

## Corn Mosaics

Called “maize” by the Native Americans, corn was a completely new food for the colonists, as it is native only to the Americas. In fact, in the early 1600s the Native Americans introduced the settlers to this crop and taught them how to grow and prepare it. Similar to today, the colonists ate corn both as a vegetable as well as ground it up into a grain. Thus, corn was a very important crop and appeared in multiple ways on many colonial tables. Benjamin Franklin even called it “one of the most agreeable and wholesome grains in the world.”

Today, corn for grain or silage (a mixture of grains that is fed to animals) is raised in nearly every Virginia county. Virginia farmers harvest about 340,000 acres of corn for grain each year! This type of corn, called field or dent corn, is different from what you buy at the grocery store, which is sweet corn. Field corn is grown for animal feed and harvested by large combines. The corn is ground into feed which is fed to cows, chickens, and other animals. Some field corn is also chopped up into silage for cows. Sweet corn is grown for people. There is more sugar in this corn which makes it tasty to eat. This is the type of corn grown in gardens, sold at vegetable stands, or in the market.

While we often think of corn kernels as being white or yellow, the Native Americans grew several different types. Colors included red, white, blue, and black. There are many varieties of corn. Some are better suited for people to eat while others are best for animals. Discuss the types children are familiar with.

### You will need:

Lots of corn kernels  
Different colors of paint (spray paint perhaps)  
Thick paper (cardstock)  
Glue  
Pencils  
Paper plates

### How to:

1. Use a variety colors of corn or paint the kernels different colors before doing this activity so they can be dry when it is time to do with activity.
2. Discuss with children the importance of corn. Sequence the steps in growing and harvesting corn.
3. Display kernels on paper plates, with each color on a separate paper plate. Have paper, glue, and pencils out, as well. Students can get started by coming up in groups to get the materials they need.
4. Explain to students that they are going to make a corn mosaic using the kernels.
5. Students are to draw the picture with a pencil first so they can use it as a guide when they are placing their kernels. Instruct them to put glue on one half of their



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picture and place the kernels, and then put glue on the second half and place the kernels.

6. Explicitly model for the students what they are to do for this activity. Encourage them to create a scene from the book read prior to this activity.

### **Suggested Books:**

*Corn* by Gail Gibbons

*The Corn Grows Ripe* by Dorothy Roads

*Corn is Maize: The Gift of the Indians* by Alik

*Raccoons and Ripe Corn* by Jim Arnosky



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