



Grade 4 Harvesting Demonstration Resource:

A Day in the Life of a 1910 Family Farm at Harvest Time

Imagine a family with a father, a mother, and four children. There are two boys (ages 14 and 6) and two girls (ages 11 and 9). The two girls alternate going to school so that Mother always has good help at home. The youngest boy goes to school every day, but the fourteen-year-old boy stays home to work as part of the threshing (harvesting) crew. The family owns a tractor, threshing machine (separator), three bundle racks, and a team of horses for each rack. The family has five milking cows, two steers, ten pigs, fifty chickens, eight geese, and a few turkeys.

The number of people involved in harvesting depends on how much land is being harvested. The family we are imagining owns six quarter sections of land. To help get all of the land harvested, the family works together with their neighbours. One neighbour plans to bring his two oldest sons to help and three bundle racks with teams of horses to pull them. When the work is done on their farm, the family will go to the neighbour's farm and help thresh their fields. The family also hires 5 more men to join their threshing crew. How many are part of the threshing crew? 11 (three from our family, three neighbours, five hired men).

In good weather, it takes about two days to thresh one quarter section. How many days will it take to do 6 quarter sections? If everything goes right and it does not rain, it will take 12 days. Not every threshing day is the same length. The threshing crew decides how long they will work each day depending on the weather and when it gets too dark (remember – no electric lights on the machines in 1910!).

In the Farm House

4:00 – 5:00 am	In 1910, the job of cooking was often done by women. Mother wakes up about 4:30 am and gets dressed in order to get this big job done in time. She starts the fire and makes a large pot of coffee. The girls also wake up early to fetch water from the well for cooking and for washing hands and faces. Then they set out the wash basin and towels. The two girls and their little brother milk the cows with their father and put the milk through the cream separator. Then the girls and their little brother feed the animals.
5:00 – 6:00 am	Mother prepares breakfast for the threshing crew. She serves foods like fried potatoes, sausage, bacon, toast, porridge, eggs, and homemade bread and jam. Breakfast is ready for the threshing crew by 6:00 am.
6:00 – 7:00 am	After the threshing crew eats and leave for the fields, the girls and their mother clear the table and wash the dishes. Then they eat their breakfast. When all the dishes are done, the girls take the cows to pasture. It's wash



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	day, so they fetch more water from the well for the boiler on the stove. Why?
7:00 – 8:00 am	While Mother waits for the wash water to boil, she prepares the morning lunch. School is a privilege. Remember, the oldest brother isn't going to school so he can help with harvest. The girls also stay home when their help is needed. Mother needs help today, so only one of them is allowed to go to school with her little brother today. The other girl, who is 11 years old stays home to feed the animals, gather eggs, chop wood, and do other outdoor chores. She helps her mother prepare the lunch and wash the family's clothes. The hired men will wash their own clothes on another day.
8:00 – 9:00 am	Mother and the 11-year-old girl wash the clothes and pour the wash water on the garden so no water is wasted. They hang the laundry on the line to dry. Then they start cooking the meat and desserts for the noon meal.
9:00 – 10:00 am	The girl helps Mother make coffee and a snack for the men. Then she hitches an old horse to the buggy and hauls the lunch out to the threshing crew about 9:30 A.M. She waits until all the men have had coffee and something to eat before she returns home. Meanwhile, Mother goes to the garden to gather vegetables for lunch.
10:00 – 11:00 am	The girl comes back from the field around 10:30 am. Her next job is to peel potatoes. She also carries in wood from the wood pile to keep the fire in the stove going. Mother washes the dishes from the morning snack and prepares meat, vegetables, bread, and dessert for lunch.
11:00 am - NOON	Mother and daughter make tea and coffee to go with dinner. The girl sets the table for the threshing crew. She puts food on the table and covers it with tea towels to keep the flies off. After all the meal preparations are done, she puts out the wash basin and towels for the crew to wash their hands and faces.
NOON – 1:00 pm	After the threshing crew has eaten, mother and daughter eat their lunch. Then they wash the dishes before they do any more food preparations for the afternoon. The girl reads a book for a few minutes before continuing with her chores.
1:00 – 2:00 pm	Mother mixes up a cake for supper (from "scratch" – remember no cake mixes in 1910!) and adds jar of Saskatoon berries. She also makes cookies and a big pot of coffee for the threshing crew's afternoon snack.
2:00 – 3:00 pm	The girl fetches more water from the well. Mother gathers vegetables from the garden and starts cooking the roast for supper. Meanwhile, the girl goes back out to the field and serves the threshing crew coffee, sandwiches, cookies and cake.
3:00 – 4:00 pm	After the threshing crew eats their afternoon snack, the girl heads back to the house around 4:00 pm to help her mother with supper.
4:00 – 5:00 pm	Then the girl goes to the pasture to find and bring the cows home. She walks two miles before she finds them all and then two more miles to bring



	them home. She waters and feeds all of the animals, again. Her siblings get home from school and help her finish the outside chores.
5:00 – 6:00 pm	The two girls and the youngest boy milk the cows and put the milk through the separator. They take the cream and milk to the ice house for storage until it is needed at home or sold in town. Then they gather eggs from the hen house. Meanwhile, Mother cooks supper and sweeps the floors.
6:00 – 7:00 pm	The girls shoo the black flies out of the house. They set up the table, then put the food out and cover it with tea towels, again. They place the wash basin and towels outside for the threshing crew, again.
7:00 – 8:00 pm	Finally, the threshing crew comes in from the field at 7:30 pm. The women replenish bowls as the threshing crew eats a supper of meat, vegetables, and desserts. After everyone has eaten, they clear and wash the dishes.
8:00 – 9:00 pm	The girls clean up the kitchen which is messy from making the day's meals. Mother makes more pies and cakes for the next day. Then she brings in the laundry from the clothes line. She folds and puts away the clothes that do not need ironing. She leaves the clothes that need ironing for another day.
9:00 – 10:00 pm	Mother continues food preparations such as baking bread and cakes. The girls go to bed around 10:00 pm so they can get up and do chores in the morning.
10:00 – 11:00 pm	Mother continues baking.
11:00 pm – MIDNIGHT	Mother finishes the baking and cleans the kitchen. She goes to bed at midnight.

In the Fields with the Threshing Crew

4:00 – 5:00 am	Father wakes up at 4:30 am. He is the threshing engineer. The man who operates the separator wakes up and gets dressed too. These men begin to grease the machines, fill them with gas, and get them ready for the day.
5:00 – 6:00 am	The rest of the threshing crew wake up. Drivers feed, water, brush, and curry comb the horses. Then the horses are harnessed and hitched to the bundle racks. The machine operators check and prepare the belts that connect the machines for the day's work. Father, his youngest son, and his daughters go out to the barn to milk the cows.
6:00 – 7:00 am	The threshing crew sit down for breakfast. They eat porridge, bacon, eggs, hash browns, bread and jam, and drink coffee ... always lots of coffee! After breakfast, the threshing crew makes final preparations and leaves the yard about 6:30 am. On the first day, they clear out an area near the grain bin for the threshing machine and tractor.



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7:00 – 8:00 am	The drivers go into the field to gather stooks onto the bundle wagons. Meanwhile, the machine operators set up the separator so the feeder faces into the wind. This way the straw is blown out the back, not towards the operators. The crew line up the tractor and put on the belts. The engineer checks all of the machines one more time and places the grain spout into the bin with the blower turned out. The drivers bring in the first loads of stooks. They position the three racks on each side of the separator. They unload two racks at a time, pitching the stooks into the separator.
8:00 – 9:00 am	The drivers bring the second load of stooks to the machines. After the first load, everyone knows what to do and it is smoother. Each trip takes about one hour from the time they leave the machines to the time they unload and head out again.
9:00 – 10:00 am	While the third load is coming in from the field, they stop for a snack, which is brought out to the field for them so they do not have to stop for long. The crew drink some coffee and have a bite to eat in shifts so that the work can keep going. The drivers get something to eat and drink while the engineer and separator operator unload their stooks.
10:00 – 11:00 am	The threshing crew repeat the cycle of gathering stooks and putting them through the separator. The machine operators watch the machines to make sure nothing goes wrong. If something does go wrong, the machines will have to be shut down immediately for inspection.
11:00 am – NOON	The threshing crew repeat the cycle of gathering stooks and putting them through the separator. When there are only two racks left to unload, the crew head back to the house for dinner.
NOON – 1:00 pm	Before they eat, the drivers feed and water the horses. Then they go in to eat a big meal of meat, potatoes, vegetables, bread, and dessert. Father lets the crew rest and care for their horses until 1:00 pm. Then they return to the field.
1:00 – 2:00 pm	The machine operators finish unloading the last two racks before moving the machines to the next grain bin. They make some minor adjustments to the machines to accommodate any change in wind direction. The men refuel and grease the machines before the drivers arrive with their loads.
2:00 – 3:00 pm	The crew repeat the cycle of gathering stooks and putting them through the separator.
3:00 – 4:00 pm	Around 3:30 pm, an afternoon snack is brought to the field. One of the girls brings coffee, sandwiches, and cakes for the crew. The crew drink some coffee and have a bite to eat but the work keeps going.
4:00 – 5:00 pm	The threshing crew repeat the cycle of gathering stooks and putting them through the separator.



5:00 – 7:00 pm	The threshing crew repeat the cycle of gathering stooks and putting them through the separator.
7:00 – 8:00 pm	About 7:00 pm, it begins to get too dark to thresh. The threshing crew heads for home. The drivers feed, water, unharness, brush, and curry comb the horses. The men wash off the dirt from their hands and faces. Around 7:30 pm, they sit down and eat a big supper.
8:00 – 9:00 pm	After supper, the machine operators refuel, grease, and prepare the machines for tomorrow's work. The drivers check the horses. The hired men fall asleep in the bunk house, straw stack, or oat bin by 9:00 pm. The neighbour goes home with his horses and sons, but will be back in the morning.
9:00 – 10:00 pm	The machine operators continue preparing the machine for tomorrow's work.
11:00 – 12:00 MIDNIGHT	The machine operators go to bed at 11:00 pm.

Classroom Activity Ideas:

1. **Arts Education:** Draw a series of pictures to go with each part of the story.
2. **Social Studies + English Language Arts:** Make a chart. List all of the work that had to be done by the 1910 family in the story in one column and then list the work that needs to be done on a farm today in another. Compare.
3. **English Language Arts:** Have the students keep a journal of a day in their life and compare their schedule to the schedule kept by the four children in the story.
4. **English Language Arts:** Have students choose one of the one-hour periods in the story, then imagine they are one of the children in the story and write a diary entry describing what they would be doing, seeing, thinking, and feeling during that hour.
5. **English Language Art:** Have students write a story about the family in which something good or bad happens which changes the schedule. How does the family react to the situation? How do they resolve the situation with a happy ending?