

HISTORY CHANNEL CLASSROOM PRESENTS



MODERN MARVELS: THE BUTCHER

A mainstay in food production, whether at the corner shop or in a huge packing plant, butchers play an essential role in the production of food. This episode of *Modern Marvels* traces the evolution from yesteryear's butcher-on-every-corner to today's industrial "disassembly" lines. This episode describes the transformation of the meat industry from the days when each neighborhood seemed to have a butcher to today's meat processing plants. Follow along as historians trace the trade of the butcher, describing the ways the preparation of meat was once a highly skilled and independent aspect of the food process. Today, meat production tends to take place in large factories and on assembly lines. Despite the transformation of the meat industry, this program also tells the story of an artisan butcher who provides customers with hand-picked meats. Viewers will also hear insights from historians and first-person interviews from butchers, who describe their work and significance over time.

CURRICULUM LINKS

The Butcher would be useful for classes on American History, American Culture, Science and Technology, Marketing and Economics. It is appropriate for middle school and high school students.

VOCABULARY

Ask students to define the terms below, or to make their own list of important vocabulary words as they are watching this program.

Protein	Smelt
Expedient	Cutlery
Embalmed	Inedible
Carcass	Differentiate
Marbled	Fragmentary

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. Butchering has been around as long as humans have been carnivores. How did the invention of metal tools influence and change butchering?

2. During the Middle Ages in Europe, butchers were confined to certain areas. Why?
3. Knives are the tools of the butcher's trade. What are the different types of knives butchers use?
4. In 1906, Upton Sinclair wrote *The Jungle*, a powerful and popular novel about the meat packing plants of Chicago. How did *The Jungle* change American history?
5. Butchering and meat selling were local industries until the invention of the refrigerated truck. How did the refrigerated truck change the meat industry from a local industry to a national industry?
6. Butchers were some of the most skilled workers in history. How did the rise of corporations and huge meat processing plants in the 20th century change workers' skills?
7. Steel is the preferred metal for knives because of its strength and flexibility. What gives steel its flexibility?
8. Butchers use band saws to cut through bones. How did the band change the profession? How did butchers cut through bone before the invention of the band saw?
9. Butchering is a dangerous job. What are some of the dangers? How do butchers today minimize these dangers?
10. What is a by-product? What are some of the by-products of meat processing?
11. Discuss the threat of e-coli to the nation's meat supply.
12. How have artisan butchers reclaimed the trade of the butcher? Do you think these kinds of meat production will continue to be popular?

EXTENDED ACTIVITIES

1. What is the healthiest way of eating? What do our bodies need for optimum health and peak performance? Follow this link (<http://www.mypyramid.gov/kids/index.html>) to the US Department of Agriculture's nutritional guideline website. Here students can find activities related to learning about nutrition. They can even play MyPyramid Blast Off Game, an interactive computer game where kids can reach Planet Power by fueling their rocket with food and physical activity. "Fuel" tanks for each food group help students keep track of how their choices fit into MyPyramid.
2. The U.S. Food and Drug Administration provides numerous activities for students for children, teens and educators. You can access these activities at <http://www.cfsan.fda.gov/~dms/educate.html>.

PRIMARY RESOURCES

The Jungle. Follow this link (<http://historymatters.gmu.edu/d/5727>) to the *History Matters* website for an excerpt from Upton Sinclair's famous muckraking novel.

WEBSITES

Nutrition.gov: <http://www.nutrition.gov/index.php?mode>

U.S. Food and Drug Administration <http://www.fda.gov/>

The Chicago Historical Society: The Stockyards
<http://www.chicagohs.org/history/stock.html>

What's Cooking America: History of Hamburgers:
<http://whatscookingamerica.net/History/HamburgerHistory.htm>

The Chicago Stockyards on the Eve of the CIO:
<http://www.kentlaw.edu/ilhs/stkyards.htm>

FURTHER READING

Upton Sinclair, *The Jungle* (Modern Library Classics, 2002)

Shelton Stromquist and Marvin Bergman, *Unionizing the Jungles: Labor and Community in the Twentieth-Century Meat-packing Industry* (University of Iowa Press, 1997)

Eric Schlosser, *Fast Food Nation* (Harper Perennial, 2005)

Horowitz, Roger, *Putting Meat on the American Table: Taste, Technology, Transformation* (The Johns Hopkins University Press, 2005)

Wade, Louise Carroll, *Chicago's Pride: The Stockyards, Packingtown, and Environs in the Nineteenth Century* (University of Illinois Press, 2002)