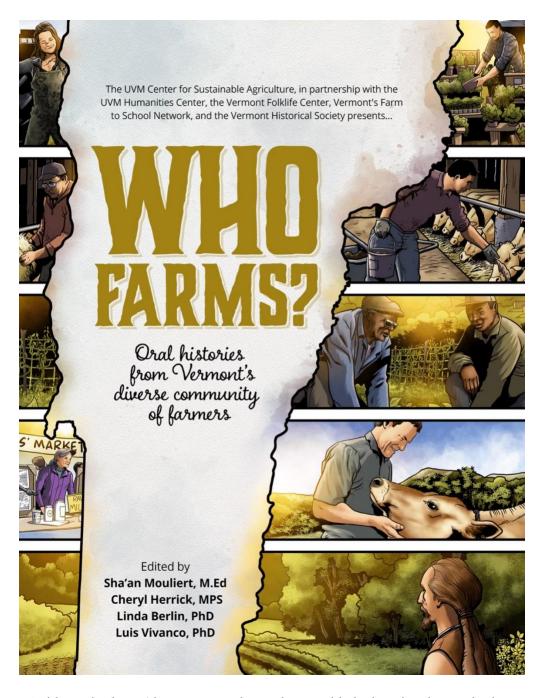
TEACHING GUIDE

For Use With Middle-Grade Learners



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About the Who Farms? Project

We welcome you to the *Who Farms?* project and are glad you are joining us here. Between 2017 and 2022, the "Who Farms?" Project collected stories from culturally-diverse Vermont farmers, with the goal of sharing their stories in comics and videos with middle school-age students learning about themes of agriculture, food, land, and social change in our state. We know that some readers may be interested in how this project came to be, and others may be here simply to engage in stories by and about Vermont farmers. If you are in the second group, you should feel welcome to skip right to the **About this Guide** section.

But if you are interested in how the comics, videos, and this guide came to be, and a little about who the project team is, this section is for you.

In the winter of 2016 into 2017, a group of us began meeting to talk about the possibility of forming a new collaborative to apply for a Creating Humanities Communities grant offered by the National Endowment of the Humanities.

Our initial planning group was led by **Luis Vivanco**, Ph.D., Professor of Anthropology who was then the director of the University of Vermont's Humanities Center. He had issued a call to the rest of UVM campus to consider joining the project, and **Linda Berlin**, Ph.D. and **Cheryl Herrick**, MPS (then) of the UVM Extension Center for Sustainable Agriculture expressed interest in working as partners, and were joined by **Ginger Nickerson**, Ph.D., who had also been an Extension staff member and had engaged in previous work at the intersection of livelihoods and humanities. Through further conversations, the group was joined by **Andy Kolovos**, Ph.D. of the Vermont Folklife Center, **Amanda Gustin**, M.A. of the Vermont Historical Society, and members of the **Vermont Farm to School and Early Childhood Network**.

Through a series of conversations, we conceived of a project that would engage the question of *who farms* in Vermont. As individuals and as a group, we were both disheartened by the tenor of the larger national conversations around identity, experience, belonging and community, and also hopeful that we could help create a space of appreciation and listening by visiting the stories of the people who work on Vermont's agricultural land. We thought it would be exciting and interesting to share those stories via graphic narrative (i.e. comic books) and short video stories. We wanted to share it with other learners, and given the media we were considering, we came to the conclusion that middle-school youth with involvement in Farm-to-School programs would be a good target audience.

After submitting a grant proposal in February of 2017, we were notified in August of that year that it had been funded. The team we spoke with at NEH said they were "over the moon" at what we had proposed, and were excited to work with us. There was a small flurry of national press attention (we wondered if it was because we had proposed that the identity of "the Vermont farmer" was not as monolithic as is sometimes presented), and we started working in earnest.

We carefully considered and recruited a project Advisory Council representing a diversity of experiences in farming, community life and identities, and a diversity of academic disciplines. We contacted educator and racial justice advocate **Sha'an Mouliert**, M.Ed. who agreed to join us as a project co-coordinator along with Cheryl. We confirmed the involvement of UVM's **Across the**

Fence video production team and the availability of Eureka Comics, a comic artist enterprise with particular expertise in educational comics.

We hosted two meetings of the Advisory Council, largely to give the project's team a chance to get to know each other. (This was partly inspired by Cheryl's learning from Mistinguette Smith, one of the leaders of the Black/Land project and her partnership with renowned Indigenous scholar Eve Tuck, and their way of forming generative "contingent collaborations" by building relationship together.) At the second gathering, after inviting the group into a conversation about how to identify and explore antidotes to white supremacy culture that might be likely to show up in the project's expression, we generated a list of values that we each wanted to make sure was alive in our shared work. These included: **Truth, Collaboration, Future-Hope, Comics, Transparency, Heritage, Emergence, Change, Community, Work, Inclusive, Equity, Curiosity**. As project leaders, we revisited these regularly through the years of work in order to remain focused on them.

Working with a small group of Advisors, we identified farmers to approach in order to share their stories. Most were willing, and we soon had identified five stories to seek and then to share. In summer of 2019, we worked with **Becky Gollin**, then of Across the Fence, to film interviews in locations around Vermont. By the end of that summer, we had filmed five interviews with a total of eight farmers.

With the whole collaborative team, we worked to identify themes within each story and consider how those might be explored through the final products. From the initial footage, we created story scripts that expressed the themes we believed were in them. It was a dialogical process in which we sometimes had disagreements (occasionally hard ones), and we sought to challenge ourselves and each other in our assumptions about identity, hierarchy, safety, and privilege. It was slow and humbling work, and we were extremely fortunate to have the tolerance of "the creatives" who had come along for the ride. Around this time, our Across the Fence collaborators realized they no longer had the staffing power to continue as video editors and partners, and we were extremely lucky that project advisor **Myles Jewell** was available to bring his documentary film expertise to help us with the next phases.

Somewhere around this time, the COVID-19 pandemic came our way, with all of the disruptions that we think anyone reading this is likely to be familiar with. Which is to say that much of the project, along with so much else, came grinding to a halt. But besides the changes made to our lives, the pandemic also presented us with a gift of time, and of slowing down to take stock of what the project was for. We regrouped. Instead of planning large events to discuss and then develop the stories, we hosted smaller online groups. Sha'an and Cheryl spent two masked days at the Vermont Historical Society going through archival materials and developing a sense of how modern farming and its issues compare to times past. As a group, we talked a lot.

Along the way, and through conversations with local teachers and other friends and community members, we realized we hadn't yet considered creating a resource specifically for the teachers who we hoped would use these stories in the classroom. And that is when we started to plan this guide that you are now reading. It is our hope that it will help you engage with the stories here, whether you are in a classroom, home or other setting, and whatever the age of your learners.

It has been an honor to be part of this team, and to receive and share these stories. And it is an honor to present them to you now.

About this Guide

Thank you for being here and reading this Guide. Our intention in this project has been to create videos and comics about who farms that are useful and inspiring for students and learners of middle school age, grades 6 through 8. We hope you find this guide helpful in planning out project-related activities that for your classroom, homeschooling, or wherever you find yourself learning.

The purpose of this guide is to:

- Provide a container and an arc for the Who Farms project. This guide brings the whole of the project into a single place, ordering the stories into sequential chapters that explore the historical, present-day, and future contexts of who farms in Vermont.
- Encourage a deeper dive into the farmers' stories presented in the comics and videos.
- Provide activities for students to explore how the people who produce the foods we eat create meaning about their lives, relate to the land, and interact with their communities.

In providing this learning resource, we would like to emphasize that, first and foremost, we hope you will engage with the farmers' stories in ways that advance your particular educational goals. Whether you use every element in this guide in the order they're given, or as background resources to brainstorm some discussion topics and activities of your own, we are eager for you to engage with the heart of this project—the storytellers themselves, through the comics and videos—in creative ways that are relevant to your own context. Our intention has thus been to produce a guide that is flexible and adaptable, for application to formal classrooms, homeschools, and independent learning settings.

If you are seeking formal alignment with current Vermont Education Quality Standards, the comics, videos, and activities can be used to address:

- Global Citizenship and Social Studies, including themes of markets and economics, human-environment interactions, global interconnections, civic engagement, and identity (https://education.vermont.gov/sites/aoe/files/documents/edu-proficiency-based-education-global-citizenship-social-studies.pdf).
- English Language Arts/Literacy, including themes around narrative and story-telling, diverse perspectives, critical thinking, visual literacies, multiple audiences, and representation (https://education.vermont.gov/student-learning/content-areas/english-language-artsliteracy).
- Visual and Performing Arts, especially artistic literacy, visual communication, non-verbal strategies, and varieties of media (https://education.vermont.gov/student-learning/content-areas/visual-and-performing-arts)
- Next Generation Science Standards, such as cross-disciplinary learning, evaluating and communicating evidence, human effects on earth systems, integration of arts with scientific inquiry and communication (https://education.vermont.gov/student-learning/content-areas/science#pog-science-stem)

The opening activities are designed to build a foundation of engagement for supporting students as they learn about who farms in Vermont. We want to acknowledge that engagement about stories representing a range of experiences and identities can be challenging in educational settings, and it is our hope that teachers and families who are visiting these stories can use this engagement as a way

to honor difference, respect stories, and also build awareness of how individual stories can be powerful ways to understand that forces larger than each of us play a significant role in particular experiences.

As a project team we also offer our own learning that stories impact different people in different ways. We know that, because these stories were shared by actual people who actually live in Vermont (or at least did in 2019), it is possible that they will be taught in classrooms with the actual relatives, friends or neighbors of the storytellers. It is our hope that teachers and others who are reading and watching the stories will welcome the chance for rich learning about different experiences, while also being aware that power, privilege, and particular kinds of vulnerability may be present as well – and deserve care and attention.

Lastly, though this project has come to an end in some ways, we hope that the stories and lessons we are sharing will make it useful for many years to come. We are eager to learn from you how the experience of engaging with these stories had an impact in your classroom, any questions you have, and any resources or tips you might like to share back with the project community. Please email us at whofarmsvt@gmail.com with any thoughts or questions, and a member of our team will do their best to respond.

With gratitude for your coming on this learning journey with us,

Cheryl, Sha'an, Linda & Luis Who Farms? Project Leadership Team

Opening Activities

Thinking about the Language We Use

Concept associations:

- 1. Put farming words on chart paper or the board, a screen, etc. Have students list all of the words, terms, and phrases that come to mind when they see each one.
 - a. Possible words: land, community, market, climate change, laws, farmer, food
- 2. Distribute terms and ask students to consider which of these they already know.

Sentence Stems:

1. Give the class a sentence stem. Each student writes a line or more to complete the stem. For example:

Farmers' stories are important because	
Farmers are	
I wonder how farmers	

Collective Poetry:

- 1. Have students put their sentences together to create a collective poem. Try:
 - Reading them aloud as a performance piece
 - Writing responses on sentence strips to be posted in the classroom
 - Posting them all on a shared document
 - Any combination of these!

Considering How We Think About Farmers

How does farming impact your life? *Make a list together...*

How would depict Vermont's diverse farmers? *Create a poster. Draw it, paint it, or make it digitally...*

What would *you* like to learn about farming in Vermont? *Tell a classmate or friend...*

More Resources (accurate as of 12/2022):

- The <u>Vermont Farm to School and Early Childhood Network resources page</u>. A go-to source for curricular inspiration, as well as reports and data about food and education, cooking in schools, climate and food justice, etc.
- Vermont Farm to Plate "Resources and Stories." Stories and reports about what's happening in Vermont food systems.
- "Comic Books and E-Learning." How to integrate comics and graphic novels into learning and the creation of scenario-based activities.

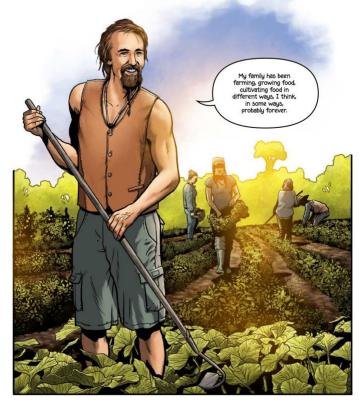
Have you created any great activities related to the materials here?

Would you be willing to share it with other learners?

Please let us know by emailing us at whofarmsvt@gmail.com!

Farmer's Story: John Hunt





Land Acknowledgement, as provided by Chief Don Stevens to the Who Farms project team.

Please respect and protect
N'Dakinna (our land)
while you are here. This
is the land of the
Western Abenaki
people.

Theme: Indigenous Peoples

John Hunt's Story

- Comic: John Hunt

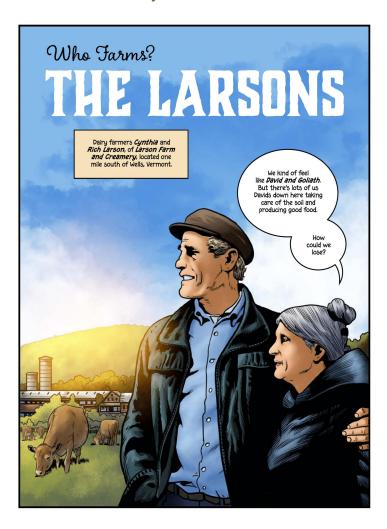
- Video: https://vimeo.com/channels/1811583

- How does John respect and protect the land?
- How have Abenaki adapted to changes in agriculture and land use over time?
- How did John and his family relate to Abenaki culture in their lives?
- John says "native heritage" is still living in contemporary Vermont culture. How so?

- John talks about the difficulties of farming in the video. But he also emphasizes that farming is about loving the land and working with it, "tending a piece of earth you care about." Students can write an ode around these themes, that farming is *both* hard work and love and care.
- **Read or listen** to this podcast by Vermont Public radio program *Brave Little State*: What Is The Status Of The Abenaki Native Americans In Vermont Today? Talk about it. What stood out to you? What do you wonder? What will you do with what you learned?
- Introducing land acknowledgements. Example: Please respect and protect N'Dakinna (our land) while you are here. This is the land of the Western Abenaki people. Source Chief Don Stevens, Nulhegan Band of the Coosuk Abenaki Nation (https://abenakitribe.org/)
- **Discussion**: What is a land acknowledgment? What is its purpose? Do people around you tend to acknowledge the land they're on? Which indigenous group was on the land that you are currently on? (See this map for help answering that.)

- <u>The Vermont Indigenous Heritage Center</u>. Based in Burlington's Intervale, this organization promotes revitalization and preservation of Abenaki cultural heritage.
- <u>"Freedom and Unity: First People."</u> Vermont Historical Society's website "Freedom and Unity" explores state history and cultural diversity, including pages linked here on Abenaki.
- <u>Abenaki "Cultural Use of Land</u>." In 2012, the Nulhegan Abenaki purchased its first tribal land, a 68-acre forest in Barton, Vermont.
- Abenaki Land Link Project. Learn about a collaboration between the Nulhegan Band of the Coosuck Abenaki, Rooted Vermont, and the Northeast Organic Farming Association of Vermont (NOFA) to support Indigenous food sovereignty.
- <u>Vermont Abenaki Artists Association</u>. An organization that supports Abenaki artists and serves the public by connecting it to Abenaki artists and educators.

Farmer's Story: The Larsons



Theme: Dairy Farming in Transition

The Larson's Story

• Comic: <u>Larson Family</u>

• Video: https://vimeo.com/channels/1811583

- What do the Larsons mean that their story as farmers is like "David and Goliath?"
- How have the Larsons adapted to the challenging economics of dairy farming?
- How do the Larsons express their changing relationship with the land?

- Learn more about the Larson farm, in Wells, VT by visiting their website: https://www.larsonfarmvt.com/. Some themes to explore:
 - What is their vision for the farm?
 - o What is A2A2 milk?
 - The geographic context of this story is Rutland County. Learn about how farming in Rutland County has changed over time.
- Free write: The Larsons observe in the video that traditional dairy farming is a 'crazy system.' What do they mean?
- Investigation: This is in important ways a story about resiliency and adaptability to changing economic and environmental conditions. What is "resiliency?" How is it related to/different from/similar to "adaptability?" What are the critical factors involved in each? Share your findings through a visual story or skit.
- Two key items for further **reflection and discussion**:
 - o In this story, the Larsons confronted a number of **decision points** about how to establish their farm and keep it going. What are some of those decision points? How do you think they made decisions around economic, environmental, and family concerns?
 - What are the critical factors—socio-economic privilege, community connections, banking practices, etc.—that helped the Larsons establish and keep their farm going? Is it easier or harder today to achieve these things, and for whom would it be easier or harder? Why?

- Vermont Dairy Farmers Voices. This report compiles interviews with dairy farmers
 from all over Vermont to explore economic and environmental challenges and opportunities
 facing the sector.
- Robert Resnik & Marty Morrissey's "The Vermont Farmer's Song." Vermont folk singers celebrating our farmers.
- Vermont Agriculture Food Safety Guidelines. Learn about how the State of Vermont manages the safety of agricultural products.
- Vermont Farm Health and Safety Coalition. The coalition promotes a stable and healthy farm workforce.

Farmer's Story: The Squiers

Who THE SQUIERS



Theme: Gender Roles, Young Farmers, and Land Access

The Squiers Story

• Comic: Squiers Family

• Video: https://vimeo.com/channels/1811583

- Why did the Squiers get into farming as a young couple?
- What are the specific challenges the Squiers have faced in establishing their farm, and how have they adapted to those challenges?
- The Squiers are conscious about how their division of labor on the farm defies stereotypes of who is 'supposed' to do what on a farm. What are some of those stereotypes?

Creative expression: The Squiers share their joy in what they're doing, expressing their passion and how their commitment to farming affects their whole lives. Express that joy and wholeness through a poem, a drawing, or a skit.

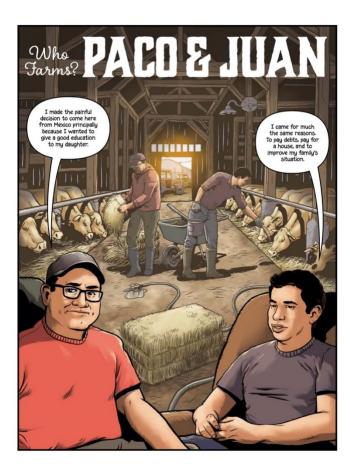
Free write: Stereotyping and prejudging people robs us of a chance to genuinely meet people as individuals. Nearly all of us have biases and stereotypes that we have internalized about other groups, even our own. This includes professions (assuming surgeons are men and teachers are women, etc.) and agriculture (assuming farmers are white men, but migrant workers are Mexicans or Jamaicans, etc.). How do stereotypes shape and affect what it means to be a farmer, and who does specific types of jobs on a farm? Why and how do those stereotypes matter?

Organize the students into small groups, and assign one of the themes below to each group. Ask each group to make a list of how that theme is present in the comic and/or video. What new questions does it raise for them? Have them present their findings the rest of the class.

- The multigenerational farming dimension to this story.
- Interconnections between a farm's ecosystem and healthy family relationships.
- The opportunities and challenges for young people to get into, and keep going in, farming.
- Gender relations in farming.
- The role of family and community relationships in sustaining farms.

- <u>Vermont Women's Agricultural Network.</u> Learn about womens' experiences and reflections on farming life.
- Vermont Folklife Center Interview of Gert Lepine (Audio) (Transcript). Stories
 of farming life with Gert Lepine, who farmed with her sisters in Morristown. Vermont.
 Learn more about Gert Lepine here.
- Vermont Folklife Center Interview about Farming Communities (Audio)
 (<u>Transcript</u>). Vermont farmers share stories about the importance of community relationships.
- Growing Food, Growing Farmers Project. Learn about this Vermont Folklife Center fieldwork project on the grassroots food movement in Vermont.

Farmer's Story: Paco & Juan



Theme: Migrant Laborers

The Paco and Juan Story

• Comic: Paco and Juan

• Video: https://vimeo.com/channels/1811583 – Note: Juan and Paco's faces have been blurred in the video to protect their identities.

- Why did Paco and Juan migrate to the U.S., and how did they end up in a Vermont dairy farm?
- What challenges have they faced as farmworkers and how have they adapted?
- What do Juan and Paco want you to understand about their lives and experiences here?

Read and/or listen to What's It Like To Be A Migrant Worker In Vermont? (Vermont Public article with 34min audio). Generate a list of reactions and questions for further investigation and reflection.

Acquire a copy of El Viaje Mas Caro/A Most Costly Journey, which is a comic book telling the stories of migrant farmworkers in Vermont. Photocopy and circulate individual stories and compare and contrast the themes they examine about migrant farmworker experience.

Organize the students into small groups, and assign one of the themes below to each group. Ask each group to make a list of how that theme is present in the comic and/or video. What new questions does it raise for them? Have them present their findings the rest of the class.

- Costs—financial and emotional costs of migration, effects on worker's bodies, etc.
- Personal sacrifice
- The factors that push and pull individuals to migrate across borders
- Loneliness and social isolation
- The role of immigrants in the Vermont farming economy
- This story is about the hidden laborers producing something that we take for granted.
- Effects of migration on parenting and family life

- Mal Maiz "Historia de un Inmigrante" (Spotify). A song by Vermont-based band about life as an immigrant, sung by its Costa Rican leader.
- Migrant Justice. Statewide organization working to advocate for migrant farmworkers.
- Milk with Dignity Migrant Justice in VT. This 12-minute video examines the
 movement to bring dignified working conditions for Vermont farmworkers. To learn more
 about the campaign see here.
- <u>The Golden Cage Project</u>. An online photography project representing migrant farmworkers lives.

Farmer's Story: Pius and Yohane





Theme: Black People and the Land

The Pius and Yohane Story

• Comic: Puis and Yohane

• Video: https://vimeo.com/channels/1811583

- What do you know, and *not* know, about Vermont's involvement in the resettlement of refugees from other countries?
- What challenges have Pius and Yohane faced in their farming lives? How have they adapted to those challenges?
- Pius and Yohane feel that they don't have good markets to sell in. What can be done?

Free write: Who and what are Pius and Yohane farming for? How is farming connected to their sense of well-being?

Explore racism and segregation in the food system. This <u>article</u> observes that "racism is built into the DNA of the United States' food system." What does the author mean? What proposals do they bring forward to address racism in the food system? This other <u>article</u> explains the relationship between 'structural racism" and the food system. What is 'structural racism, and how is it perpetuated?'

Organize the students into small groups, and assign one of the themes below to each group. Ask each group to make a list of how that theme is present in the comic and/or video. What new questions does it raise for them? Have them present their findings the rest of the class.

- The importance among newcomers to Vermont of connection to land
- Farming for physical and mental health and well-being
- Relations between new farmers and the community
- Social isolation
- Gender roles in farming

- Burundian harvest song class activity. Created by Vermont music educator Betsy Nolan.
- The role of immigrants and refugees in Vermont history:
 - <u>"After the Crossing."</u> A podcast about immigration history of Vermont, from Vermont Historical Society's *Before Your Time* Series.
- Contextualizing Black farmer experiences:
 - o "Black farmers seek to put down new roots in New England." Boston Globe article.
 - o "In Vermont, just 17 of the 7,000 farms are Black-owned. A new grant seeks to expand access." USA Today article.
 - O <u>"Princes and Free Men."</u> A podcast about African-American history in Vermont, from Vermont Historical Society's Before Your Time Series.

- O <u>Daisy Turner's Kin: An African American Family Saga</u>. Oral history of an American family from Africa to Vermont.
- O Jamaica: The Country, the People, and the H-2A Temporary Agricultural Workers Program. Learn about the role of Jamaican farmworkers in Vermont.

Cross-Cutting Themes and Concepts

In engaging with these stories, there were some important themes that were part of each story that farmers shared. We offer these resources and activities to support your learning about those as well.

Farming and Climate Change

Discussion Questions/Writing Prompts/Activities

- Reflect on all the stories. How do students think a changing climate will impact all of the farmers they've learned about?
- Read <u>Marie Audet: Farmers embracing ways to fight climate change</u> about farming in Vermont. After reading, consider how you too can support farmers
- Read <u>Vermont Climate Action Plan- Our Strategies (p21)</u>. Which strategy can you be part of and how?

Learning resources

- Vermont Folklife Center Greening Vermont
- The Potential Impacts of Climate Change on Agriculture in Vermont
- New England Adaptation Survey Report
- A Guide to Solar Energy in Vermont's Working Landscape
- Before Your Time: Talk about the Weather
- Farming in a Changing Climate
- Farming & Climate Change program at the Center for Sustainable Ag.: Farming & Climate Change: New England Farmers Adapt

Farming and the Law

Discussion Questions/Writing Prompts/Activities

- What laws do you know about that affect farmers?
- Do laws affect migrant workers differently?
- How has the law impacted the Larsons? How has it impacted Juan & Paco?
- How have laws impacted your life and the food you eat, or the food you grow?

Learning resources

Learn about the Vermont School of Law's <u>Tuholske Institute for Environmental Field Studies</u> Read about how <u>Vermont School of Law</u> went green

Farming Concepts and Terms

Invite students to pick at least one they don't immediately understand, find its answer, and then write a one-paragraph statement about whether or not it's important to farming in Vermont.

- 1. Agrarian
- 2. Agricultural research
- 3. Agricultural science
- 4. Agriculture
- 5. Agritourism
- 6. Agroecology
- 7. Algae blooms
- 8. Angiosperms
- 9. Compost
- 10. Exports
- 11. Fish farming
- 12. Food sovereignty
- 13. Foraging
- 14. Free range
- 15. Grassroots
- 16. Gymnosperms
- 17. Homestead
- 18. Horticulture
- 19. Hydroponics
- 20. Imports
- 21. Livestock
- 22. Monoculture
- 23. Organic
- 24. Pasteurized
- 25. Permaculture
- 26. Ranching
- 27. Red tide
- 28. Sharecropping
- 29. Social farming
- 30. Social justice farming
- 31. Suburban farming
- 32. Sustainable
- 33. Unceded territory
- 34. Vertical farm
- 35. Vermiculture

Long Term Agriculture-Linked Activities

- Grow something in the room: Plants, apples, beans
- Create a butterfly garden or ant farm
- Cook at home or in class and talk about the ingredients and where they're from
- Cook using only foods from the farmers' market
- Organize an activity like "Jr. Iron Chef" to promote creative work with food
- Make a field trip to a nearby farm

Research/Listening Project: Who Farms in our Community?

As a class, identify and select a farmer in your community and conduct an interview with them to gather new Who Farms? stories. The school/teacher may know a farmer who they want to work with and/or employ Farm-To-School Network at Shelburne Farms.

As a class, generate questions for farmer listening sessions and a consent form for sharing their stories. Support students in scheduling interviews (virtual or in person) and discuss various formats for collecting stories—audio, note-taking, video, photos, etc. It may be helpful to practice an interview as a whole class with one farmer. Or, this whole project could be done as a class going through the process together of designing and implementing an interview with one farmer partner.

The final storytelling can be presented in a variety of formats: podcast, blog, vlog, newspaper, article, poem, essay, play, video, audio, photos, comic, artwork, graphic book, music, spoken word.

Sample interview questions:

- What is the farmer's relationship to the land?
- What is the farmer's relationship to their community?
- How does the farmer bring their product to market?
- How is the farmer impacted by environmental change? Climate change?
- How is the farmer impacted by laws?

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