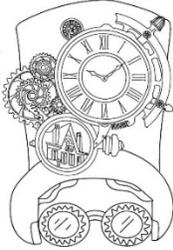


Victorian Time Traveler Kit

Math Activity:

How Much Is a Scruple?



In this activity, we will learn about Victorian measurements and convert a recipe using algebraic operations.

Supplies Needed: recipe worksheet, pencil, eraser

Time: Approximately 30 minutes

An **RECIPE** is a written list of supplies and instructions for baking, cooking, or creating something to eat or drink. The first recipe ever recorded was for a meat pie, written on a stone tablet in Mesopotamia around 17000 BC!

In Victorian times many cookbooks were published and sold as books of “Household Management,” incorporating recipes for the most commonly eaten foods, such as beef, mutton, chicken, bacon, eggs, bread, cheese, oatmeal, potatoes, rice, jam, vegetables in season, and tea.

However, as different spices, seasonings, and flavors became more available with better transportation, recipes became more complex. Frequently, the recipe writers used measurements that are hard to recognize today. These measurements were borrowed from apothecaries, people who gave medical advice and sold medicines and remedies, who were similar to today’s pharmacists. Some measurements that were borrowed included a spoonful, a dram, handful, a scruple, and an ounce, which look very different from today’s measurements. Below, you can see a measurement chart (on left) and shelves of an Victorian apothecary (right).

A handfull is written thus _____ M.ʒ.
 Halfe a handfull thus _____ M.ʒ.
 A little handfull thus _____ P.ʒ.
 A Scruple thus _____ ʒ.ʒ.
 A Dramme thus _____ ʒ.ʒ.
 An ounce thus _____ ʒ.ʒ.
 Halfe an ounce, or halfe a dramme thus _____ ʒ.ʒ. - ʒ.ʒ.
 An ounce and halfe, thus _____ ʒ.ʒ.ʒ.
 A Grayne thus _____ G.ʒ.
 The number of any thing, thus _____ no.ʒ. &c.
 A Pound, is thus _____ l.ʒ.
 So much as shall suffice, thus _____ q.ʒ.
 (Ana) is of either of them.
 xx. Graynes make a Scruple,
 iij. Scruples, make a Dramme,
 viij. Drammes, make an ounce.
 xij. Ounces, make a pound.



We can use math to figure out how to make a Victorian recipe in today’s kitchens. Use the link provided in the download kit for the worksheet.

In the kitchen of Körner's Folly, Aunt Dealy would have been in charge of cooking for the rest of the family. Because she was born into slavery, she was not allowed to read or write (even recipes), but this did not stop her from being an amazing cook. She "cooked by hand," using approximate measurements instead of exact ones, and was known for her corn cakes, her cherry pies, and for her delicious seasonal vegetables. She would have used some of the tools below in her cooking.

The illustration below can be used as a coloring page for younger students.

