What possible connection can an insect, a corn stalk, a tomato vine, and a clover have?

Let’s start with the insect. When the boll weevil invaded the South from Mexico in the late 1800s, it destroyed cotton crops. Since most farmers depended on their cotton, they had to find other crops to grow. Unfortunately, they didn’t know much about growing anything but cotton.

That’s where the corn stalk comes in. Some college educators realized that farmers couldn’t go to school to learn new farming methods. That meant the educators had to go to farmers and teach them. So farm demonstration agents were hired. One crop the agents wanted the farmers to grow was corn. Corn could be eaten by the family, could be fed to the livestock, and could be sold for cash. However, the educators found that the farmers were often not willing to try new farming methods. So they organized Boys’ Corn Clubs to teach the farmers’ sons new farming techniques. The parents would learn from the boys.
The tomato vine entered the scene when girls decided the boys shouldn’t have all the fun. They formed Tomato Canning Clubs and grew tomatoes and other vegetables in their gardens. Then they canned the vegetables and got prizes for the best canning.

Now, the clover. As the Boys’ and Girls’ Clubs became more popular, educators realized there were many other things young people needed to learn to make their homes, farms, and communities better. The Cooperative Extension Service was formed in 1914, and Corn and Tomato Clubs became a part of it. A new club was formed, called 4-H. The four-leaf clover was chosen as the Club emblem. Over the years, the number of projects grew from the original two to about forty. The projects are things all youth can do, not just farm boys and girls.

This year Alabama 4-H is 100 years old, and we’re celebrating! Ask your agent what you can do to help. Meanwhile, here’s a quiz to test your knowledge about 4-H. The scoring section at the end will show how your score measures up.

4-H—What Do You Know?

1. Boys’ Corn Clubs were:
   a. social fraternities for boys
   b. designed to teach better farming methods
   c. popular from 1945 to 1970
   d. never very successful

2. Boys’ Corn Clubs were the forerunners of 4-H in Alabama. What year did they get started?
   a. 1900
   b. 1909
   c. 1918
   d. 1930

3. In what county or counties did the first Boys’ Corn Clubs meet?
   a. Calhoun
   b. Walker
   c. Tuscaloosa
   d. all of these

4. Girls’ Tomato Clubs were important because:
   a. girls learned to grow better gardens
   b. girls learned to can food safely
   c. girls learned to eat a better variety of food
   d. all of these
5. What organization is in charge of 4-H?
   a. County school board
   b. Alabama Cooperative Extension System
   c. State Department of Education
   d. all of these

6. Originally, the 4-H clover had only three leaves. They stood for head, hands, and heart. In 1911, a fourth H was added. What does the fourth H stand for?
   a. health
   b. harmony
   c. home
   d. hustle

7. During its first years, 4-H was mainly concerned with improving agricultural production and food preservation. Today, the major concern is:
   a. improving agriculture
   b. helping young people develop their skills and talents
   c. teaching young people to compete
   d. giving awards

8. How many 4-H members are in Alabama?
   a. approximately 50,000
   b. approximately 55,000
   c. approximately 60,000
   d. approximately 65,000

9. What percentage of Alabama 4-H’ers live in cities?
   a. 37 percent
   b. 50 percent
   c. 90 percent
   d. 10 percent

10. How many volunteer leaders help carry out the 4-H program in Alabama?
    a. approximately 1,000
    b. approximately 1,500
    c. approximately 2,000
    d. approximately 2,500

11. How much does it cost to join 4-H?
    a. nothing
    b. cost varies from club to club
    c. cost varies from county to county
    d. 50 cents per person

12. What awards do Achievement Senior Level II winners receive?
    a. a $25 savings bond
    b. a trip to Montgomery
    c. a buggy
    d. an Alabama State Trophy and trip to National 4-H Congress
Answers
1. b 7. b
2. b 8. b
3. d 9. a
4. d 10. c
5. b 11. a
6. a 12. d

How Do You Rate?
Number correct:
10–12..............Celebrate, EXPERT! You know your 4-H.
7–9..................Not bad, NOVICE; you’re learning.
4–6..................You’re a BEGINNER, right? Not a bad start.
0–3..................4-H has a lot to teach—start to learn today!

Things You Can Do

• Present a skit on the history of 4-H.
• Make an exhibit or bulletin board about the history of 4-H.
• Try to locate a senior citizen who was a member of the Corn Club or Tomato Club. Interview the person about his or her club experiences.
• Write a history of 4-H in your community. Describe life in the early 1900s. Include drawings of what your community looked like then.
• Trace a 4-H family tree back as far as you can. Tell who was a 4-H’er in each generation, what they achieved, and so on.

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For more information, call your county Extension office. Look in your telephone directory under your county’s name to find the number.

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