

# Corn Cob Toys

## Background

In Early America, there was no industry devoted to making toys for children. Most families were involved in farming, and children stayed busy with chores. When they had time to play, they had to find amusement from everyday life. Made toys consisted of whatever they or their parents could make for them from whatever they had around the home. Toys were usually simple in design, and the material available to work with depended on the geographic location and the wealth and talents of the child's family.

One major crop grown by Early American farm families was corn. The Pilgrims at Plymouth Rock would have starved in 1621 if natives had not taught them how to grow corn. Besides eating the corn and feeding it to their animals, the Pilgrims also learned to stuff their mattresses with corn husks and to burn corn cobs for fuel. From the cobs and the husks they learned to make toys.

Today, we have many more uses for corn. Corn syrup sweetens candy bars and many of the sweet drinks we enjoy. Corn is also used to make the plastic used in modern toys.

## Visual Arts

1. Read and discuss background.
2. Tell students they are going to learn to make toys from corn cobs like children in early America.
  - Show students how to make corn cob people and corn cob airplanes, as described below.
  - Students will make one of the two toys described or design and make some other toy or useful object from the materials provided.

**CORN COB PEOPLE**

  - Students will use markers to draw faces on the large ends of their corn cobs.
  - Students will choose fabric remnants to wrap around the cob and tie the cloth in place with yarn.
  - If corn silk is available, students may use it to make hair for their dolls. The hair may be tied, wrapped in loose strands or braided. If no silk is available, have students draw hair or glue on yarn.

**CORN COB AIRPLANES**

  - Students will decorate the planes as desired with markers before criss crossing two corn cobs and securing them with yarn.
3. Students will use fresh corn on the cob to make corn paintings.
  - Cover a table with newspaper, and place paper on top.

## P.A.S.S.

### GRADE 1

**Visual Arts**—3.2,4; 4.3

**Social Studies**—1.1

### GRADE 2

**Visual Arts**—3.2,4; 4.3

**Social Studies**—1.1

### GRADE 3

**Visual Arts**—3.2,4; 4.3

**Social Studies**—1.1

**Writing**—2.1,2,3

### GRADE 4

**Visual Arts**—3.1,2; 4.3

**Social Studies**—1.1

**Writing**—1.6

### GRADE 5

**Visual Arts**—3.1,2,3; 4.3

**Social Studies**—1.1

**Writing**—2.1

**Oral Language**—2.5

### GRADE 6

**Visual Arts**—3.1,2,3; 4.3

**Social Studies**—1.1

## Materials

dried corn cobs

dried corn husks

corn silk, if available

assorted fabric

yarn

markers

## Vocabulary

**cob**—the woody core on which the kernels of

Indian corn are arranged  
**corn**—the seeds of a cereal plant and especially of the important cereal crop of Indian corn, also called maize

**husk**—a usually thin dry outer covering of various seeds or fruits (as barley and corn)

**kernel**—a whole grain or seed of a cereal (as wheat or corn)

**toy**—something for a child to play with

—Students will dip corn on the cob in tempera paint, roller-style, and roll along the paper in any direction.

## Language Arts

1. Students will each write a description of the toy/object he or she has made and provide instructions for making it.
2. Students will write and perform plays, using their corn cob people as characters.
3. Students will complete the worksheet provided with this lesson.

## Social Studies

1. Students will research to find where corn is grown and find locations on a world map.

## Extra Reading

Bianco, Margery Williams, and Gennady Spirin, *The Velveteen Rabbit: Or How Toys Became Real*, Marshall Cavendish, 2011.

Collodi, Carlo, and Alice Carsey, *Pinocchio: The Tale of a Puppet*, Bottom of the Hill, 2011.

de Seve, Randall, and Loren Long, *Toy Boat*, Philomel, 2007.

Jackson, Paul, *Origami Toys That Tumble, Fly, and Spin*, Gibbs Smith, 2010.

Paxton, Tom, and Steve Cox, *The Marvelous Toy*, Imagine, 2009. (Grades PreK-2)

Wells, Rosemary, *Yoko's Paper Cranes*, Hyperion, 2001.

Wulffson, Don, and Laurie Keller, *Toys!: Amazing Stories Behind Some Great Inventions*, Henry Holt and Co., 2000.

Name \_\_\_\_\_

# Corn Cob Toys

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corn

cob

doll

toy

Read the words above.

Which two words have the long “o” sound? \_\_\_\_\_

Which two words have the short “o” sound \_\_\_\_\_

Write three words that rhyme with corn.

\_\_\_\_\_

Write a sentence using the word corn and the three rhyming words.

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

Write a poem, using the four words at the top of the page.

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