

# Johnny Appleseed – Man or Myth

## National Day Calendar

### The Man vs. The Myth

Feature	The Legend	The History
<b>Appearance</b>	Wore a tin pot as a hat.	Likely wore a felt hat; the "pot" story is largely folk tall-tale.
<b>Method</b>	Scattered seeds randomly.	He was an <b>orchardist</b> . He fenced in plots and sold "nursery" stock.
<b>Motivation</b>	Just loved apples.	He was a missionary for the New Church and used trees to claim land.
<b>The Apples</b>	Sweet, shiny snacks.	Most were "spitters"—small, sour apples used for <b>hard cider</b> .

### Engaging Classroom Ideas

- **The "Spitter" Taste Test:** Bring in various apples (Granny Smith, Red Delicious, and perhaps a wild crabapple). Explain that John's apples weren't for eating raw; they were for cider, which was often safer to drink than water back then.
- **The Law of the Land:** Discuss the "homesteading" laws of the time. To claim land, you often had to plant at least 50 apple or pear trees. Johnny Appleseed was essentially a 19th-century real estate developer!
- **Conservation Connection:** John was a vegetarian and a strict animal lover (he once put out a campfire because mosquitoes were flying into it). This is a great segue into discussing early American conservation efforts.

### Quick "Fun Fact" for the Board

**Did you know?** There is one "authentic" Johnny Appleseed tree still standing today. It's a Rambo Apple tree located in Nova, Ohio, and it is over 175 years old!

### Visualizing the Frontier

To help your students visualize the world John lived in, you might show them how he moved across the map. He wasn't just wandering; he was following the path of the pioneers.

### A Quick Classroom Strategy

If you use the "**Spitter Review**" prompt below, you could have the students "age" their paper by crumpling it up and dipping the edges in tea or coffee to make it look like an authentic 19th-century letter!

# Johnny Appleseed Writing Prompts

## [National Day Classroom](#)

### 1. The "Spitter" Review (Creative / Persuasive)

"Imagine you are a pioneer living in the 1800s. You just met John Chapman, and he sold you a plot of land with 50 small, sour, 'spitter' apples. Write a **letter to a relative back East** explaining why these sour apples are actually more valuable than gold for your survival on the frontier."

### 2. The Man Behind the Tin Pot (Biographical Fiction)

"History tells us that John Chapman was a very kind man who loved animals and the wilderness. Write a **short story** about a day in John's life where he encounters a problem in the woods (like a lost animal or a cold night). How does he solve it without using a weapon or hurting nature?"

### 3. Legend vs. Reality (Journalism)

"You are a reporter for the *Frontier Gazette* in 1840. You have just interviewed John Chapman and discovered he isn't exactly like the stories people tell. Write a **news article** titled 'The Real John Chapman,' comparing the 'Legend' of Johnny Appleseed with the 'Businessman' you met."

