

Learning Activity

Potatoes – Travel the World

10
minutes

Potatoes can be grown in Iowa today but are not native. This hearty storage crop went on a journey to arrive here.

Materials: Globe

1. Show students a globe. Point out your location and compare it with the Andes mountains of South America. Thousands of years ago, ancestors of the Inca started growing potatoes in the mountains of modern-day Peru. Today potatoes are an important food around the world.
2. Read “The Potato’s Journey Around the World” below. Point out places on the globe. Have students complete the exercises for about 30 seconds until you read the next statement.

The Potato’s Journey Around the World	Movement
For thousands of years, indigenous farmers grew potatoes in the Andes mountains of South America .	Repeat for about 30 seconds Mountain climbers
As people traveled around the world, so did potatoes. Spaniards brought potatoes to Europe in the 1500s.	Fast feet
Potatoes spread throughout Europe .	Gallop in place
European sailors brought potatoes to Asia, Africa, and Australia .	Sway like you are on a ship
Irish immigrants introduced potatoes to the United States in the 1700s.	Star jumps

Variation: Build an obstacle course to simulate the potato’s movements around the world. Mark different areas of the room with signs for the continents and set obstacle course events between them.

Extension: Read the humorous tale *The Potato King* by Christoph Niemann.



Observation



Potatoes

15
minutes

White potatoes grow underground but there are green leaves and stems above ground supporting them.

Materials: Potato plant (or photos), paper, crayons

1. Show students a white potato plant. Encourage them to name and describe the parts of the plant above ground: leaves and stems. What do they look and feel like?
2. Important plant parts exist below ground, too. Point out the roots and potatoes below ground. Potatoes are not roots because they do not suck up water like roots. Instead they are called **tubers**, which provide energy storage for the plant. How do the roots and potatoes look and feel different?
3. Students will fold their paper in half. The top half is “above ground”; the bottom half is “below ground”. Color the sky, sun, and soil to show the different halves.
4. Sketch a potato plant, placing the roots and potatoes below the soil, and the stems and leaves above the soil.
5. Older students can label key parts such as **leaf, stem, root, potato, soil**.
6. Follow up this activity by tasting potatoes.

Extension: Read *Up, Down, and Around* by Katherine Ayres. Think about the different ways plants grow.

Tasting Activity

Potatoes

10
minutes

1. Before passing out any samples, review Brave Tasting Expectations, including “Don’t yuck someone else’s yum” and “We all wait and try together.”
2. Consider involving students in the preparation of the potatoes. Sliced potatoes in an air fryer or oven can make quick fries or chips. Students can add spices to create their own “flavor”.
3. After tasting, ask students to voice their thoughts and “Vote with your thumb.” Thumbs up, to the side, or thumbs down. I like it, it’s okay, or no thank you.