

Ox-Cart Man

Bennington Museum is looking forward to presenting this program to your class! You may wish to make connections in your classroom to the things your students experience during the program. Below are just a few ideas for pre- and post-program activities that you could do with your students. If you have a great activity idea, and would like to share it with us, please contact Deana Mallory at dmallory@benningtonmuseum.org, or call (802) 447-1571.



Pre-program activities

Rules

If your program takes place at the museum, talk with your students about what rules they might be expected to follow when they get here. We'll talk about this with them, of course, but they could make predictions about what rules we'll ask them to follow, based on what they expect to see and do while they're here.

Back in Time

The story of the Ox-Cart Man takes place during the 1830s. Encourage students to think about life during that time period. Talk about what kinds of work people did, how they did things without electricity, what it was like to be a child, etc.

Map It

The town of Portsmouth, New Hampshire is mentioned in the story of the Ox-Cart Man. Have your students locate Portsmouth on a map. How far is it from your town? Why would Portsmouth have been an important town long ago?

Post-visit Activities

Author Study

Donald Hall wrote several books for children. Share some of this other stories with your class. Use the Internet or the library to learn more about Donald Hall.

75 Main Street
Bennington, VT 05201
Tel. 802-447-1571
Fax 802-442-8305
www.benningtonmuseum.org

The Seasons, Then and Now

Ox-Cart Man takes us through a cycle of activities on a farm, closely related to the changing of the seasons. Have your students make a list of what the Ox-Cart Man and his family did during each of the four seasons. (The story does not directly mention the summer season. Encourage the children to come up with their own ideas about what the family would have done during the summer, as those activities connect to the rest of the story.) Then make another list of what your students and their families do during those seasons today. Each child can make a “Then and Now” book, illustrating the seasonal activities of long ago and today.

Poems and Stories

Ox-Cart Man was first written as a poem, then turned into a story. Read the poem version of *Ox-Cart Man* (attached) to the class. Which version do they like better? Read the poem, *Kicking the Leaves*, to the class. Have the students turn that poem into a picture book like *Ox-Cart Man*.

Poet Laureate

In 2006, Donald Hall was named Poet Laureate. Help your students find out what a Poet Laureate is and who else had been one. Each student can learn about a different poet to create a class book of Poet Laureates. Share your book with other classrooms.

Ox-Cart Man

In October of the year,
he counts potatoes dug from the brown field,
counting the seed, counting
the cellar's portion out,
and bags the rest on the cart's floor.

He packs wool sheared in April, honey
in combs, linen, leather
tanned from deerhide,
and vinegar in a barrel
hooped by hand at the forge's fire.

He walks by his ox's head, ten days
to Portsmouth Market, and sell potatoes,
and the bag that carried potatoes,
flaxseed, birch brooms, maple sugar, goose
feathers, yarn.

When the cart is empty he sells the cart.
When his cart is sold he sells the ox,
harness and yoke, and walks
home, his pockets heavy
with the year's coin for salt and taxes,

and at home by fire's light in November cold
stitches a new harness
for next year's ox in the barn,
and carves the yoke, and saws planks
building the cart again.

Donald Hall

from **Kicking the Leaves**

Each fall in New Hampshire, on the farm
where my mother grew up, a girl in the country,
my grandfather and grandmother
finished the autumn work, taking the last vegetables in
from the cold fields, canning, storing roots and apples
in the cellar under the kitchen. Then my grandfather
raked leaves against the house
as the final chore of autumn.

One November I drove up from college to see them.
We pulled big rakes, as we did when we hayed in summer,
pulling leaves against the granite foundations
around the house, on every side of the house,
and then, to keep them in place, we cut spruce boughs
and laid them across the leaves,
green on red, until the house
was tucked up, ready for snow
that would freeze the leaves in tight, like a stiff skirt.
Then we puffed through the shed door,
taking off boots and overcoats, slapping our hands,
and sat in the kitchen, rocking, and drank
black coffee my grandmother made,
three of us sitting together, silent, in gray November.

Donald Hall from ***Kicking the Leaves*** (1978)