



# The Farmerettes

How They Kept Ontario  
Growing During the War



## Growing Together!

Literacy Resources for Students



Included in this packet:

Essay: Teen Heroes Who Fed Canada ...	2
Comprehension and Inference .....	4
Making Connections .....	6
Building Vocabulary .....	7
Mapping Farmerette Farms .....	8

*We're Good in Every Classroom!*

Join the Ontario teachers who  
have discovered our resources.



[www.GoodInEveryGrain.ca](http://www.GoodInEveryGrain.ca)

# Teen Heroes Who Fed Canada



The Second World War caused a shortage of farm workers. Boys were able to get other types of work, so teen girls went to work on the farms to fill the gap.



## Mary Gardner, 1944, 1945 Thedford

My unforgettable adventure as an Ontario Farmerette began one day in June 1944 at my Toronto collegiate. A very persuasive gentleman explained to us students that with our young men at war Ontario needed replacement workers for the orchards and farms. As Farmerettes, we would be committed to thirteen weeks of work wherever we were sent and as Farmerettes we would be excused from writing our grade thirteen final exams!!

So fired by pure patriotism, three classmates and I, complete strangers to agriculture, arrived for a season's work in Thedford Ontario. Our wardrobe consisted of brand new Levis. In the 1940's blue jeans were not an all-season all-occasion outfit, but strictly a uniform for work!

We worked in the onion bogs in ground baked by the sun to cement, on hands and knees, weeding.

Still, we accepted the luck of the draw cheerfully and faced the Farmerettes' challenges which were:

**Boredom** – We conquered it by telling each other in detail every movie we had ever seen as we crawled up and down the endless onion rows.



**Raw knees** – You would not believe what we used as knee-pads until our mothers in distant Toronto put aside their many League knitting projects to make us indestructible knee protectors.

**The Clinging Aroma of Onions** – We used every soap and lotion available with no success.

ag.ri.cul.ture;  
the science, the art, or practice of cultivating  
the soil, producing crops, and raising livestock.

We were paid, I think, twenty-five cents per hour for a ten-hour day. From this sum we paid a small amount for room and board. Needless to say, we considered working as a Farmerette to be a wartime volunteer contribution.

But it was not all work. There was free time every evening for recreation – letter-writing, record playing (TV did not exist) and trips to town.

The benefits of Farmeretting were obvious – girls from all over the province met, worked together and made friends. Ontario's garden food supply was maintained, onions and all.



Excerpt from *“Two Summers as a Farmerette”* by Mary Gardener, A1996.89  
*Farmerettes: Wellington County Historical Society Essays, 1996, held at the Wellington County Museum and Archives.*”



### Consider This!

How do you think you could help the country?  
Would you want to?

### Fast Fact

Over 30,000 girls, 16 - 18, became Farmerettes from 1941 - 1952. Most had never worked on a farm, but they learned to drive tractors, plant, harvest, and stook (cut and stack) wheat.



Name: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

# Comprehension and Inference

Read the essay Teen Heroes Who Fed Canada. Then answer each question.

Why was there a need for Farmerettes? (as explained to Mary Gardner at her Toronto collegiate)

---

---

---

---

What was the uniform given to the Farmerettes? How is their 'uniform' used today?

---

---

---

---

What benefits of being a Farmerette does Mary Gardner reference in her writing?

---

---

---

---



Name: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Mary Gardner says she was “fired by true patriotism” to join the Farmerettes. What do you think she means by this statement? Has there ever been a time in your life that you felt “fired” by something? Explain.

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

In the article, Mary mentions that by joining the Farmerette movement, she was excused from writing her Grade 13 exams. Do you think this was a reasonable offering to the young women who joined the movement? Why or why not? Use details from the text and your own ideas to support your answer.

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---



Name: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

# Making Connections

Now that you have read and thought about the article, what connections can you make to the knowledge you already have? Is this story similar to something you have seen on TV or read about online? Does it remind you of an article you have read, a new story you have heard, or a movie you have seen? Do you have a connection to farming? Onions? Share three connections in the chart below.



What the text says:



My Connection:

What the text says:



My Connection:

What the text says:



My Connection:



Name: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

# Building Vocabulary

The essay written by Mary Gardner used some words that you may not use much. Choose two words from the bank below and fill in the chart. Use a dictionary and thesaurus to help you!

Word Bank: persuasive, agriculture, wardrobe, collegiate, recreation, bog

My Word:	Parts of Speech:	I have heard this before:  Yes / No
Definition:		
My Words in a Sentence:		

My Word:	Parts of Speech:	I have heard this before:  Yes / No
Definition:		
My Words in a Sentence:		



Name: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

# Mapping Farmerette Farms

Study the map of Southern Ontario with coordinates and answer the questions.

## Instructions:

1. Colour Lake Huron dark blue. List three coordinates that include Lake Huron. For example, (E,9). Remember that the X axis (horizontal) always comes first!

\_\_\_\_\_

2. Colour (I, 10) light blue. List three coordinates that include (I, 10). For example, (C,3). Remember that the X axis (horizontal) always comes first!

\_\_\_\_\_

3. Colour Lake Ontario a colour of your choice. List three coordinates that include Lake Ontario. For example, (B,7). Remember that the X axis (horizontal) always comes first!

\_\_\_\_\_

4. Choose five different Farmerette farms from the list. Using the listed coordinates, colour and label your chosen farms.

Fenwick (E,4)

Oakville (E,5)

Thedford (B,4)

Huttonville (D,5)

Kingsville (A,2)

Forest (B,4)

Grimsby (E,4)

Vineland (C,3)

## Bonus!

The fruits, vegetables, and grains the Farmerettes harvested were all foods that will grow in Ontario's climate, geography and soil.

The Niagara Region (X,X) is good at growing fruit! Many of the farms that the Farmerettes worked on were in this region. Looking at your map, what geographic characteristics do you notice about the area that might contribute to this?

\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_





Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

# Map of Southwestern Ontario



[www.GoodinEveryGrain.ca](http://www.GoodinEveryGrain.ca)