

Economics and History of Maple:

Background:

Maple has long played a role in West Virginia, but not always in it's economy. In the early days of West Virginia, where many people lived a subsistence lifestyle, meaning they produced most of what they needed for themselves, people used wooden spiles, or taps and buckets to collect sap and large cast iron pots to boil it down to syrup. As people moved away from the subsistence lifestyle, and began to congregate in towns and cities, maple syrup production fell away. In more recent years, people across the state have started producing maple syrup for commercial sale. As these producers have increased their production capacity, a new industry has begun to develop. Producers are looking to buy unprocessed sap, to increase their production of finished maple syrup.

Activities:

New VS Old:

Goal: This activity works to get students to compare and contrast old styles of maple production with newer methods of production. This can be made broader by talking about how these methods reflect larger patterns of historical lifestyles versus modern lifestyles.

Equipment:

- Pictures of older maple sap collection
 - Pictures of modern tubing and maple production
- A Google search will bring up both of these.*

Procedure:

- Have your students look at the pictures and discuss what everyone sees in the pictures.
 - What materials are used?
 - How many trees are tapped?
 - How much sap do they think will be collected, a lot, a little?
 - How much syrup will be made?
- Create a venn diagram or other form of visual display for this compare and contrast.
- Wrap up the lesson by setting it within the larger picture.
 - Why would historically people want to make less maple syrup?
 - Why are modern producers trying to make as much as possible?

Maple Economy:

Goal: This activity aims to have kids explore the trading of goods and services and basic economic concepts of wants and needs.

Equipment:

- Some form of money or token

- There is a downloadable sheet of fake money in Resources.
- A representation of syrup
 - This could be a picture of a bottle
- A representation of sap
 - This could be a picture of a maple leaf

Procedure:

- Start by assigning your students different roles, sap producers, maple producers, and merchants or store owners.
- Outline the trading process. Sap producers want to trade their sap to syrup producers in exchange for money. Syrup producers want to trade their syrup to merchants in exchange for money, and the merchants want the syrup for their stores.
- Give the Syrup producers and Merchants 5 imaginary dollars each.
- Give the sap collectors 5 to 10 representations of sap.
- Instruct the students that 5 sap is equal to one syrup and that syrup is sold for 5 dollars a unit.
- Let the students trade amongst themselves, and see if each role ends up with what they want.
 - Once a syrup producer has 5 saps, they can exchange them with you for 1 syrup.

Link to Standards: Maple can be tied into standards of West Virginia history, past and present lifestyles, and economics. Maple can be used as an example in lessons on economics, needs versus wants, and discussing jobs within the student's local community.