for the material stored in their blunt heads. It was used to make "spermaceti" candles, which are said to have given out more light than three tallow candles combined.
2. Read about other forms of lighting: pine-knots or candlewood, rushes, and many interesting types of lamps. See if you can track down some old lamps. What were they named and how were they used?

### Vocabulary

- Tallow -- Commonly refers to the fat of cattle and sheep, melted and separated for use in candles and soap. A similar fatty substance can be obtained from plants (like bayberries) and is sometimes referred to as tallow, also.
- Wick -- Back then, wick was commonly made of loosely spun hemp or cotton or milk-weed.

# History & Geography

## Project # 2

### Taffy Pulling

#### Background

Entertainment in early America was vastly different from the world of amusement we live in today; no television, stereos, video tapes, computer games, playgrounds, or the like. People found simpler ways to amuse themselves. One popular form of entertainment consisted of getting together with other folks and making something useful, like a quilt. A taffy pull was that kind of entertainment. It provided a way to socialize, have fun, and make something.

#### CAUTION! MIXTURE IS VERY HOT!

#### Materials

- ♦ 1 cup sugar
- ♦ 3 tablespoons corn starch
- ♦ Pinch of salt
- ♦ 1/4 cup of water
- ♦ 2/3 cup of honey
- ♦ Candy thermometer (optional)
- ♦ Platter or cookie sheet
- ♦ Butter

#### Directions

1. Grease a platter or cookie sheet thoroughly.
2. Combine sugar, corn starch, and salt with water and honey in a saucepan.
3. Boil until the mixture reaches the “hard ball” stage. (If you are using a candy thermometer, it is 250 - 266 degrees.)
4. If you are not using a candy thermometer, test for the hard ball stage by allowing a few drops of the hot mixture to drop into a cup of cold water. Put your fingers in the cup and try to push the mixture together. If it forms a firm ball, it has reached the “hard ball” stage. If it forms a ball but it is soft, your taffy isn’t quite ready yet.

#### Tip

Watch carefully! It can reach the “hard ball” stage very quickly. If allowed to heat beyond the “hard ball” stage, the mixture will be too hard to form a ball. **DO NOT** allow it to get to this point.

When the taffy can be formed into a hard ball, pour it onto a well-greased platter or cookie sheet. Allow it to cool at room temperature. (Not in the refrigerator or cold outside air.) Occasionally lift the outer edges into the center to ensure that the taffy cools at a uniform rate.

## History and Geography Project #2 (continued)

### Pulling

All participants in the taffy pull should thoroughly wash their hands and then butter them. The butter keeps the taffy from sticking to your skin, insulates your hands, and imparts a tasty flavor to the candy! As soon as the taffy can be handled, you should start pulling. Don't wait too long or the taffy will harden and you won't be able to work it.

Take a big glob of taffy from the outside edge (where it is coolest) and begin pulling. Stretch it out as far as it will go, then fold both ends back into the center. Repeat this many times until the taffy is just too hard to stick back together again.

It's fun to work in teams of two people where each team gets a fairly large glob to work with. But it can be accomplished singly as well. The taffy gets "whiter" as it is worked. That is because the pulling is incorporating air into the candy.

When you are done pulling, lay the taffy down and give it the final shape you want it to have. It can be twisted or formed into letters or number. Or it can be left in a long rope and then cut with a knife or scissors into smaller pieces. It is now ready to eat and enjoy!

### Extensions

1. Watch for forms of entertainment like taffy pulling and quilting bees in books. What do we do today that is comparable?
2. Plan an old-fashioned evening with family or friends. Cook a meal from the Little House on the Prairie Cookbook or one of the American Girls' cookbooks. Use lamplight or candlelight. Make candles, taffy, pomander balls, sew a project, or string popcorn. Read aloud to one another. Learn to play some games from long ago. (Try your library for books about games.)

# Timelines

Everything happened somewhere -- hence maps. Everything happened sometime -- hence timelines. The connection between geography and history is vital. Knowing where something happened is as good as knowing when it happened. However, it is far more valuable to know both pieces of information: where and when. Students will be more likely to retain information that they can place in context.

## Habits!

As you teach history, make it a habit to show **where** events happened as well as **when** they happened. A simple and highly effective habit is to always have students mark the where on the map and the when on a timeline. For example, as you discuss Christopher Columbus your students will add him to their timeline and mark on the map important information like: place of birth, Spain, and his voyage routes. It is especially memorable if you use the same symbol for Columbus on the timeline that you used on the map. So if you had a small drawing of him that you put on the timeline, put a copy of the same drawing on your map, too. That visual reminder will make the connection of when and where even stronger.

## Types of Timelines

For the early elementary ages, a linear timeline is easier to follow. This could be done in a variety of ways:

- ☐ Strips of 8 ½ x 11 paper or posterboard taped along the hallway.
- ☐ Butcher paper rolled out as you need it.
- ☐ Index cards laid out one by one along your table -- and stored in a baggie when not in use.
- ☐ Clothesline hung from one end of the room to another and clothespins used to hang up cards or icons to represent the study.\*
- ☐ A laminated linear timeline that is useable over and over again. Bright Ideas Press makes an inexpensive one that works very well for the younger crowd.

## \*Clothesline Timeline

### Directions

1. Have reference books on hand
2. Choose events and time frame
3. Gather icons
4. Make century or decade markers from cardstock and pin to clothesline
5. Hang icons with clothespins
6. Add other times relevant to the kids' frame of knowledge

## Timelines (continued)

**Exploring Ancient Civilizations?** Add Jesus' birth and discovery of America for a frame of reference.

**Discovering USA history?** Go back in time and add Jesus' birth on one end and go forward and add your student's birthday on the other.

Try to keep the timeline at least nominally to scale. Obviously when doing so some feet of clothesline will be very bare compared to others. This is a great discussion starter -- why is there so much more notable history in some times than others?

### Other Questions

- ☐ Why do we have dates for fewer events the farther back in time we go?
- ☐ Of what significance was the printing press?
- ☐ What do B.C. and A.D. really mean?
- ☐ What century were you born in?
- ☐ What century do you live in now?

Don't forget to also refer to the "where of events" as you place them on your timeline.

Some specialty timelines you might enjoy constructing with your kids:

- ☐ Bible stories
- ☐ Famous missionaries
- ☐ Discoveries/Inventions
- ☐ Wars
- ☐ Great composers or artists
- ☐ Presidents
- ☐ Your own family

### Warning!

Don't get trapped into the mind set that your timeline has to be really cool or "perfectly" organized!! Many people avoid doing one because they want to do it just "right" and therefore never do it. Simple is fine -- in some ways preferable -- If your expectations are reasonable it is more likely you'll actually get started. If you don't like the first one you do, learn from that and do your second one differently. Some weeks or months you may add a lot to it and other times it may be ignored for awhile. If you can routinely add to it though, you'll find it to be a quietly beneficial activity that only takes a little time to do.

### History is Messy!

You'll find conflicting dates and information, you'll find that you can't cram everything in that you'd like, and you'll find out that sometimes history is downright messy! That's okay -- that's the way life really is; God is orderly but mankind is not!