SCARECROWS 2019

PINK PALACE FAMILY OF MUSEUMS
LICHTERMAN NATURE CENTER
LIVELY LEARNING FOR ALL!

Scarecrow Lore to accompany Scarecrow Display (for 3rd Grade & up)

Scarecrows have been used for the last 3,000 years to keep crows, other birds and animals away from crops, from planting time through harvest.

Scarecrows could:
- Be friendly & comical or frightening & scary
- Be alive, carved, stuffed, noisemakers or even chemicals
- Represent the magic of life, death & rebirth
- Represent good or evil--under the influences of witches

Throughout history scarecrows have been made & used by many different cultures around the world.

- **EGYPTIAN** farmers in the fertile Nile Valley placed wooden frames covered in netting in wheat fields and hid to surprise and capture the unsuspecting quail, thus saving their crops but also having quail to eat.

- **GREEK** farmers carved wooden Scarecrows to keep birds from their crops. The grapes, in particular, were abundant and tasty and the birds stayed away when Scarecrows were present.

- **ROMANS** copied the Greek custom of carved scarecrows and in their conquests of Europe carried this tradition to many of the local farmers.

- In **BRITISH ISLES** (during the Great Plague in 1348) landowners had to substitute "SCARECROWS", stuffed sacks with carved turnip or gourd faces propped on poles because of lack of "Bird Scarers". However, children continued to be "Bird Scarers" until the Industrial Revolution.

- **JAPANESE** farmers, (during the same time as the Greeks and Romans were making their carved statues), were making their own type of scarecrows to protect their rice fields. These scarecrows were called "kakashis" ("that which smells bad"). They consisted of bamboo poles, old rags, rancid meat and fish bones. Later, the scarecrows began to take human form and were dressed in raincoats/straw hats and carried bows and arrows

- **ITALIANS** used animal skulls on poles to protect crops from birds and plant diseases.

- **GERMANS** used wooden witches to dissipate the evil spirits of winter & hasten the coming of spring.

- In **AMERICA** (In the colonies and later the States SENECA INDIANS (in what is now New York) soaked corn seeds in a poisonous herb mixture before planting that would make the crows fly in a crazy fashion thus scaring away other birds.

In 1700's the **ATLANTIC COLONIES** placed a bounty on crows--So many crows were killed that another problem arose--Insect population destroying the corn and wheat crops--Bounties stopped and the farmers started making "scarecrows".

Immigrants to America brought a variety of ideas for making 'scarecrows: (1800's--German farmers built human looking scarecrows called "bootzamon" or "bogeyman" and his "wife" was "bootzafrau" or "bogeywife". The body was a wooden cross and the head, a broom or mop top, with a cloth stuffed with straw. The clothing was a shirt, overalls or dress, coat and hat or bonnet. They protected cornfields, strawberry patches and orchards.

At the same time in the **Southwest**, Zuni children held scarecrow contests. They used yucca fibers to make lines hung between cedar poles set every 6-9 feet around the cornfields. Rags animal skins and animal shoulder blades hung from the lines--these scarecrows had movement and sound.

In 1930 almost every farm had at least one scarecrow.
From 1945 to the early 1960's spraying and dusting with the likes of DDT were used to "protect" crops

Scarecrows today incorporate all kinds of fun props such as :
 Whirligigs, resin snakes, plastic owls, water or light sensors, cannons are used; but so are Bird Scarers (in the Middle East and India) & Scarecrows all over the world--and like Zuni children of the past--lots of scarecrow contests!

If you created your own Scarecrow (Discussion Prompts):
> What would it look like?
> What materials would you use?
> How would you go about building your crow?
> Where would your scarecrow live?
> What would it repel?
> What would it attract?

Extension Activity: Draw a picture or a sketch of your scarecrow share it with classmates. Give your scarecrow a name and have a contest for your class to vote on their favorite scarecrow sketch.