HARVESTING WILD RICE

Historical Literacy Guide:

Economics

Wisconsin Historical MUSEUM

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Object Literacy: *Learning from Objects*

The Wisconsin Historical Museum, as part of the Wisconsin Historical Society, has developed the following guide to assist in the teaching of standards for social studies. By focusing on objects, artifacts, maps, photographs and other primary sources from its collection, students will be able to redefine how they learn from objects and from history.

Object-based learning is

- Using a variety of objects as central to the development of lesson concepts
- Utilizing objects through posing and investigating questions
- Utilizing well-thought-out initial questions to stimulate further critical thinking
- Using students' natural interest and inclination for question-posing to guide instruction in all subjects
- Leading students to their own answers by responding to open ended questions and/or returning the students' focus to the object
- Student-directed learning following paths created by the students

Thinking Like a Historian: Rethinking History Instruction and Common Core State Standards Initiative

Thinking Like a Historian: Rethinking History Instruction by Nikki Mandell and Bobbie Malone is a teaching and learning framework that explains the essential elements of history and provides "how-to" examples for building historical literacy in classrooms at all grade levels. With practical examples, engaging and effective lessons and classroom activities that tie to essential questions, *Thinking Like a Historian* provides a framework to enhance and improve teaching and learning history.

Thinking Like a Historian: Rethinking History Instruction (TLH) inquiry-based educational theory provides a common language for educators and students. The theory allows for the educational process to be combined with categories of inquiry which promote historical literacy.

It is the intent of the Wisconsin Historical Museum that this guide serves educators and students in providing object-based lessons to be used after visiting and experiencing the museum on a field trip. Our field trips support *Common Core English Language Arts Standards* for Reading: Informational Text and Speaking & Listening standards as well as CCSS for English Language Arts & Literacy in History/Social Studies.

Educators should use this guide as a post-museum visit activity. It will continue to challenge students to "Think Like a Historian" by encouraging them to think critically, make personal connections with history, and to evaluate information by asking "why", "how", and most importantly, "How do you know?"

TLH CATEGORIES

CAUSE AND EFFECT

CHANGE AND CONTINUITY

TURNING POINTS

USING THE PAST

THROUGH THEIR EYES

Background Information

Harvested in the early autumn, wild rice has long been an important commodity to Native Americans, including the Ojibwe, who lived in areas where it grew abundantly. This improvised wild rice threshing machine was made and used by Duane Poupart, Sr., a Lac Du Flambeau Ojibwe. The barrel at the top of the frame, made of PVC pipe closed off at both ends with plywood, allows only a small space at the top through which to insert rice. Once filled, a motor rotates the barrel and the hulled rice then drops out of the lower end of the barrel. Box fans then supply the wind needed to completely separate the grain from the husk.

Machines such as this one save time and energy. The traditional harvest of wild rice could take days or weeks and involved a great deal of manual labor. To harvest the rice, one person would push a canoe slowly through the water in the rice fields, using a forked stick to grip the roots of the rice. The partner ricers, using pairs of wooden sticks, bent the rice stalks over the canoe and knocked the kernels off. Historically, harvesters used a trademark binding to tie together bundles of rice stalks a few weeks before harvest, allowing them to distinguish their property; each family or group only gathered the portion of rice that belonged to them. Gathering the rice would continue through the day until the canoe was full.

Once back to shore, the processing of the rice began by spreading it out on sheets of birchbark or blankets, and cleaning it of twigs, pieces of stalks, small stones, and worms before leaving it to dry in the sun. The rice was then placed in a big iron kettle or galvanized iron washtub and parched over an open fire, where the processor stirred it constantly with a wooden paddle to keep the rice from scorching. This parching process cured the rice and also helped loosen the outer husks.

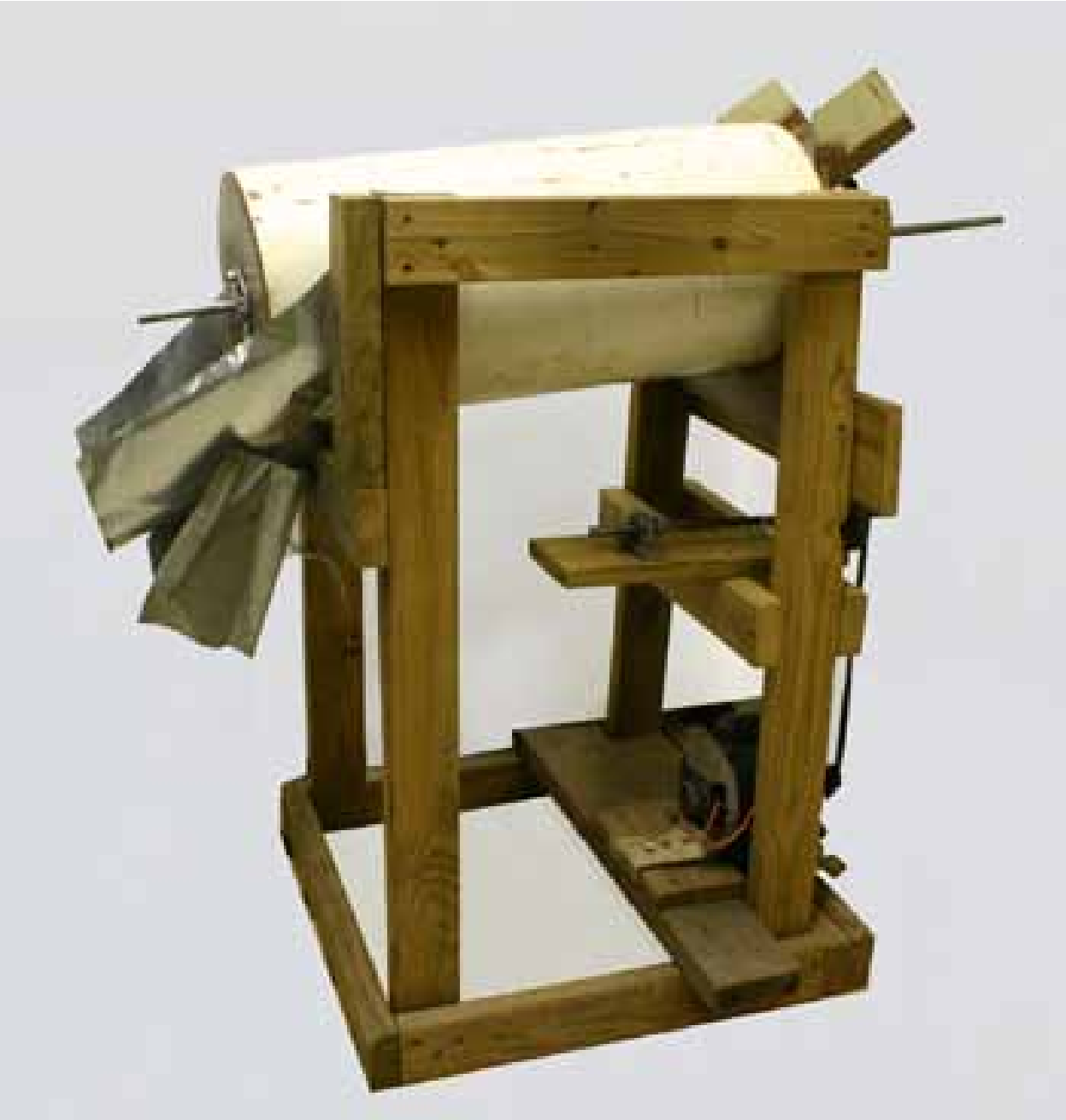
The next step was threshing, jigging, or “dancing the rice”, which further separated the husks from the grains. The rice was placed in a depression in the ground that had been lined with deerskin or into a wooden tub sunk in the ground. The “jigger” was usually a man who wore special moccasins with high cuffs wrapped around the ankles to prevent the rice from getting inside. Stepping into the pit and leaning on a post for support, he tramped on the rice, further loosening it from its husks.

Finally, the processors had to separate the rice grains completely from their husks. They usually accomplished this, with the help of a strong breeze, by putting the rice kernels into large birchbark winnowing trays and then tossing them into the air. The husks blew away and the heavier grain fell back to the bottom of the tray.

While the wild rice harvest has retained its importance in many Indian communities, the traditional harvesting process has evolved over time with mechanization taking over at least two of the most laborious steps: parching and hulling. Hulling machines or threshers, like the one featured here, replaced the arduous task of jigging, which separated the rice from its husks manually. Parched rice is put through a door in a rotating "thresher" that has sticks or pegs inside at many different angles. A belt-driven motor or engine rotates the entire barrel and the weight of the rice falling against the sticks removes the husks. Processors often constructed these homemade inventions with salvaged mechanical parts, so no two are exactly alike.

The increasing popularity of mechanized wild ricing has had effects on traditional Ojibwe culture. The seasonal wild rice harvest is not only a source of sustenance but also has important social aspects. Traditionally, entire communities moved to the lakeshore for several weeks during the fall harvest, which allowed people to visit with family and friends and also created opportunities for courtship. While harvesters spent their days gathering and processing rice, dancing and socializing filled the evening hours. The mechanical processing equipment allows the Ojibwe to process their rice in a fraction of the time, but now they often do so at home rather than by hand at the lakeshore, reducing the traditional opportunities for social interaction.

Images for the Classroom



Wild Rice Thresing Machine *(WHi Museum Object: 1999.61.5). Improvised wild rice threshing machine used on the Lac du Flambeau Reservation, Wisconsin, c. 1990.*

Images for the Classroom

Parching Wild Rice, 1907 *(WHi Image ID: 25055). A Chippewa woman parching wild rice in Lac Vieux Desert. Lac Vieux Desert is a 4200-acre Michigan-Wisconsin boundary water in Vilas County.*

Images for the Classroom

Harvesting Wild Rice, 1941 *(WHi Image ID: 34567). Joe Stoddard of the Chippewa tribe harvests wild rice on the Bad River Indian Reservation.*

Student Activity

Introduce students to wild rice harvesting by using the teacher background information. Then project or share a photocopy with students of **Wild Rice Threshing Machine** (WHi Museum Object: 1999.61.5), **Parching Wild Rice** (WHi Image ID: 25055) and **Harvesting Wild Rice** (WHi Image ID: 34567). Ask students to review the images, brainstorm and write down what they are looking at. Give students plenty of time to respond before introducing the discussion questions.

Teacher-led Student Inquiry and Analysis Questions

1. Using the images, how would the creation of a Wild Rice Threshing Machine change the process of harvesting wild rice?

2. What aspects of the traditional method of harvesting are missing from the mechanized harvest?

3. What possible effect has the change of harvesting from hand to machine had on the community life of the Ojibwe?

4. Why might some Ojibwe people prefer the traditional methods of harvesting wild rice? What is so important about these traditional methods?

5. What other technologies do we use today that change the way we interact with our peers?

Bibliography and Additional Resources

Images and objects shared in this document can be found on the following Wisconsin Historical Society webpages:

Wisconsin Historical Images www.wisconsinhistory.org/whi/

Curators' Favorites www.wisconsinhistory.org/museum/artifacts/

Additional information can be found in:

Indian Nations of Wisconsin: Histories of Endurance and Renewal **by Patty Loew**

Reflection

The Wisconsin Historical Museum is interested in hearing memories of favorite experiences or exhibits. Have students use the next page to illustrate and describe what they enjoyed most. Please return to:

Museum Education
Wisconsin Historical Museum
30 N Carroll Street
Madison, WI 53703

Name _____

Date _____

Teacher _____

Please illustrate your favorite exhibit in the space below.

Please describe why you enjoyed this exhibit the most.