

Johnny Appleseed Teaching Guide

Prepared By: Mountain State Apple Harvest Festival, Inc.

Grade Level: K–5

Theme: American Folklore, Westward Expansion, Kindness, Nature, and Community

Teacher Background

Johnny Appleseed was the nickname of John Chapman (1774–1845), an American pioneer who traveled through parts of Pennsylvania, Ohio, Indiana, and Illinois planting apple nurseries. While many stories about him have become legends, he was a real person known for his generosity, love of nature, and simple lifestyle.

Facts vs. Folklore

Facts

- His real name was John Chapman.
- He planted apple nurseries.
- He traveled extensively on foot.
- He was known for kindness and generosity.

Folklore

- He randomly scattered apple seeds everywhere.
- He always wore a cooking pot as a hat.
- Every story about his adventures is historically accurate.

Learning Objectives

Students will:

- Identify who was Johnny Appleseed.
- Distinguish between fact and legend.
- Understand the importance of apples and pioneers.
- Explore themes of kindness and environmental stewardship.
- Practice literacy, math, science, and art skills through cross-curricular activities.

Essential Questions

1. Who was Johnny Appleseed?
 2. Why is he remembered today?
 3. What makes someone a folk hero?
 4. How do trees help people and the environment?
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Vocabulary

Word Definition

Pioneer One of the first people to settle an area

Orchard A place where fruit trees are grown

Nursery A place where young plants are grown

Folklore Traditional stories passed down through generations

Settler A person who moves to a new area to live

Seed The part of a plant that grows into a new plant

Read-Aloud Suggestions

Kindergarten–Grade 2

- *Johnny Appleseed* by Steven Kellogg
- *Johnny Appleseed* by Will Moses
- *Johnny Appleseed: My Story* by David L. Harrison

Grades 3–5

- *Johnny Appleseed: The Story of a Legend* by Will Moses.
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Daily Lesson Plan (5 Days)

Day 1: Meet Johnny Appleseed

Mini-Lesson

Read a picture book about Johnny Appleseed.

Discussion

- Was Johnny Appleseed a real person?
- Why did he plant apple trees?

Activity

Create a K-W-L Chart:

- What I Know
- What I Want to Know
- What I Learned

Exit Ticket

Draw one thing you learned.

Day 2: Fact or Folklore?

Mini-Lesson

Discuss the difference between facts and legends.

Activity

Sort cards into:

- FACT
- FOLKLORE

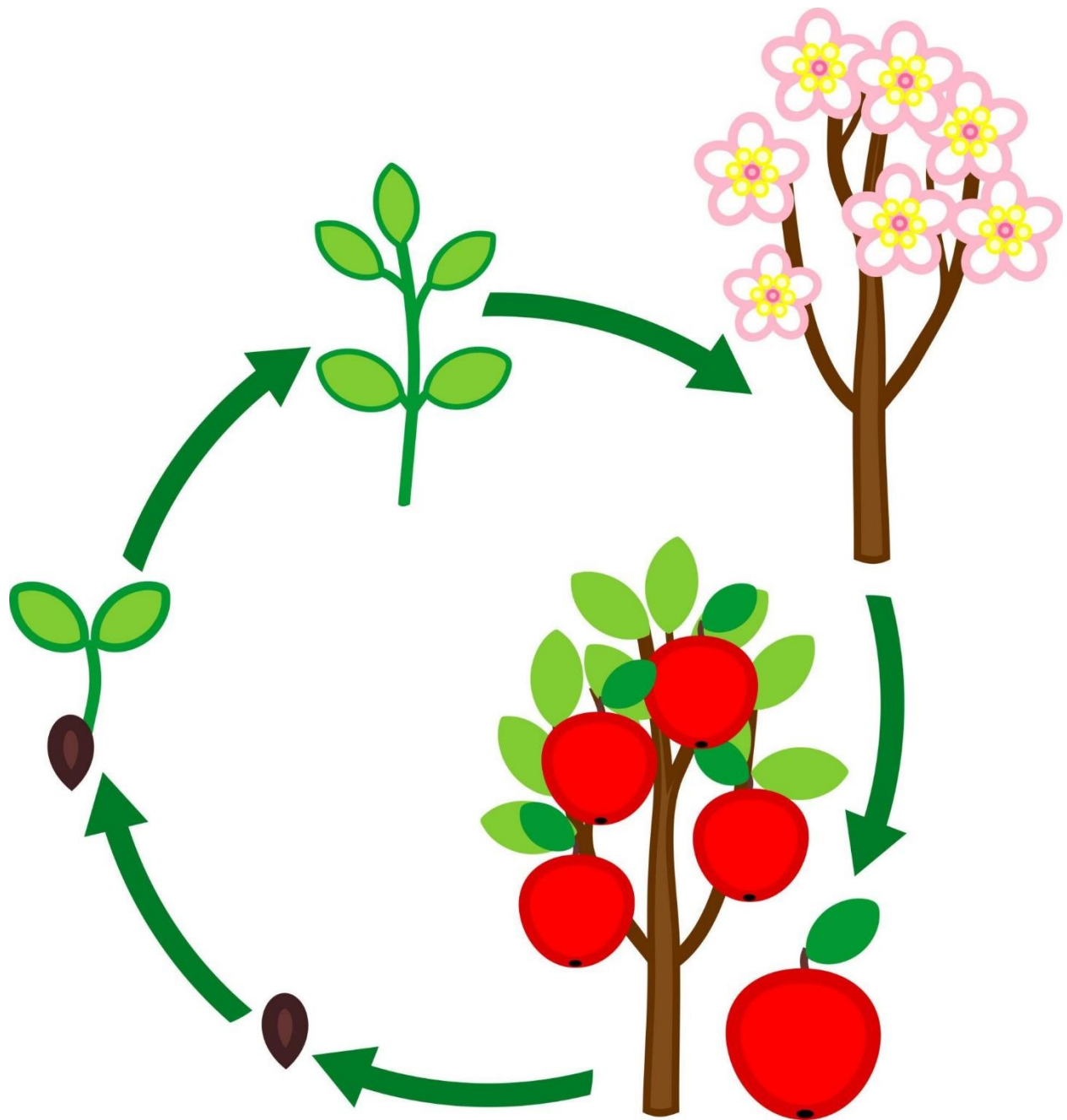
Examples:

- Johnny Appleseed's real name was John Chapman. (Fact)
- He talked to bears every day. (Folklore)

Writing Prompt "If I met Johnny Appleseed, I would ask..."

Day 3: Apple Science









Science Investigation

Cut open apples and examine:

- Seeds
- Stem
- Core
- Skin

Discuss

What does a seed need to grow?

Extension

Plant apple seeds in cups.

Observation Journal

Students draw growth changes.

Day 4: Apple Math

Activities

- Count apple seeds.
- Create apple graphs.
- Measure apples.
- Estimate and compare weights.

Sample Questions

- Which apple had the most seeds?
 - How many more seeds did the largest apple have than the smallest?
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Day 5: Johnny Appleseed Celebration

Art Project

Create a Johnny Appleseed craft:

- Brown paper bag vest
- Construction paper apple tree
- Pot hat (paper version)

Writing

"My Johnny Appleseed Adventure"

Presentation

Students share:

- One fact
 - One lesson they learned
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Cross-Curricular Extensions

Reading

Compare two books about Johnny Appleseed.

Writing

Write a diary entry as Johnny Appleseed.

Science

Study the life cycle of an apple tree.

Social Studies

Map the states where John Chapman traveled.

Art

Create an apple orchard mural.

STEM Challenge

Build an Apple Picker

Materials:

- Craft sticks
- String
- Tape
- Plastic apples or pom-poms

Challenge:

Design a tool that can pick apples without touching them directly.

Assessment Ideas

Formative

- Class discussion
- Exit tickets
- Journal entries

Summative

Students should be able to:

1. Explain who Johnny Appleseed was.
2. Name one fact and one legend.
3. Describe how an apple tree grows.
4. Explain why people remember him today.

Bulletin Board Title

"Johnny Appleseed: Planting Seeds of Kindness"

Display:

- Student apple crafts
- Writing samples
- Apple life cycle diagrams
- Fact vs. Folklore cards

Teacher Tip

Many students already know the Disney version of Johnny Appleseed. Use that familiarity to spark interest, then guide them in comparing the legend to the real life of John Chapman. This creates a natural lesson on distinguishing historical facts from stories passed down through generations.