

# Who are the Amish?

**Grade Level: 4-8**

## Lesson Overview

Learn about Amish traditions and compare them to modern non-Amish traditions of today.

## Student Objectives

1. Understand the values and traditions of the Amish.
2. Compare and contrast Amish and non-Amish people.

## Materials

- ✓ *Amish Home* by Raymond Bial
- ✓ Amish, How Do You Light A Room Without Electricity? (included in lesson)
- ✓ Amish & Illinois Amish Facts (included in lesson)

## Vocabulary

- **Amish** – a group of Protestants who broke away from the Mennonites in the 17th Century. The Amish live in close communities, farm for a living, and do without many modern conveniences, such as telephones, automobiles, and tractors.
- **naphtha** – a petroleum product intermediate between gasoline and benzene, also known as white gasoline.

## Background Information

The Amish occupy an interesting place in history and in today's culture. The book *Amish Home* by Raymond Bial and the fact sheet provided give a good background on the subject. The websites listed in the additional resources section also give great background information, as do many other popular informational websites.

The main goal of Amish society is to live apart from the world, to be disconnected and live more simply. This is an important ideal to make sure students are aware of once they get past the fact that the Amish do not watch television. A removal from the modern world is their choice and the guiding thought behind the rules that they then follow to stay removed. It is also important to note that not all Amish follow the same strictures and guidelines.

## Procedure

1. Read the book *Amish Home* by Raymond Bial (a photo essay on the Illinois Amish) to your students to acquaint them with the ideas, values, and traditions of the Amish.
2. After reading the book, lead a short discussion with the students about the differences between the Amish and non-Amish. Use information from the Student/Teacher Information Sheet: Amish & Illinois Amish Facts to supplement this discussion. Steer the conversation towards the Amish farming lifestyle and the responsibilities for chores that all Amish children have.
3. Read aloud or assign the students to read the included article, Amish, How Do You Light A Room Without Electricity?, and then assign them to write an essay about or make a list of all of the electrical things they come into contact with during their evening called “How Could I Live Without Electricity?!?!”
4. Select one or many students to share their essays/lists with the class and then hold a discussion on the differences between the life of the Amish and non-Amish. Making a Venn diagram of this discussion might be helpful for noting similarities and differences between Amish and non-Amish families.

## Extension Activities

1. The Amish are famous for their cooking. Research and prepare typical Amish friendship bread with your class.
2. Amish quilts are beautiful and a good example of geometry, shape patterns, and measuring. Design your own class quilt.
3. Explore information about Amish in another state.

## Additional Resources

- <https://www.illinoisamish.org/> The mission of the Illinois Amish Heritage Preservation Center is to enhance the preservation, understanding, and appreciation of all aspects of the culture and heritage of the Amish people in Illinois from 1865 to the present.
- <https://www.illinoisamishcountry.com/> This website has tourist and visitor information as well as some great facts about the Illinois Amish in the Arcola/Arthur area.
- <https://lancasterpa.com/amish/> This website has tourist and visitor information as well as some great facts about the Amish in the Lancaster, PA, area.
- <https://people.howstuffworks.com/amish.htm> An in-depth look at the history, background, and traditions of the Amish.

## Standards

### ***Illinois English Language Arts Standards***

CCRA.SL.1 Prepare for and participate effectively in a range of conversations and collaborations with diverse partners, building on others' ideas and expressing their own clearly and persuasively.

CCRA.R.1 Read closely to determine what the text says explicitly and to make logical inferences from it; cite specific textual evidence when writing or speaking to support conclusions drawn from the text.

### ***Illinois Social Science Standards***

SS.EC. 2.4. Describe how goods and services are produced using human, natural, and capital resources (e.g. tools and machines).

SS.G.2.5. Describe how humans have utilized natural resources in the United States.

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These mAGic lessons are designed to bring agriculture to life in your classroom. They address the Illinois Learning Standards in math, science, English language arts and social studies.

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## How Do You Light A Room Without Electricity?

From *Living without Electricity* by Stephen Scott and Kenneth Pellmann

Arthur, Illinois – Supper was over and the kitchen at the Schrock house was almost pitch dark. Levi Schrock took the lamp from the hook above the table and jiggled it slightly to hear if there was enough fuel in the tank. This lamp burned “white gasoline” or naphtha.

Levi put the lamp on the table and attached a small pump – like one used to inflate bicycle tires – to a valve on the base of the lamp. He vigorously pumped a dozen strokes.

Levi detached the pump and flipped a small wire switch on the upper part of the lamp. This action cleared the gas passageway of dirt. Then he turned a black knob a quarter turn to the left and back again. A small amount of gasoline was forced into a narrow tube, called the generator, by the compressed air inside the tank.

Levi quickly lit two large wooden matches at the same time and held the flames to the generator. Their combined heat vaporized the liquid gasoline. After a few seconds two white bags – called mantles – began to flame. An adjustment to the knob extinguished the flames, and the mantles began to radiate with intense light. The lamp gave a slight hissing sound.

Levi turned the knob all the way on. He hung the lamp back on a hook in the middle of a round metal deflector, which protected the ceiling from the heat of the lamp.

Lizzie Schrock and her daughters began clearing the table of dishes and taking them to the sink. Levi put on his coat and hat and grabbed a lantern from a shelf on the porch. This lantern was much the same as the lamp, except that it had only one mantle. The lantern was enclosed in a glass globe and had a metal top with a carrying ring.

Levi pumped the self-contained pump on the lantern and lit it in the same way as the lamp. Twelve-year-old Joe followed his father to the barn.

An additional lamp was lit at the sink while the women washed the dishes. Then Lizzie went to the enclosed porch to her sewing machine. Here she lit another lamp. This one had two mantles at the end of a long pipe extending from the middle of a small propane tank enclosed in a wooden cabinet. The tank was like those used for a gas grill. The lamp was on casters so that it could be rolled from place to place.

The girls and their two youngest brothers occupied themselves under the kitchen light with games and projects. Levi and Joe returned after doing the chores and joined the rest of the family.

The clock struck nine, signaling the time for the family to settle down for the night. After the evening prayer the two oldest children, Joe and Rachel, took flashlights and led their brothers and sisters upstairs to the bedrooms.

Rachel entered the girl's room and directed the beam of the flashlight to a lamp on a table beside the bed. She took the glass chimney from the lamp and got a wooden match from a small container. After striking the match, she held the flame to the bit of kerosene-soaked wick protruding above the brass fixture. This lamp was not nearly so bright as the pressurized mantle lamp, and its light was yellowish.

Rachel put the chimney back on the lamp and adjusted the wick with a small knob so that the flame was neither too low nor too high. If the flame were too high, it would smoke.

The younger girls snuggled into bed in the unheated room, but Rachel spent a few minutes reading and writing before blowing out the light.

# Amish & Illinois Amish Facts

## General Amish Facts

1. The Amish faith had its start in Switzerland and was founded by Jakob Ammon. He and a small number of people became dissatisfied with the worldliness of the parent Mennonite Church. It was their wish to live a more strict and simple life; therefore, they formed together as a group who rejected wars, materialism, and frivolity. Early Mennonites and Amish came to America to seek religious freedom in 1632. They settled in Pennsylvania and were divided into two groups. The “Church Amish” favored a central church building; the other group known as “House Amish” favored holding services in a home.
2. The charter of Amish life requires members to limit their occupation to farming or closely associated activity such as operating a sawmill, carpentry, or masonry work.
3. The Amish believe that they should not dress and behave like the world. They are also forbidden from marrying a non-Amish person or from being in business partnership with an outsider.
4. The Amish are forbidden to take part in violence and war.
5. The most common rules across the United States for the Amish are the following
  - a. No electricity.
  - b. No telephones.
  - c. No central-heating systems.
  - d. No automobiles.
  - e. No tractors with inflatable tires.
6. The following things are the most common requirements of being Amish:
  - a. The Amish require beards (but not mustaches) for all married men.
  - b. Long hair for women & men.
  - c. Most Amish use hooks-and-eyes on dress coats instead of buttons.
  - d. Horses are to be used for travel.
  - e. The Amish do not believe in formal education beyond the elementary grades.

## Illinois Amish Facts (taken from <https://www.illinoisamishcountry.com>)

1. One of the largest Amish settlements in Illinois is in the Arthur/Arcola area.
2. The Amish in Arthur are “House Amish.” They hold their church services in their homes.
3. The first Amish family came to the Arthur/Arcola area in 1865.
4. There are approximately 3500 Amish in the Arthur/Arcola area.
5. An average Amish family has six children.
6. When the young people are married, they are often given a parcel of land by one of the fathers. The young couple will make their living from this land.
7. An average Amish farm consists of approximately 80 acres. Their main crops are wheat, oats, clover, and corn.