

Kids Komer

Growing Up Amish

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What's it like growing up without electricity, without a car, and without television?

Lots of fun is the answer for Lydia, Erma, and Ephraim. The three are the children of Mervin and Sylvia Allgyer.

They are Amish who live in Christiana in Lancaster County. Lydia is 6, Erma is 5, and Ephraim is 3.

If you go to their home, the children come running to eagerly greet visitors. They call, "Hi! Hi!" Smiles spread across their faces and their eyes sparkle with delight. They enjoy having company.

Surprisingly, "Hi!" is about the only word the two youngest children can speak in English.

In their home, as in all Amish homes, the families speak Pennsylvania Dutch instead of English.

When Lydia entered first grade this year, she didn't know how to speak English. At the one-room Amish school she attends, the lessons are taught in English. To learn a new language while learning to write, add, and subtract sounds difficult. But Lydia, like many other Amish children, had no trouble learning English. Within a few months, Lydia could easily talk in English.

However, during recess and lunchtime, the children are expected to talk in Pennsylvania Dutch. The government has a special agreement with the Amish that allows them to retain their culture as long as they are taught the same basic lessons in math, reading, and geography that children in the public school system receive.

Although they do not have electricity, Amish homes are much like those of their English-speaking neighbors. Their house, heated with a woodstove, is warm and cozy. Registers in the upstairs bedrooms allow some of the heat from the downstairs to come up through the opening. That means it isn't freezing upstairs but it is cooler than the bedrooms in most homes that are heated with oil, coal, and electricity.

The beds have lots of blankets and comforters to keep the children warm.

Propane gas is used to operate the cookstove, refrigerator, and hot water heater. That means that Amish homes have running water and a bathroom. Because they live in an older farmhouse, the bathroom only has a small shower. The children take baths in a large Rubbermaid storage box used for a tub.

Although the children do not have cars, they like to go away. In fact, almost every morning they awaken, they ask: "Where are we going today?"

They travel by horse and buggy. The horses used to pull the buggy are like pets. The horses are so tame that the children ride horseback on them

around the fields. Sometimes the children walk underneath the horses bellies. The parents don't want them to do that because some of the newer horses are not as trustworthy as the older horses, which sense they need to be very gentle around children.

The children usually wake up about 6:30 in the morning and go to bed at 8:30 in the evening.

During the day the girls like coloring and workbooks. Although Erma doesn't go to school, she writes her name and all the numbers. She taught herself numbers by copying them off the calendar.

Although many Amish girls like to play with dolls, Erma never cared much for dolls. When she was 3-years-old, Erma broke her wrist. Her dad said that happen because Erma was "monkeyshining" on the couch.

Erma likes helping her mother with chores around the house. She likes to help in the garden and she likes helping to cook.

Amish schools only go to the eighth grade. After that, the

children work at home and go to school for three hours a week until they are 15 years old. From eighth grade until they are 15 years old, the students need to keep a diary that records their daily activities. This is part of the agreement between the Amish and the government in making special exceptions for Amish schooling.

Although the Amish do not go to a church building, they do have church. About 30 families take turns gathering in each other's homes for a Sunday morning church service held every other Sunday.

The parents of the Allgyers said that the Amish church keeps growing larger and larger. When it expands to about 40 to 50 families, the group is divided to form another church. In 1960, the Allgyers said, there were only 30 church districts in the county. Today there are 160.

No phones are allowed inside Amish homes. Instead they have what they call a community phone, which is shared by seven Amish families living in the area. The community phone is

kept in a building outside the house.

The Amish do not allow photographs of themselves or their children to be taken so this story does not have pictures of Lydia, Erma, and Ephraim. If you happen to see Amish children in town, say "Hi" to them, but remember the younger ones usually do not know English.

This isn't a problem if Amish children play with English-speaking children. The Allgyers

say that when English speaking neighbors come to visit, the children have lots of fun playing together and speaking the same language doesn't keep them from understanding each other.

For children, growing up Amish is just like growing up in other homes. The children are happy, they love their parents, their brothers and sisters. They like playing outside and inside. They learn to color, read, and write.

Kids Learn About Germs

UNIVERSITY PARK (Centre Co.)-Pennsylvania schools project, Fight Bac! is part of a nationwide campaign to promote awareness of food safety to prevent incidents of foodborne illness that affect 33,000 Americans each year.

Fight Bac! familiarizes students in Pennsylvania's middle and high schools with key principles of food safety: hand washing, proper cooling and storage, sufficient heating of food during

preparation and avoiding cross contamination.

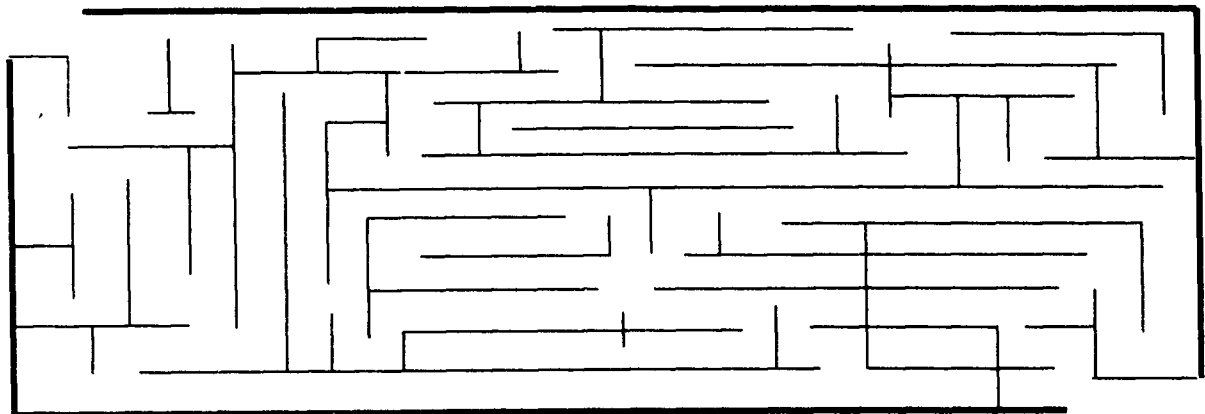
The project provides hands-on activities—for example, the hand-washing lesson incorporates Glow Germ, a fluorescent compound that glows under a black light. Teachers can apply it, shake some students' hands as they enter the room, then turn out the lights to illustrate how germs pass from person to person.



HARVEST FUN FEATURING THE POTATO

The inside scoop on America's favorite vegetable, the potato brought to you by your hometown potato growers in NYS and the National Potato Promotion Board

HELP TURBO 'TATER FIND HIS WAY TO THE FINISH LINE



FINISH LINE

Did You Know?

Potatoes grow under the ground. To harvest them, farmers must first use a machine that digs them up. Then a conveyor belt gently scoops them up & loads them into a truck.

Some cars actually run on potatoes. Companies in Colorado & North Dakota, for example produce ethanol fuel using cull potatoes.

MR Potato Head. According to Playskool Inc., the Mr. Potato Head doll was born in 1952 and was introduced to his wife, Mrs. Potato Head a year later. The two honeymooned in Boise, Idaho and have 12 children. In 1987, Mr. Potato Head quit smoking & gave up his pipe to set a good example for children. This ageless toy has enjoyed a renewed popularity in recent years.

HASH BROWN HUMOR



- Why do POTATOES VACATION ON THE FRENCH RIVIERA?
- WHAT KIND OF POTATOES CATCH THEIR OWN FOOD?
- Did you know you can get ARRIVED FOR GROWING TOO MANY POTATOES?
- Why wouldn't THE REPORTER LEAVE THE MASHED POTATOES ALONE?

1 They like to see THE FRENCH fry. 2 Fish'n Chips 3 It's called exceeding THE SPEED limit. 4 He desperately wanted a SCOOP.

POTATO PICASSOS

Making artwork with potatoes is great, inexpensive fun. Potatoes can be used as stamps. With the help of an adult, children can use a butter knife to cut a potato in half and make a stamp. Draw a geometric shape in the center of the cut edge of the potato - a circle, square, triangle.

Then carefully cut the outside edge off, leaving the raised shape in the middle of the potato half.

It can then be dipped in finger paint and the image stamped onto paper to create one-of-a-kind pictures.

Another fun activity is to use all sorts of edible supplies to make their own Mr. or Mrs. Potato Head creations. Fruits and vegetables make great works of art. Toothpicks can hold things together. They can work in teams to foster cooperative learning skills.