



October Newsletter

Our mission is to increase awareness and understanding of agriculture among New Jersey educators and students. You can learn more on our website newjersey.agclassroom.org.

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Fall is Full of Apples in New Jersey

Finally it's fall, and New Jersey orchards are loaded with apples!

New Jersey ranks 13th in the nation for apple production, growing more than 30 different varieties that total 65 million pounds a year.

Check out our lessons on apples for all grades below, and discover the truth about Johnny Appleseed. *Hint: Nobody ate his apples.*



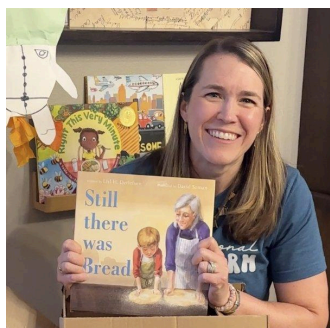
Win a Class Interview With a Real Children's Author *Enter our Contest for Grades 3-5!*

New Jersey Agriculture in the Classroom is pleased to announce a contest to win a Zoom conversation with author Lisl H. Detlefsen about her recent book *Still There Was Bread*. The contest is for grades 3-5.

Lisl Detlefsen is one of our favorite children's authors who writes about agricultural topics, including the books *Time for Cranberries*, *Farm Boots*, and *Right This Very Minute*.

For the contest: ask your students about traditions their families follow that involve food.

Then write a class poem or create a class poster about the students' food traditions.



Email the poem or a closeup photo of the poster to: njagliteracy@gmail.com by October 31.

The contest winner will be decided by NJAITC staff.

****Every student in the winning class will receive a copy of the book *Still There Was Bread*. ****

The Zoom conversation with Lisl Detlefsen will be scheduled in December 2026.

The Story of Wheat

Our Newest NJ Ag in a Box Topic

NJAITC's *NJ Ag in a Box* series gives teachers in grades 3-5 the resources and materials to teach three lessons each season about one of New Jersey's crops. The lessons, which each cover a different academic subject, can be modified for older and younger grade levels.



Our latest ag box is *The Story of Wheat*.

This box includes the book *Still There Was Bread* by Lisl H. Detlefsen, in which a young boy is introduced to his family's multi-generational tradition of baking rolls.

It includes lesson plans for:
Still There Was Bread (language arts)

The Story of Wheat (science), including an NJAITC powerpoint presentation

White or Whole Wheat Bread: Which Is Better for You? (nutrition) including an NJAITC powerpoint presentation

Materials to grow wheat in the classroom -- wheat seeds, soil, and plant pots -- as well as a class set of 30 AgMags on wheat also come in the box.

An NJ Ag Box costs \$30. See all of our different ag box topics and place an order [here](#).

Lessons of the Month

Apple Investigations

Grades K-2

Students use their five senses to investigate different varieties of apples. They brainstorm adjectives to describe the apples, vote on their favorites, and write a poem.

See the entire lesson [here](#).



Grades 3-5

Students test different varieties of apples for nine characteristics and rank them. They graph results of their taste tests, read about the history of apples and learn how they are grown.

See the entire lesson [here](#).

Grades 6-8

Students use their knowledge of genetics to distinguish between sexual and asexual reproduction. They learn how new varieties of apples are developed and propagated to meet consumer demand.



See the entire lesson [here](#).

Grades 9-12

Students distinguish between natural and artificial selection and learn how science and genetics have been used to artificially select apples for specific traits like color, texture, taste, and crispness.

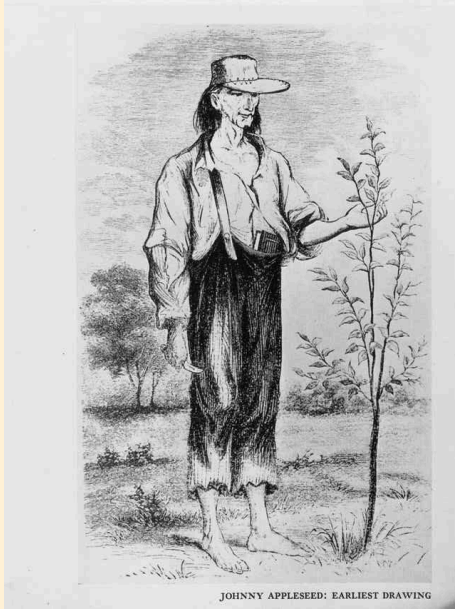
See the entire lesson [here](#).

The Myth of Johnny Appleseed

Nobody ate his apples

There are at least two dozen children's books about Johnny Appleseed, but most don't mention what settlers did with his apples.

That's not surprising when you realize that people on the frontier didn't eat Johnny's apples; they drank them.



JOHNNY APPLESEED: EARLIEST DRAWING

On the frontier, water and milk were often unsanitary. Cider, with its 8% alcohol content, was the most trusted beverage. Even children drank it.

Apples are heterozygous -- they do not grow true to seed. If you plant an apple seed, the resulting plant will not be a copy of its parent. Apple seedlings are genetically different, and usually inferior, to their parents.

Johnny Appleseed grew all his apple trees from seeds. The resulting apples were so bitter and inedible that they were called *spitters*. Apples from his trees were only used to make hard cider.

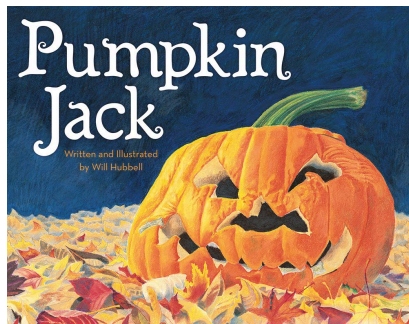
The apples we eat are propagated by grafting. Only by grafting can growers produce trees that are genetically identical to each other.

To learn more, click [here](#) to see our powerpoint presentation on Johnny Appleseed for grades 4 and up.

Library Corner

Disappearing Pumpkins!

October is also the time for pumpkins! But when Halloween is over, don't throw out that pumpkin. Read these two books and do an experiment that will last for months. Give your students the chance to watch how a pumpkin decomposes, one week at a time.



Pumpkin Jack By Will Hubbell

Grades PreK-2
See the entire lesson [here](#).



Rotten Pumpkin, A Rotten Tale in 15 Voices by David M. Schwartz

Grades 3-5
See the entire lesson [here](#).

October Ag Gag

If you have 13 apples
in one hand
and 10 apple pies in the other,
what do you have?

Very big hands

Happy fall, y'all!



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