

# MAKING POPCORN

Grades K-2 • 45 minutes



## OBJECTIVES

Students will observe different types of popcorn to make comparisons.

## ESSENTIAL QUESTIONS

What are the three main types of corn?  
Why does popcorn pop?

## MA STATE FRAMEWORK(S)

- 1-LS3-1

## MATERIALS NEEDED

The Popcorn Book by Tomie dePaola.  
[or listen to it read  
<https://youtu.be/CNTSbfsB6ggI>]

## PROCEDURE

### Introduction

7,000 to 10,000 years ago, what we call corn (and much of the world calls maize) was a wild grass. The closest known relative is "teosinte", a wild grass, which scientists say is one one gene different from corn and is corn's closest living non-domesticated relative. The indigenous peoples in Mexico and Central America were the first to grow corn around 8000 years ago. From Mexico maize spread north into the Southwestern United States and south down the coast to Peru. About 1000 years ago, as indigenous people migrated north to the eastern woodlands of present day North America, they brought corn with them. When Columbus made contact with people living in North and South America, corn was a major part of the diet of most native people. But up to this time, people living in Europe did not know about corn. Today we have colorful flint corn, which is mainly used for feed, sweet corn which is what most are used to eating, dent corn, flour corn, pod corn, flint corn, and popcorn. (Popcorn is a flint corn with small hard kernels. When they are heated, natural moisture inside turns to steam. The trapped steam builds up pressure and the kernel explodes to reveal the fluffy air-filled endosperm.)

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## PROCEDURE, cont.

### Warm Up

Discuss popcorn:

- Who eats it?
- Who likes it and why?
- Does anyone dislike popcorn?
- Why does it pop?

If possible, bring in different types of popcorn to show students. Make observations about the differences:

- What colors are the corn?
- What size?
- What does the corn feel like?

### Activity

Read Tommy DePaola's book *The Popcorn Book*

As you read, discuss with students:

- What are the three types of corn described in the book?
- Locate New Mexico and Peru on a map.
- What are some ways that indigenous people popped corn?

## EXTENSIONS and VARIATIONS

Explore the different types of corn and make a corn bulletin board or presentation. Have groups of students research dent corn, flint corn, popcorn, sweet corn, pod corn and flour corn.

Pop some corn and enjoy!