**Student Handout 3**

**Natural Gas and the Fayetteville Shale**

**An In-Depth Study**

**Name \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_Date\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_**

**Words to watch for in your research:**

* Command of porosity
* Permeability
* Reservoir rock
* Cap rock
* Conventional drilling methods

1. **Background.** There is much talk about the Fayetteville Shale in our region. So much so, that one would think it was a newly discovered mega-source of natural gas that could sustain our country’s needs for decades. In reality, the Fayetteville Shale has been known a gas reservoir for more than 75 years. In the late 1800s, natural gas was discovered in shale in Arkansas. Natural Gas was first produced in Arkansas in 1889. By the beginning of the twentieth century, oil was discovered in Union County. Today 25 counties in Arkansas produce oil or natural gas.
2. Many residents in Arkansas have private water wells but imagine having your own natural gas well. Describe the concerns as well as the benefits of having your own natural gas well. \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_
3. **Fayetteville Shale.** The Fayetteville Shale is an unconventional natural gas reservoir located on the Arkansas side of the Arkoma Basin, ranging in thickness from 50 to 550 feet and ranging in depth from 1,500 to 6,500 feet. The shale is a Mississippian-age shale that is the geologic equivalent of the Caney Shale found on the Oklahoma side of the Arkoma Basin and the Barnett Shale found in north Texas. The formation holds [natural gas](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Natural_gas) in a fine-grained rock matrix which requires [hydraulic fracturing](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Hydraulic_fracturing) to release the gas. This process became cost-effective in some shale such as the Fayetteville after years of experimentation in the [Barnett Shale](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Barnett_Shale) in [North Texas](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/North_Texas), especially when combined with [horizontal drilling](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Directional_drilling).
4. To better understand the shale formation, research the type of rock in the Fayetteville Shale and give a short synopsis of it

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1. In conventional reservoirs of fluids (groundwater, crude oil, natural gas), the fluid resides in rocks that are both *porous* and *permeable*. Review these terms and give an example of a sedimentary rock that is porous but not permeable. \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_
2. What is the average grain size of shale? \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_
3. Would the intergranular pore space of shale be larger or smaller than intergranular pore space of sandstone? Justify your response. \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

**III. Shale as a reservoir rock.** Black, organic-rich shale is a *conventional* source rock for crude oil and natural gas but an *unconventional* reservoir rock. Crude oil and natural gas form from a carbon-rich source at depth then, due to their lower density compared to the surrounding rock, the fluids rise up and accumulate in porous and permeable rock (a reservoir) that is capped by an impermeable layer. The impermeable cap prevents the accumulated oil and/or gas to be dispersed through the crust. In conventional exploration, deep wells are drilled through the cap and accumulated crude oil and/or natural gas is extracted from the reservoir.

1. Why would shale, like the Fayetteville, be considered an unconventional reservoir for natural gas? \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

**IV.** The **push to explore and develop the Fayetteville shale.** Rising natural gas prices during the turn of the current century coupled with technological advances spurred interest in the Fayetteville shale in Arkansas. Although the thickness of the Fayetteville shale is greater in some areas the depth to the shale is also greater. Most of the exploratory and development gas wells in Arkansas are drilled to depths ranging between 3,000 and 4,000 ft.

1. If it costs a gas drilling company about $150 per foot to drill a vertical gas well, how much does it cost to drill a 4,000 ft. vertical well?
2. An average vertical gas well might produce 45,000 cubic feet per day. If the wellhead (top of the well before it flows into a pipeline for distribution) price for natural gas is $7.50 per thousand cubic feet, how many years will it take a gas company to recover its cost to drill a 7,000 ft well?

**V. Horizontal drilling and hydraulic fracturing.** New drilling and stimulating techniques have made the Fayetteville shale in Arkansas a viable target for gas extraction. Horizontal drilling allows a vertical well to turn and penetrate a layer of rock. This allows a much greater volume of gas-bearing rock to be intersected by a drill. Furthermore, hydraulic fracturing **(“fracking”)** is a technique that enhances the recovery of gas and/or crude oil. This technique involves pumping a water-based fluid and sand into a formation under high pressure. The pressure induces cracks in the rock and the sand helps prop open the cracks. Horizontal drilling and hydraulic fracturing triples the cost of drilling a well.

Watch a video explanation of **“fracking”**.

<http://www.bing.com/videos/search?q=Fracking+Definition&FORM=HDRSC3&adlt=strict#view=detail&mid=13BE2A6AB33AB9DCEB6413BE2A6AB33AB9DCEB64>

1. How are shallow aquifers protected from contamination by the drilling process and subsequent extraction of natural gas? \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_
2. What is meant by a “tight gas reservoir”? \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_
3. What is the key effect of “perfing” and “fracking” a horizontal well? Be clear in your explanation. \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

**VI. Environmental issues associated with deep gas well drilling.** Any process that extracts a natural resource from the earth’s crust impacts the environment (“we can’t get something for nothing”). Although much needed regulations emplaced over the last several decades have lessened the impacts, they have not eliminated them. Conventional vertical well drilling environmental impacts include surface disturbance (access and drilling operation set up, disposal of rock cuttings carried out of the well by a mixture of clay and water, i.e. “drilling mud”, emplacement of infrastructure to move gas into a pipeline network) and “down hole” preventative measures (contamination of groundwater aquifers, management of saline formation waters that can carry toxic chemical compounds). Do these environmental impacts apply to unconventional deep gas well drilling in Arkansas? Review the following articles:

oilprice.com/Energy/Natural-**Gas**/Study-Finds-no-Trace-of-Fracking... [Study finds no Trace of Fracking Fluid in **Arkansas**...](http://oilprice.com/Energy/Natural-Gas/Study-Finds-no-Trace-of-Fracking-Fluid-in-Arkansas-Drinking-Water.html)

## [Natural Gas Drilling: Impacts of Fracking on Health, Water...](http://www.nrdc.org/energy/gasdrilling/)

[www.nrdc.org/energy/gasdrilling](http://www.nrdc.org/energy/gasdrilling)

## [Drinking water wells in Arkansas show no contamination...](http://www.upi.com/Science_News/2013/05/15/Study-Gas-fracking-in-Arkansas-not-affecting-groundwater/UPI-56061368644857)

[www.upi.com/Science\_News/2013/05/15/Study-Gas-fracking-in-Arkansas](http://www.upi.com/Science_News/2013/05/15/Study-Gas-fracking-in-Arkansas)

1. List and describe three major environmental impacts of deep gas well drilling in Arkansas:

1.

2.

3.

**VII. Energy impact of natural gas in Marcellus shale.**

<http://www.beg.utexas.edu/info/docs/Fayetteville%20Shale%20OGJ%20article.pdf>

<http://www.solarplan.org/Research/Well%20Production%20Profile%20for%20the%20Fayetteville%20Shale%20Gas%20Play_Mason_OGJ_4%20April%202011.pdf>

1. U.S. natural gas consumption in 2008 was 23,208,677 cubic feet. The volume of currently recoverable gas from the Fayetteville shale is equivalent to how many years at our current annual consumption rate? Refer to the 2 above articles to estimate the number of years and give reasons to support your answer. \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

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