IN THEIR OWN WORDS

250 years of American Agriculture

Preparation: Read Farmer George Plants a Nation or Thomas Jefferson Grows a Nation with the class.

Introduction: Discuss with students why the author Peggy Thomas might have included so many quotations from primary sources in her books. Why are primary sources important? What does a quotation tell us about the person who wrote it, or the subject matter?

In this exercise, students will examine quotations from different founding fathers or key figures in American history. Each quotation addresses agriculture and how farming and the land are key to the foundation of the nation and central to our national identity, i.e. “land of opportunity.”

Directions: Assign a quotation to each student and have them answer the 5 questions on the answer sheet.

1. My quotation is?
2. What does this quote mean to me?
3. What did this quote mean to the author?
4. Has this passage stood the test of time? Why or why not? (i.e. is the language understandable? Are the words or phrases outdated?)
5. Is this quote still relevant to today’s world? Why or why not? (i.e. Is it still true? Are the issues in the quotation still issues we deal with now?)

Extras:

1. Instruct the students to identify any metaphors or similes in their quotation. What are the 2 things being compared? How do they add to or detract from the message?
2. Have the students rewrite the quotation in today’s language.
3. Have each student write their own quotation about the importance of agriculture in our country today.

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George Washington	“Liberty, when it begins to take root, is a plant of rapid growth.”
Thomas Jefferson	“The greatest service which can be rendered any country is to add an useful plant to its culture.”
George Washington	“I hope, some day or another, we shall become a storehouse and granary for the world.”
John Adams	“Let every sluice of knowledge be opened and set a-flowing to the improvement of agriculture.”
James Madison	“Agriculture is the foundation of manufactures, since the productions of nature are the materials of art.”

Thomas Jefferson	“Cultivators of the earth are the most valuable citizens. They are the most vigorous, the most independent, the most virtuous, and they are tied to their country and wedded to it’s liberty and interests by the most lasting bonds.”

George Washington	“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.”

Thomas Jefferson	“Planting a new world with the seeds of just government, will produce a remarkable era in the history of mankind.”

Benjamin Franklin	“There seem to be but three ways for a nation to acquire wealth: war, ...commerce,... and agriculture, which is the only honest way.”

James Madison	“The husbandman is the keystone of the structure of society.”

Daniel Webster	When tillage begins other arts follow. The farmers, therefore, are the founders of human civilization.
Thomas Jefferson	I think our governments will remain virtuous for many centuries; as long as they are chiefly agricultural.
Thomas Jefferson	“Agriculture is our wisest pursuit, because it will in the end contribute most to real wealth, good morals, and happiness
Thomas Jefferson	...we have been in the habit of plouhing in straight rows... and our soil was rapidly running into rivers. We now plough horizontally, following the curvatures of the hills and hollows..... Every furrow thus acts as a reservoir to receive and retain the waters, all of which go to the benefit of the growing plant...
Alexander Hamilton	“In every country ... Agriculture is the most beneficial and productive object of human industry. This position, ... applies with peculiar emphasis to the United States, on account of their immense tracts of fertile territory, uninhabited and unimproved. Nothing can afford so advantageous an employment for capital and labour, as the conversion of this extensive wilderness into cultivated farms. Nothing equally with this, can contribute to the population, strength and real riches of the country.”

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Examining quotations

Name:

Date:

1. My Quotation

2. What does this quote mean to me?

3. What did this quote mean to the author?

4. Has this passage stood the test of time? Why or why not?

5. Is this quote still relevant to today's world? Why or why not?