

Johnny Appleseed's Apples

A Mini-Theme Unit from Our Montessori Home

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Johnny Appleseed's Apples

A Note to Parents & Educators

Johnny Appleseed is an incredibly interesting character from American folklore and history. From sleeping in the same log as a mama bear and her cub to walking barefoot most of his life, it's hard to know what was truth and what was legend about the man John Chapman. Even though we can't know for sure all the details of Johnny's life, *Johnny Appleseed's Apples* is a great mini-theme unit to use in your home or classroom to introduce the man and legend of Johnny Appleseed as well as the life cycle of the apple.

September would be a great time to present this theme unit, since in most parts of the country the apple harvest is ripe and Johnny Appleseed's birthday is remembered and celebrated on September 26th. But, of course, any time that works for you is a great opportunity to introduce such a kind and gentle character in our American history.

Johnny Appleseed's Apples is designed to be taught over the course of a week (5 days), though, as always, you are free to adapt it to your students needs. On the next page, you'll find an overview of the daily lessons. Each daily lesson has a corresponding focus from the Montessori environment: history and culture, geography, botany, grace and courtesy.

At the end of each lesson, you'll find a recommended activity or book to read related to the day's lesson. In the Appendix, you'll find a list of resources (free printables, suggested reading, materials), a list of accompanying activities for the theme unit, and a mini-tutorial for using Google Maps to map Johnny Appleseed's travels.

I hope you enjoy this mini-theme unit as much as we do!

Happy Learning,

Jessica Mueller

Author of *Our Montessori Home*

Learn more about the Montessori philosophy, activities, and theme units at:
www.ourmontessorihome.com. You can also follow us on [Facebook](#) and [Pinterest](#).

Johnny Appleseed's Apples

A Mini-Theme Unit from Our Montessori Home

Objective. To learn about the history and legend of Johnny Appleseed (also known as John Chapman), to explore and discover the life cycle of an apple tree, its fruits and parts, as well as to grow in our generosity of others and stewardship of the earth.

Lessons Overview:

Day	Daily Lesson	Focus
1	Who was Johnny Appleseed? When did Johnny live?	History/Culture & Timeline
2	What did Johnny Appleseed do? How does an apple grow?	Botany: Apple Tree Fruit Cycle
3	What are the parts of an apple?	Botany: Parts of an Apple
4	Where did Johnny Appleseed go?	Geography: Map Johnny's Journey
5	What legacy did Johnny Appleseed leave? How do we remember Johnny?	Grace & Courtesy

Mini-Theme Unit, Day 1: *Johnny Appleseed*

Objective: To share the tale of Johnny Appleseed and the man behind the tale, John Chapman.

Lesson 1: Who was Johnny Appleseed? When did Johnny live?

Johnny Appleseed is an American folktale hero. He's best known for walking across the country planting apple trees. He's often shown wearing a pot on his head and walking barefeet. He traveled alone and lived in the great outdoors, some say he was even friends with animals. But who was Johnny Appleseed?

Johnny Appleseed was born as John Chapman on September 26, 1774 in Leominster, Massachusetts. John was born right before the American Revolution. When he was a young child, his father went to fight in the war and his mother and little brother died when he was just a toddler. His father later remarried and John became the oldest of over 10 children!

The Chapman family lived off the land, as many did in those days. John's family made sauce, ciders, butter, and vinegar from the apples they picked. John loved the great outdoors and as soon as he was old enough he left home to travel west. As he went, he'd settle down for a little while befriending Indians and settlers all the while planting apple seeds along the way. Many people were moving west during those days, Johnny Appleseed planted orchards, fields of apple trees in rows, when settlers made their way west they found Johnny's apple trees already growing.

John was known for his kindness and generosity to friends, strangers, and creatures alike. He was a great storyteller and would often entertain children with tales of his wilderness adventures and stories from the Bible. As Johnny grew older, it was harder for him to keep up his work, but still he traveled and planted. One winter, when he was 70 years old, Johnny got sick during a snowstorm in Fort Wayne, Indiana. He found shelter in a settler's cabin and died a few days later. Though Johnny Appleseed died, his legacy still lives on through apple orchards across America.

Activity – Johnny Appleseed Coloring Page

Reading - *The True Tale of Johnny Appleseed* by Margaret Hodges

Mini-Theme Unit, Day 2: *Johnny Appleseed*

Objective: To teach that Johnny Appleseed planted apple orchards as he traveled and to introduce the life cycle of an apple.

Lesson 2: What did Johnny Appleseed do? How does an apple grow?

During his many travels Johnny Appleseed carried apple seeds and planted them throughout the country. When he'd run out of seeds he'd go to a cider press (where they squash apples to make apple cider) to get more seeds.

But how does an apple tree grow?

First, we start with a tiny seed. Remember when you bite into an apple, at the core are tiny black seeds. That's where the apple begins!

You plant the seed in healthy soil with plenty of sunshine and water it regularly. Soon it will grow into a seedling. A seedling is the name we give to a young tree. It will take the seedling a few years to grow strong and big enough to produce apples. When it's ready the tree will grow little buds which will blossom into flowers in the spring and early summer.

Some of the flower blossoms will be pollinated by bees. What does pollinate mean? Flowers produce a yellow powder called pollen, when a bee visits a flower to feed on its nectar this pollen attaches to the bee's face. When the bee flies to the next flower to drink its nectar, the pollen falls off into the flower. That process is what we call pollination.

When a flower is pollinated seeds will begin to grow inside. Because the flower is no longer needed, the flower loses its petals. With the petals gone an apple begins to grow around the seeds.

As fall approaches the apple will grow bigger and bigger. When the fruit is ready, we can pick the apple and enjoy its sweet taste!

Activity – Apple Life Cycle mat & matching objects, Apple Life Cycle 3-part cards

Reading – *The Life Cycle of an Apple* by Ruth Thomson, *One Red Apple* by Harriet Ziefert

Mini-Theme Unit, Day 3: *Johnny Appleseed*

Objective: To introduce the child to the parts of an apple.

Lesson 3: What are the parts of an apple?

If we look at an apple, what do we see? What color is it? Red. Sometimes apples can be green, yellow, or mix of all three colors.

How did the apple hang from the tree? The stem, of course. Do you think the apple had any leaves? Maybe. Now, what does an apple look like on the inside? It's white, maybe a little juicy. When you eat it, what do you find in the middle? The seeds! That's right.

Today we're going to learn the different parts of an apple.

What's the first part of the apple you see? The skin.

When you bite into an apple or cut it open the yellow-white juicy part is called the flesh. This is the part of the apple we eat.

The center of the apple is called the core and inside the core are the apple seeds. Do you remember how the apple seeds got there? They grew from the bee pollinating the apple blossom!

At the top of the apple is a small stalk where the apple once held onto the tree branch.

Activity – Parts of an Apple 3-part cards, Parts of an Apple Book

Reading - *Apples & How They Grow* by Laura Driscoll (or reread *The Life Cycle of an Apple* by Ruth Thomson), *Riddle:* There's a little red house with no windows or doors with a star inside it, what is it? (Answer: An apple.)

Mini-Theme Unit, Day 4: *Johnny Appleseed*

Objective: To teach share how far Johnny Appleseed traveled planting orchards and to map major landmarks along the way.

Lesson 4: Where did Johnny Appleseed go?

Johnny Appleseed was born

Today we're going to see how far Johnny traveled. While we don't know the exact route he traveled or all the places he stopped along the way, we do know where he began and ended his life as Johnny Appleseed and a few significant places along the way.

We're going to use a map of the United States to track Johnny's journey. This is where we do know Johnny Appleseed visited:

- He was born in Leominster, Massachusetts on September 26, 1774.
- By age 6, his family had moved to Longmeadow, Massachusetts.
- Between 19 - 21 years old, John Chapman left home and began to move west.
- It's said he learned his craft in Wilkes-Barre, Pennsylvania.
- Planted his first apple nursery in Brokenstraw Creek, Pennsylvania.
- His time spent among Indians (most likely the Mohicans) was between Venango County, Pennsylvania and the French Creek river, a tributary of the Allegheny River.
- Johnny spent some time near Lake Erie during the War of 1812, most likely near French Creek.
- He continued traveling west, reaching as far as Ohio. When he'd run out of seeds to walk east until he found a cider press.
- In his later years, he continued planting orchards as far west as Indiana.
- In the winter of 1845, Johnny Appleseed died of pneumonia near Fort Wayne, Indiana.

What's so interesting about Johnny's travels is that he didn't have a car, ride a train or a bus, but walked all on foot! (Sometimes he would use a canoe.) In Johnny's day, most people didn't leave 20-30 miles from their home! He was quite the pioneer.

A Note to Parents & Educators: Check the *Appendix* for a pictorial tutorial for mapping Johnny's Journey with Google Maps.

Activity – Map Johnny's Journey using Google Maps or a printable map of the eastern United States.

Reading - *Johnny Appleseed: A Tall Tale* by Steven Kellogg

Mini-Theme Unit, Day 5: *Johnny Appleseed*

Objective: To learn from the legacy of Johnny Appleseed, his kindness to mankind and creatures alike and how he cared for the environment.

Lesson 5: What legacy did Johnny leave?

Johnny Appleseed left quite a legacy of kindness and respect. While we might not know all the details of his life and some stories have grown into tall tales, there is much we can appreciate and learn from how Johnny treated others and his environment.

Here are five lessons we can learn from Johnny Appleseed:

1. **Use What You Have** - Johnny planted his nurseries with seeds cider presses were going to throw away. He often reused old potato sacks to make his clothes. How can you use what you have to make something new?
2. **Share What You Have** - Johnny Appleseed didn't have much, but he did share what he did have. If a family couldn't afford to buy one of his trees he'd give it to them for free. He'd also give books to families he met on his travels. How do you share what you have?
3. **Respect Nature** - Johnny lived at peace with animals and often went out of his way to help them (once he rescued a wolf!), he used plants used for medicine, and respected nature. How can you take care of the plants and animals you meet?
4. **Make Peace Where There is War** - In Johnny's lifetime, people were not always at peace with each other. He lived through the Revolutionary War and the War of 1812, but peace was important to Johnny. He'd often warn both sides of the fight if an attack was planned. How can you live at peace with others?
5. **Take Small Steps** - Johnny traveled far and wide making friends and planting apple trees. He had a goal to provide apple trees for the families who'd move west, but that wasn't goal he could complete in a week or even a few months. Johnny spent years caring for his apple trees traveling hundreds and hundreds of miles. He accomplished his goal seed by seed, deed by deed. What is a goal you have to make your environment a better place? What are some small steps you can take to get there?

Activity – Go apple picking or Make an apple pie to share with family and friends.

Reading - *Seed by Seed: The Legend & Legacy of John "Appleseed" Chapman* by Esmé Raji Codell

Appendix

Resources for Montessori Apple Activities:

[The Life Cycle of an Apple Three-Part Cards](http://thehelpfulgarden.blogspot.com/2011/10/life-cycle-of-apple-nomenclature-and.html), The Helpful Garden* -

<http://thehelpfulgarden.blogspot.com/2011/10/life-cycle-of-apple-nomenclature-and.html>

[The Life Cycle of an Apple Control Chart](http://thehelpfulgarden.blogspot.com/2011/10/life-cycle-of-apple-nomenclature-and.html), The Helpful Garden* -

<http://thehelpfulgarden.blogspot.com/2011/10/life-cycle-of-apple-nomenclature-and.html>

The Life Cycle of an Apple, Objects - The objects we used for our mat were seed, seedling, tree, bud, flower, and apple. We saved a seed from an apple. For the seedling, we picked an oak tree seedling from our backyard. The tree came from our language objects purchased from Montessori Services. The bud was picked from a plant in our yard. The flower belonged to silk floral arrangement. The apple was purchased from Amazon as a set of 15 and were used in other activities as well.

[Parts of an Apple Three-Part Cards](http://thehelpfulgarden.blogspot.com/2012/10/parts-of-fruit-nomenclature-cards-and.html), The Helpful Garden* -

<http://thehelpfulgarden.blogspot.com/2012/10/parts-of-fruit-nomenclature-cards-and.html>

[Three-Part Card Tray](http://www.montessoriservices.com/preparing-the-environment/trays/three-part-tray), Montessori Services -

<http://www.montessoriservices.com/preparing-the-environment/trays/three-part-tray>

[Timeline: Christ Center of History](http://www.montessoriforeveryone.com/assets/PDF/Christ_Center_of_History.pdf), Montessori for Everyone* -

http://www.montessoriforeveryone.com/assets/PDF/Christ_Center_of_History.pdf

[Parts of an Apple Book](http://littlewondersdays.blogspot.com/2011/09/apple-literacy-science-and-friday-fun.html?m=1), Little Wonders' Days* -

<http://littlewondersdays.blogspot.com/2011/09/apple-literacy-science-and-friday-fun.html?m=1>

** Denotes a free printable from the website at the time of publishing.*

Book Recommendations:

Seed by Seed: The Legend and Legacy of John “Appleseed” Chapman, by Esmé Raji Codell

Apples and How They Grow, by Laura Driscoll

The Life Cycle of an Apple, by Ruth Thomson

One Red Apple, by Harriet Ziefert

The True Tale of Johnny Appleseed, by Margaret Hodges

Johnny Appleseed, by Stephen Kellogg

Apples to Oregon, by Deborah Hopkinson & Nancy Carpenter

The Legend of Johnny Appleseed, by Reeve Lindbergh

Ideas for Montessori-Inspired Activities:

Counting Apples (or Seeds)

Spooning Mini Apples

Pouring - Dry, Red & Green Beads

Pouring - Wet, Apple Juice (Could be a part of food preparation)

Life Cycle of an Apple - Matching Objects to Control Chart

Life Cycle of an Apple - Three-Part Cards

Life Cycle of a Fruit - Three Part Cards

Parts of an Apple Book

Sorting Seeds - Use different fruit seeds

Timeline - Find Johnny’s place in history. Use the golden beads to see what year(s) Johnny Appleseed was born or died. Have students find our current year with the golden beads as well, then exchange the beads to see how many years its been since Johnny lived.

Food Preparation Ideas:

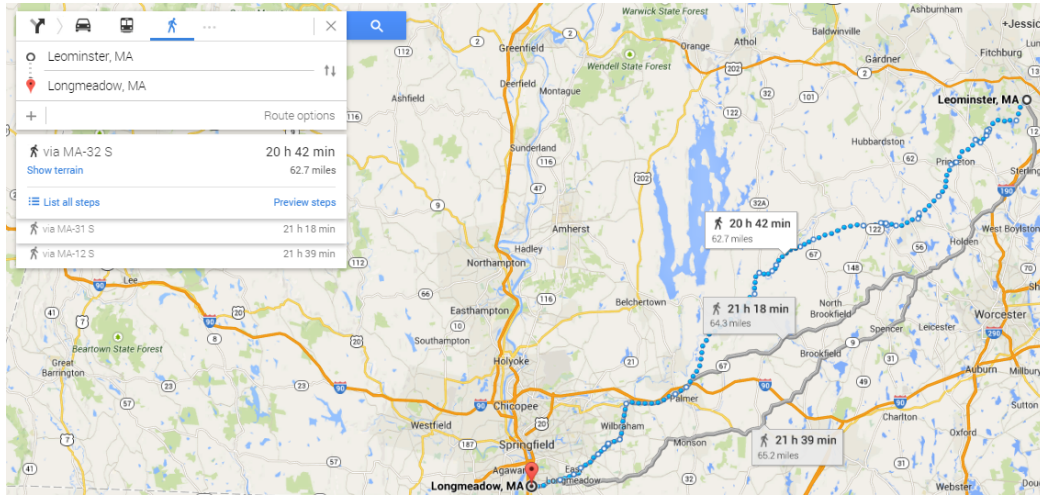
- Slicing an Apple
- Spread Peanut Butter on Apples
- Make Applesauce
- Bake an Apple Pie
- Pouring Apple Juice

Mapping Johnny's Journey: Follow Johnny Appleseed's Travels Using Google Maps

One way to map Johnny's journey would be to use Google Maps.

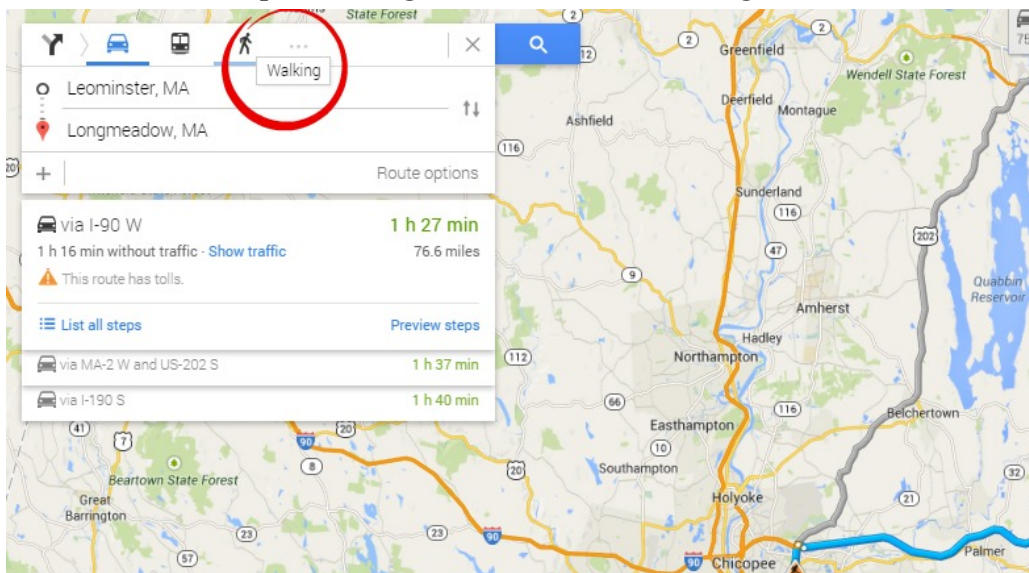
Add a Destination

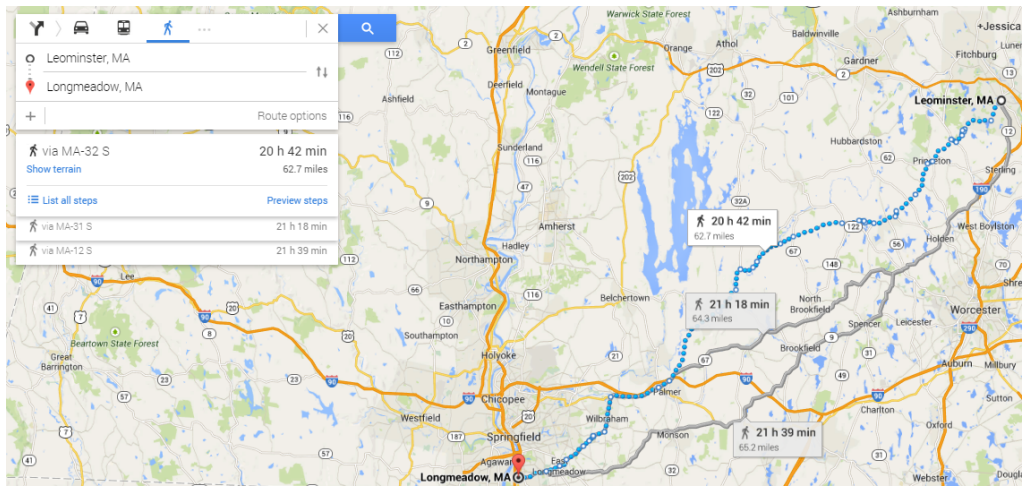
Search for Leominster, Massachusetts, then click 'Directions' and add Longmeadow, Massachusetts as the next destination. You can continue to add destinations by clicking the + and typing in a destination.



Change the Mode of Transportation to Walking

You can also change the mode of transportation from car to walking to see the time it might've taken Johnny to walk. Though, Johnny wouldn't have had our modern roads and routes, it will still give you an overview of the path he might've taken and how long it would take.





Change the Terrain

You can also change the terrain to get a better idea of the changes Johnny might have faced walking through mountains, valleys, alongside creeks and rivers, etc. Use the + and - on the right hand side to zoom in and out to see a closer picture of the terrain.

