

ARTHUR YOUNG AND THE PRESIDENT

57

GRADES: 9-12

SUBJECT: Language Arts

OBJECTIVE: Students will translate NASS data into prose for a variety of purposes.

BACKGROUND

In 1791, President Washington received a letter from an Englishman named Arthur Young, who had written to several farmers requesting information on land values, crops, yields, livestock prices, and taxes. By personally conducting a mail survey and compiling the results, Washington was able to gather enough information to reply fully to his English correspondent. This was, in effect, the Nation's first agricultural survey.

Between September 24 and November 18, 1791, Washington sent Young three letters that provided agricultural statistics on an area extending roughly 250 miles from north to south and 100 miles from east to west. The strip ran through an area, which is today Pennsylvania, West Virginia, Maryland, Virginia, and the District of Columbia, where most of the young country's population lived.

Washington asked Congress to establish a National Board of Agriculture in 1776, but Congress rejected the idea at that time.

The issue wasn't raised again until 1839, when Commissioner of Patents Henry Ellsworth persuaded Congress to designate \$1,000 from the Patent Office Fund for "collecting and distributing seeds, carrying out agricultural investigations, and procuring agricultural statistics."

In 1840, the first census of agriculture collected detailed agricultural information to provide the first nationwide inventory of agricultural production.

The U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) was established by Abraham Lincoln in 1862, and its first crop report appeared in July, 1863. The National Agricultural Statistics Service (NASS) traces its roots all the way back to 1863, when USDA estab-



VOCABULARY

yield
survey
cwt
bale
bushel

lished a Division of Statistics.

During the Civil War, USDA collected and distributed crop and livestock statistics to help farmers assess the value of the goods they produced. At that time, commodity buyers usually had more current and detailed market information than did farmers, a circumstance that often prevented farmers from getting a fair price for their goods. Producers in today's marketplace would be similarly handicapped were it not for the information provided by NASS.

NASS publishes reports covering everything about agriculture in the U.S.— production and supplies of food and fiber, prices paid and received by farmers, farm labor and wages, farm aspects of the industry. In addition, NASS' 45 Field Offices publish data about many of the same topics for their individual states.

NASS publications cover a wide range of subjects, from traditional crops, such as corn and wheat, to specialties, such as mushrooms and flowers; from calves born to hogs slaughtered; from agricultural prices to land in farms.

Because of the amount of information produced by the agency, NASS has earned the title, "The Fact Finders of Agriculture."

ACTIVITY

1. Ask students how they get information to friends who they don't see every day. Record responses on the chalk board. Does anyone communicate by writing letters?
2. Share background information about the correspondence between George Washington and Englishman Arthur Young and the first agricultural surveys. Ask students where they would go to find the kind of information Arthur Young asked George Washington to provide. Why did the President of the United States think the questions were important enough to personally gather the information and reply?
3. Provide each student with the data on the following pages and a copy of the letter, a modern day version of the letter Arthur Young might have written to George Washington. Have students use the data to compose a reply. Students should cover the following topics in their letters: land value, crops, yields, and livestock prices.
4. Divide students into groups, and have each group select either a commodity or a state or region and use the data to



develop promotional brochures and posters and to make oral presentations, using technology (Power Point) when available.

ADDITIONAL ACTIVITIES

1. Provide students with excerpts from George Washington's letters to Arthur Young and others at the end of this lesson, and have them rewrite them in modern English.
2. Have students explore additional data on the National Agricultural Statistics Service Web site, www.nass.usda.gov. Have them choose a region or agricultural commodity and write news releases or reports.
3. Have students design surveys gathering specific information about their school to share with someone from another school, state or country. After students gather the information, have them use it to write letters to the other schools. Have students present the information to local audiences in a variety of forms—charts, graphs, prose, oral presentations, etc.
4. Have students design surveys about the agriculture in another country. Make arrangements to connect with an overseas classroom via e-mail. Divide your class into two groups, and have one group correspond overseas via e-mail and another using traditional mail service. Compare the results. Discuss advantages and disadvantages of both means of communication.



Name _____

Arthur Young and the President

[Date]

Dear _____,

It was nice to get your letter and to hear all about your school, your town and your friends. I loved the photos you sent of your family's camping trip. What a beautiful place!

It's always interesting to hear about life in your country. I hope I get to visit there someday. I would also love for you to come visit me. As you know, my family has a farm, and when I am not in school, I am usually helping with that.

What is farming like in your country? What kinds of crops grow there? Are there some crops that your country produces more than any other? How much is produced in a year? What kind of livestock do you raise? How much is it sold for? How much does farm land cost? Is it more expensive in certain parts of the country? Does the price stay the same, or does it go up and down from one year to the next?

As you can see, I have many questions. Thank you again for your letter. I look forward to hearing from you again.

Your Friend,
Pat



Farm Real Estate: Average Value Per Acre, by Region and State, January 2001-2005

<u>Region and State</u>	<u>2001</u>	<u>2002</u>	<u>2003</u>	<u>2004</u>	<u>2005</u>
	Dollars	Dollars	Dollars	Dollars	Dollars
NORTHEAST	2,830	3,000	3,200	3,550	4,020
CT	7,700	8,500	9,500	10,200	10,800
DE	3,400	3,700	4,000	6,000	8,400
ME	1,500	1,600	1,750	1,850	1,950
MD	3,800	4,000	4,150	5,700	7,900
MA	7,300	8,100	9,300	9,900	10,500
NH	2,550	2,800	3,100	3,250	3,450
NJ	8,100	8,600	9,100	9,750	10,300
NY	1,520	1,610	1,700	1,780	1,880
PA	3,000	3,250	3,450	3,650	4,000
RI	7,700	8,300	9,300	10,200	11,200
VT	1,800	1,900	2,050	2,150	2,300
LAKE STATES	1,700	1,870	2,010	2,220	2,480
MI	2,280	2,470	2,680	2,920	3,150
MN	1,400	1,500	1,600	1,800	2,030
WI	1,950	2,150	2,300	2,500	2,850
CORN BELT	1,950	2,030	2,130	2,300	2,550
IL	2,290	2,350	2,430	2,610	2,900
IN	2,350	2,460	2,570	2,770	3,050
IA	1,850	1,920	2,010	2,200	2,490
MO	1,300	1,380	1,470	1,580	1,740
OH	2,470	2,600	2,740	2,930	3,180
NORTHERN PLAINS	556	576	594	632	704
KS	645	665	685	715	800
NE	735	760	775	825	910
ND	410	415	425	455	500
SD	405	430	460	500	570
APPALACHIAN	2,120	2,250	2,370	2,560	2,860
KY	1,750	1,830	1,900	2,000	2,200
NC	2,680	2,900	3,100	3,300	3,570
TN	2,200	2,300	2,400	2,500	2,700
VA	2,380	2,530	2,700	3,200	3,900
WV	1,270	1,330	1,400	1,500	1,600
SOUTHEAST	2,030	2,140	2,270	2,420	2,740
AL	1,640	1,700	1,760	1,860	2,050
FL	2,600	2,720	2,900	3,100	3,700
GA	1,900	2,050	2,200	2,350	2,590
SC	1,800	1,900	2,050	2,150	2,330
DELTA STATES	1,330	1,390	1,460	1,580	1,710
AR	1,350	1,410	1,480	1,650	1,820
LA	1,380	1,440	1,500	1,580	1,680
MS	1,270	1,330	1,400	1,480	1,580
SOUTHERN PLAINS	715	755	788	832	900
OK	655	680	705	745	805
TX	730	775	810	855	925
MOUNTAIN	471	500	523	550	599
AZ	1,250	1,400	1,500	1,600	1,750
CO	675	700	730	775	845
ID	1,200	1,240	1,280	1,360	1,480
MT	350	370	390	410	445
NV	450	465	480	500	550
NM	240	250	260	265	290
UT	975	1,040	1,100	1,150	1,230
WY	270	285	300	315	350
PACIFIC	2,120	2,240	2,350	2,480	2,700
CA	3,200	3,400	3,600	3,800	4,160
OR	1,100	1,150	1,200	1,250	1,350
WA	1,300	1,390	1,480	1,530	1,650

Crop Summary: Production, United States, 2005

<u>Crop</u>	<u>Units</u>	<u>2005</u> (Thousand)
GRAIN & HAY		
Barley	Bushel	211,896
Corn for Grain	Bushel	11,112,072
Corn for Silage	Ton	106,311
Hay, All	Ton	150,590
Alfalfa	Ton	75,771
All Other	Ton	74,819
Oats	Bushel	114,878
Proso Millet	Bushel	13,545
Rice	Cwt	223,235
Rye	Bushel	7,537
Sorghum for Grain	Bushel	4,218
Sorghum for Silage	Ton	2,104,690
Wheat, All	Bushel	1,499,129
Winter	Bushel	101,105
Durum	Bushel	504,456
Other Spring		
OILSEEDS		
Canola	Pounds	1,580,985
Cottonseed	Tons	8,501
Flaxseed	Bushels	19,695
Mustard Seed	Pounds	35,114
Peanuts	Pounds	4,821,250
Rapeseed	Pounds	3,000
Safflower	Pounds	192,545
Soybeans for Beans	Bushels	3,086,432
Sunflower	Pounds	4,018,355
COTTON, TOBACCO & SUGAR CROPS		
Cotton, All	Bales	23,719.0
Upland	Bales	23,064.0
Amer-Pima	Bales	655.0
Sugarbeets	Tons	27,654
Sugarcane	Tons	27,134
Tobacco	Pounds	639,709
DRY BEANS, PEAS & LENTILS		
Austrian Winter Peas	Cwt	307
Dry Edible Beans	Cwt	27,222
Dry Edible Peas	Cwt	14,003
Lentils	Cwt	5,163
Wrinkled Seed Peas	Cwt	755
POTATOES & MISC.		
Coffee (HI)	Pounds	6,400
Ginger Root (HI)	Pounds	5,100
Hops	Pounds	59,914.5
Peppermint Oil	Pounds	6,980
Potatoes, All	Cwt	420,879
Winter	Cwt	4,892
Spring	Cwt	18,724
Summer	Cwt	16,237
Fall	Cwt	381,026
Spearmint Oil	Pounds	1,933
Sweet Potatoes	Cwt	15,747
Taro (HI)	Pounds	4,000

Source: USDA, NASS

Livestock: Average Prices Received by States, 2004

	Dollars per cwt		
	<u>Lambs</u>	<u>Hogs</u>	<u>Beef Cattle</u>
Alabama		43.90	80.70
Alaska		73.00	90.00
Arizona	95.00	59.30	101.00
Arkansas		47.40	82.60
California	90.40	49.50	68.70
Colorado	101.00	52.70	104.00
Connecticut		45.50	65.00
Delaware		44.70	80.00
Florida		43.70	63.20
Georgia		50.30	66.10
Hawaii		87.00	45.30
Idaho	95.60	49.00	78.00
Illinois	100.00	50.80	85.50
Indiana	102.00	48.90	72.20
Iowa	94.90	49.90	86.80
Kansas	95.80	47.40	84.80
Kentucky		48.10	84.30
Louisiana		44.10	63.70
Maine		45.50	78.00
Maryland		44.60	80.00
Massachusetts		45.50	70.00
Michigan	94.00	45.90	68.70
Minnesota	94.70	49.80	76.20
Mississippi		46.70	70.60
Missouri	101.00	46.10	92.30
Montana	112.00	52.30	91.00
Nebraska	98.30	50.80	88.70
Nevada	98.00	45.80	89.40
N ENG (1)	125.00		
New Hampshire		45.50	75.00
New Jersey		41.80	52.00
New Mexico	100.00	48.30	482.00
New York	114.00	43.80	47.70
North Carolina		50.60	79.80
North Dakota	103.00	51.40	89.80
Ohio	98.50	49.30	77.70
Oklahoma	96.00	44.10	96.60
Oregon	94.40	51.60	82.30
Pennsylvania	115.00	46.70	73.30
Rhode Island		45.50	65.00
South Carolina		49.00	81.20
South Dakota	115.00	50.40	89.30
Tennessee		47.30	77.90
Texas	110.00	44.90	86.50
Utah	101.00	53.90	90.00
Vermont		45.50	70.00
Virginia	101.00	46.60	79.20
Washington	96.00	48.90	94.00
West Virginia	102.00	46.10	67.20
Wisconsin	92.50	46.30	65.00
Wyoming	114.00	46.70	98.80
Other ST (2)	96.00		
U.S. Average	101.00	49.30	85.90

(1) Includes CT, ME, MA, NH, RI & VT

(2) Other States include: AL< AK< AR< DE< FL, GA< HI, KY, LA< MD, MS, NJ, NC, SC & TN

Source: USDA, NASS

Arthur Young and the President

Back before telephones, e-mail and fax machines, people relied heavily on letters for sharing all kinds of information. The following are quotes from letters George Washington wrote to an English agriculturalist, Arthur Young, and others. Read the quotes, and then rewrite them in modern English, as though you were writing them to a friend today. Try to guess the meaning of unfamiliar words by reading them in context. Also notice the punctuation, capitalization and spelling that is different from what is considered correct today.

1. I have a prospect of introducing into this Country a very excellent race of animals also, by means of the liberality of the King of Spain. One of the Jacks which he was pleased to present to me (the other perished at sea) is about 15 hands high, his body and Limbs very large in proportion to his height; and the Mules which I have had from him appear to be extremely well formed for Service. I have likewise a Jack and two Jennets from Malta, of a very good size, which the Marquis de la Fayette sent to me. The Spanish Jack seems calculated to breed for heavy, slow draught; and the other for the Saddle or lighter carriages. From these, altogether, I hope to secure a race of extraordinary goodness, which will stock the Country. Their longevity and cheap keeping will be circumstances much in their favor. I am convinced, from the little experiments I have made with ordinary Mules, (which perform as much labor, with vastly less feeding than horses) that those of a superior quality will be of the best cattle we can employ for the harness. And indeed, in a few years, I intend to drive no other in my carriage: having appropriated for the sole purpose of breeding them, upwards of 20 of my best Mares.

George Washington
(Letter to Arthur Young, December 4, 1788)

2. Every improvement in husbandry should be gratefully received and peculiarly fostered in this Country, not only as promoting the interests and lessening the labour of the farmer, but as advancing our respectability in a national point of view; for in the present State of America, our welfare and prosperity depend upon the cultivation of our lands and turning the produce of them to the best advantage.

George Washington
(Letter to Samuel Chamberlain, April 3, 1788)



3. When I speak of a knowing farmer, I mean one who understands the best course of crops; how to plough, to sow, to mow, to hedge, to Ditch and above all, Midas like, one who can convert everything he touches into manure, as the first transmutation towards Gold; in a word one who can bring worn out and gullied lands into good tilth in the shortest time.

George Washington
(Letter to George William Fairfax, June 30, 1785)

4. To tell a farmer. . . that his Cattle & ca. Ought to be regularly penned in summer and secured from bad weather in winter, and the utmost attention paid to the making of manure for the improvement of his fields at both seasons; that his oxen should be well attended to, and kept in good and fit condition, thereby enabling them to perform the labor which they must undergo; to remind him of these things would, I say, be only observing what every Farmer must be thoroughly sensible of his duty enjoins...

George Washington
(Letter to William Pearce, September 23, 1793)

5. I think it would be no unsatisfactory experiment to fat one bullock altogether with Potatoes; another, altogether with Indian meal; and third with a mixture of both: keeping an exact account of the time they are fattening, and what is eaten of each, and of hay, by the different steers; that a judgement may be formed of the best and least expensive mode of stall feeding beef for market, or for my own use.

George Washington
(Letter to William Pearce, December 7, 1794)

6. No wheat that has ever yet fallen under my observation, exceeds the White which some years ago I cultivated extensively; but which, from inattention during my absence from home of almost nine years has got mixed or degenerated as scarcely to retain any of its original characteristic properties. But if the march of the Hessian Fly, Southerly, cannot be arrested. . .this White Wheat must yield the palm to the yellow bearded, which alone, it seems, is able to resist the deprivations of that destructive insect. This makes your present of it to me more valuable. It shall be cultivated with care.

George Washington
(Letter to John Beale Bordley, August 17, 1788)

