

Johnny Appleseed

Analyzing Fact & Fiction



Directions: Read the following passages about Johnny Appleseed and answer the questions.

John Chapman (1774-1845) – American pioneer, nurseryman, folklore legend.

Folklore

Johnny Appleseed was a hermit and a wanderer, who was welcomed wherever he went in the Ohio territory. Everyone loved him, in spite of his unkempt appearance. He always carried a sack full of apple seeds to plant, and walked barefoot all-year round. He knew the frontier woods better than anyone. Even the Indians respected Johnny Appleseed for his willpower.

People gave him the nickname “Johnny Appleseed” because he introduced and planted apple trees throughout the American Midwest.

Johnny took his training as a nurseryman under Mr. Crawford, who inspired him to plant apple trees. “How wonderful it would be if there are apple trees everywhere for everyone,” Johnny thought. He decided to fulfill his wish.

Johnny left his home with a cooking pot on his head and an old coffee sack filled with apple seeds. The kind-hearted Johnny wanted everyone to eat apples. Whenever he found a suitable place, he planted apple seeds. “There will be enough apples for everybody; no one will die of hunger.”

Historical Perspective

Johnny Appleseed was said to be a barefoot wanderer with a tin pot hat and a sack of apples, leaving apple trees everywhere he went. Appleseed's story was based on a real man. His name was John Chapman, and his real life was far richer and more interesting than his legend.

Frontier law allowed people to lay claim to land by planting 50 apple trees. In his travels through Pennsylvania, Ohio, and Illinois, Johnny planted swaths of seeds to begin an orchard and sold them to settlers once the land had grown bountiful. When he died, Johnny owned more than 1,200 acres of land.

Johnny’s apples were small and tart “spitters” (what you would likely do if you bit one). However, this made them ideal for making apple cider. Johnny’s shabby clothing and preference for bare feet was likely due to his religious belief of simple living.

It was not until after his death in 1845 that the legend of Johnny Appleseed really took off. Considering his distinctive look, uncommon views, and contribution to frontier settlement, it is little wonder his legend proved so powerful.

Sources: Wikipedia, Mental Floss

Questions:

1. What are two reasons Johnny planted apple trees? (**2 sentences**) *According to legend, he planted seeds to feed everybody. The historical view states he planted seeds in order to claim land.*
2. What is the difference between the two articles? (**≥3 sentences**) *The legend portrays Johnny planting apple trees for the benefits of others. Only the legend mentions his nurseryman training. The historical view presents him as a businessman, planting trees to claim the land; it also mentions his real name.*
3. Based on the two readings, who was Johnny Appleseed? (**≥3 sentences**) *Combining both articles, John Chapman was a pioneer who planted apples for others' benefit. He also planted trees for future sale to settlers. John was well known in the Midwest for his travels, appearance, and simple living.*
4. Cite two examples showing how the legend is closely related to the actual Johnny. (**2 sentences**) *The legend mentions his travels in the Midwest. It also shows a man living a simple, pioneering lifestyle.*
5. What is the moral or main idea of the Johnny Appleseed legend? (**1 sentence, use “because”**) *The main idea is generosity and kindness, because the legend states he does not want anyone to go hungry.*

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