



Lesson 4: Comparing Popcorn and Sorghum

Grade Level: Kindergarten

Time: 1 hour

Subjects: ELA, Science

Overview: This lesson is Lesson 4 of 5 in the *Celebrate Wheat* unit within the Growing Readers micro-curriculum, based on a series of books written by Kansas author Dan Yunk. Lesson 4 serves as a hands-on literacy lesson focused on comparing and tasting popped sorghum and popcorn to deepen students' understanding of how Kansas crops become food. Students build on prior knowledge of seed comparison from Lesson 3 while engaging in structured discussion, sensory observation, and opinion writing. This lesson reinforces foundational literacy skills through explicit instruction in letter-sound correspondence, spacing, capitalization, and end punctuation, while integrating place-based agricultural connections to Kansas crops. Connections to The Soil Neighborhood are carried forward as students are reminded that the crops they are tasting today grew from seeds planted in Kansas soil.

Skillset: Activating and connecting prior knowledge across units, comparing and contrasting, sensory observation, descriptive language, oral language development, vocabulary acquisition, phonological awareness (initial sounds), phonics, letter-sound correspondence, opinion writing, sentence construction, print concepts, foundational writing conventions, and agricultural awareness.

Kansas Academic Standards:

Kansas ELA Standards

W.K.1 Use a combination of drawing, dictating, and writing to compose opinion pieces in which they tell a reader the topic or the name of the book they are writing about and state an opinion or preference about the topic or book (e.g., My favorite book is . . .).

W.K.10 Demonstrate command of the conventions of standard English grammar and usage when writing.

W.K.10.a Print many upper and lowercase letters.

W.K.10.d. Use the most frequently occurring prepositions in written work (e.g., to, from, in, out, on, off, for, of, by, with).

W.K.11 Demonstrate command of the conventions of standard English capitalization, punctuation, and spelling when writing.

W.K.11.a Capitalize the first word in a sentence and the pronoun *I*.

W.K.11.b Recognize and name end punctuation.

W.K.11.c Write a letter or letters for most consonant and short vowel sounds.

W.K.11.d Spell simple words phonetically, drawing on knowledge of letter-sound relationships.

RF.K.1.b Recognize that spoken words are represented in written language by specific sequences of letters.

RF.K.3 Know and apply grade-level phonics and word analysis skills in decoding words.

RF.K.3.a Demonstrate basic knowledge of one-to-one letter-sound correspondences by producing the primary or many of the most frequent sounds for each consonant.

Science Standards

K-LS1-1 Use observations to describe patterns of what plants and animals (including humans) need to survive.

K-ESS3-1 Use a model to represent the relationship between the needs of plants and the places they live.

National Agriculture Literacy Outcomes:

Plants and Animals for Food, Fiber, and Energy

T2.K-2.a Describe how plants are grown and used for food.

T2.K-2.d Identify examples of food and fiber products that come from plants and animals.

T5.K-2.a Identify the ways farmers use land to grow crops and raise animals.

Objectives

Science Objectives

Students will be able to:

- Observe and describe similarities and differences between popcorn and popped sorghum using their senses.
- Identify corn and sorghum as crops grown by farmers for food.
- Explain that crops grow in fields and provide food for people and animals.

English Language Arts Objectives

Students will be able to:

- Communicate an opinion about whether they prefer popcorn or popped sorghum using drawing, dictation, and writing.
- State their opinion using a complete sentence (e.g., "I like popcorn.").
- Demonstrate understanding that spoken words are represented by written letters and words.
- Apply one-to-one correspondence and spacing between words during writing.
- Print upper and lowercase letters to represent consonant and short vowel sounds in familiar words.
- Write sentences using correct capitalization at the beginning of each sentence and for the pronoun.
- Write sentences with appropriate end punctuation.
- Isolate and produce the initial sounds in key lesson words (e.g., /p/ in popcorn, /s/ in sorghum).

Materials Needed

- Small bowls of popped sorghum (one per student)
- Small bowls of popcorn (one per student)
- Small bowls of unpopped popcorn kernels (one per group)
- Small bowls of unpopped sorghum kernels (one per group)
- Chart paper
- Markers
- T-chart labeled "Popped Sorghum" and "Popcorn."
- Student draw-and-write opinion paper (one per student) **provided below**
- Pencils and crayons
- Sentence frames displayed on chart paper
- Simple map of Kansas
- Hand wipes or paper towels
- Sticky notes (one per student, for class opinion graph), optional

Lesson Procedures

1. Activating Prior Knowledge (Connecting to *Celebrate Wheat*)
 - a. Explain to students: *"Yesterday, we were seed scientists. We examined wheat, corn, soybeans, sorghum, and sunflowers. We learned that Kansas farmers grow many different crops."*
 - b. Ask students:
 - *"What crops did we study yesterday?"*
 - *"Which seed was the smallest?"*
 - *"What crop can be made into syrup?"*
 - *"What crop grows tall like wheat?"*
 - c. Hold up a small sample of sorghum seeds and popcorn kernels and explain to students: *"One of the seeds we studied yesterday was sorghum. Today, we are going to see what happens when sorghum is heated. Just like corn pops into popcorn, sorghum can pop too!"*
 - d. Explain to students: *"In our book Celebrate Wheat, we learned that wheat is a crop that Kansas farmers grow in fields that becomes food. Corn and sorghum are also crops grown in Kansas. And just like wheat, they start as tiny seeds planted in the soil. The same kind of healthy soil we learned about in The Soil Neighborhood. Farmers grow crops to feed people and animals."*
 - e. Build phonological awareness, say:
 - f. *"Let's say sorghum together. /Sor/-ghum/. What sound do you hear at the beginning?" (/s/)*
 - g. *"Now say popcorn. /pop/-corn/. What sound do you hear at the beginning? (/p/)*
 - h. Explain to students: *"Today, we are going to compare popped sorghum and popcorn. We will look closely at them, feel them, and even taste them. We will talk about how they are the same and how they are different. After we compare them, you will decide which one you like the best. Then you will draw and write your opinion using a complete sentence."*
2. Observation & Compare/Contrast (Hands-On Investigation)
 - a. Distribute a small sample of popped sorghum and popcorn to each student. (You may choose to have students observe first before tasting.)
 - b. Explain expectations to students: *"Scientists and writers look closely before they talk and write. Today, we are going to observe. We use our eyes and hands first. We will taste in just a moment."*
 - c. Hold up, popcorn.
 - *"What do you notice about the size?"*
 - *"Is it big or small?"*
 - *"What color is it?"*
 - *"Is it smooth or bumpy?"*
 - d. Hold up, popped sorghum.
 - *"How does this one look?"*
 - *"Is it bigger or smaller than the popcorn?"*
 - *"Do they look the same or different?"*
 - e. Create a T-chart on the board or chart paper labeled: Popped Sorghum | Popcorn
 - f. Record student responses using simple descriptive words such as:
 - Small
 - Big

- White
- Round
- Crunchy
- Light
- g. Model complete sentence responses:
 - *"Popcorn is bigger."*
 - *"Sorghum is smaller."*
 - *"Both are white."*
- h. Encourage students to repeat sentences chorally.
- i. Introduce explicit comparison vocabulary and write on chart paper:
 - Same
 - Different
 - Both
 - Bigger
 - Smaller
- j. Explain to students: *"When we compare, we tell how things are the same. When we contrast, we tell how they are different."*
- k. Have students practice:
 - *"Both are..."*
 - *"Popcorn is..."*
 - *"Sorghum is..."*
- 3. Tasting & Sensory Description
 - a. Explain expectations clearly to students: *"Now you may taste both the sorghum and the popcorn. Take one small bite at a time and chew carefully."*
 - b. After tasting, prompt descriptive language:
 - *"How does it taste?"*
 - *"Is it salty, plain, crunchy, soft?"*
 - *"Does one have more flavor?"*
 - *"Which one feels lighter in your mouth?"*
 - c. Add tasting words to the T-chart.
 - d. Encourage complete sentence responses using sentence stems:
 - *"I notice that..."*
 - *"I think..."*
 - *"Both taste..."*
 - *"Popcorn tastes..."*
 - *"Sorghum tastes..."*
 - e. Reinforce academic language and say: *"We are comparing using our senses. We are noticing similarities and differences."*
- 4. Vocabulary & Phonological Awareness
 - a. Revisit key vocabulary words from the observation chart:
 - Popcorn
 - Sorghum
 - Big
 - Small
 - Crunchy
 - Pop
 - b. Point to each word as you read it aloud and explain to students: *"When we talk, we hear sounds. When we write, we use letters to show those sounds."*

- c. Isolate beginning sounds in key vocabulary words.
 - d. Say the word pop and have students repeat the word.
 - e. Ask students:
 - *“What sound do you hear at the beginning of the pop?” (/p/)*
 - f. Write the letter P on chart paper.
 - g. Repeat with:
 - Popcorn - /p/
 - Sorghum - /s/
 - Small - /s/
 - Corn - /k/
 - h. Write "S" and "C" on chart paper as students identify the sounds.
 - i. Have students say the letter name and sound together.
 - j. Connect sounds to letters explicitly and explain to students: *“The letter P represents the sound /p/. The sound /s/ is represented by the letter S. The sound /k/ is represented by the letter C in the word corn.”*
 - k. Point to each letter as students produce the sound.
 - l. Prompt students to use complete sentences using comparison language:
 - “Popcorn is big.”
 - “Sorghum is small.”
 - “Both are crunchy.”
 - m. As students respond, emphasize spacing between words orally and say: *“Say one word at a time.”*
 - n. Model slow articulation and finger tapping for each word in a sentence.
 - o. Explain to students: *“When we say a sentence, we hear separate words. When we write a sentence, we leave spaces so the reader can see each word.”*
 - p. Point to the T-chart sentences and track left to right.
5. Introducing Opinion Writing
- a. Gather students in a place where they can clearly see the chart paper or board.
 - b. Explain to students: *“Today, you are going to write your opinion. An opinion is what you think or feel about something.”*
 - c. Pause and clarify by saying: *“An opinion is not right or wrong. It is what you like or prefer.”*
 - d. Explain the difference between a fact and an opinion: “If I say, ‘Popcorn is white,’ that is a fact. A fact is something we can see and know is true. If I say, ‘Popcorn is the best snack,’ that is an opinion. An opinion tells what someone thinks or likes. You might think popcorn is the best snack, and someone else might think popped sorghum is the best snack. That’s okay! People can have different opinions.”
 - e. Ask students:
 - *“Can two people have different opinions?”*
 - *“Is an opinion right or wrong?”*
 - f. Guide students to respond with: *“No, opinions are what we think.”*
 - g. Explain to students: *“You tasted popcorn and popped sorghum. Now you get to decide which one you like best. That is your opinion.”*
 - h. Model oral opinion statements, say:
 - *“I like popcorn.”*
 - *“I like sorghum.”*
 - i. Then expand statements and say:

- *"I like popcorn because it is crunchy."*
 - *"I like sorghum because it is small."*
 - j. Encourage students to turn and tell a partner:
 - *"My opinion is..."*
 - *"I like..."*
 - k. Prepare students for writing and explain: *"When we write our opinion, we start with 'I like...' and tell what we prefer. The word 'I' is always written with an uppercase letter. Now I am going to show you how to write an opinion sentence."*
6. Shared Writing & Print Concepts
- Explain to students: *"Writers follow rules so the reader can understand what they wrote. I am going to write my opinion sentence."*
- a. On chart paper, slowly write and model each step explicitly:
 - *"I like popcorn."*
 - b. Write the uppercase I and say: *"Every sentence begins with an uppercase letter. The word I is always written with an uppercase letter."*
 - c. Ask students:
 - *"Is this an uppercase or lowercase letter?"*
 - d. Point to the letter as students respond.
 - e. After writing "I", stop and explain to students: *"I finished my first word. Now I need a space so the reader knows a new word is starting. Use your finger to make a clear space before writing the word like."*
 - f. Continue modeling the spacing between each word.
 - g. Ask students:
 - *"How many words are in my sentence?"*
 - h. As you write popcorn, finger stretch the word aloud and say: *"Let's finger stretch popcorn slowly. /p/ /o/ /p/...corn."*
 - i. Model writing letters that match the sounds heard and explain to students: *"Writers listen for sounds and write the letters that match those sounds."*
 - j. Point to the beginning letter and ask students:
 - *"What sound does the word popcorn start with?" /p/*
 - k. After finishing the sentence, add a period and explain to students: *"This dot is called a period. A period tells the reader the sentence is finished."*
 - l. Ask students:
 - *"Do we put a period at the beginning or the end of a sentence? Why?"*
 - m. Point to each word in the sentence while reading slowly: *"I / like / popcorn."*
 - n. Explain to students: *"When we read and write, we move from left to right."*
 - o. Ask students:
 - *"Where does our sentence start?"*
 - *"Where does our sentence end?"*
 - *"How do you know?"*
 - p. Repeat modeling with: *"I like sorghum."*
 - q. Compare the two sentences visually and ask students:
 - *"What is the same about these sentences?"*
 - *"What is different?"*
 - r. Guide students to notice:
 - Both start with an uppercase I
 - Both have spaces
 - Both end with a period

- Both have three words
 - Only the food word changes
7. Student Writing Component
- Gather students in a place where they can clearly see the sentence frames and the anchor chart.
- a. Explain to students: *“Now it is your turn to write your opinion. When we write a sentence, we follow rules that help the reader understand what we wrote. A good sentence:*
 - *starts with an uppercase letter,*
 - *has spaces between words,*
 - *uses letters that match the sounds we hear, and*
 - *ends with a punctuation mark to tell the reader we are finished.”*
 - b. Display sentence frames on chart paper or board:
 - “I like popcorn.”
 - “I like sorghum.”
 - c. For students ready to extend:
 - “I like popcorn because it is crunchy.”
 - “I like sorghum because it is small.”
 - d. Explain to students: *“These sentences tell whether you prefer popcorn or popped sorghum. Since everyone may have a different favorite, these are opinions, not facts.”*
 - e. Provide students with draw-and-write directions, say: *“First, draw popcorn and sorghum. Then circle the one you like best. After you circle your favorite, write your opinion sentence.”*
 - f. Encourage phonetic spelling, say: *“Stretch the words slowly. Listen for the sounds. Write the letters that match the sounds you hear.”*
 - g. Model finger stretching, say: *“/p/ /o/ /p/..., /s/ /o/ /r/...”*
 - h. Circulate the classroom and explicitly support:
 - Uppercase I
 - Spacing between words
 - Sound stretching
 - Ending period
 - Rereading sentences with finger tracking
 - i. Ask students:
 - *“What is your opinion?”*
 - *“Can you read your sentence to me?”*
 - *“Where does your sentence end? How do you know?”*
8. Discussion & Reflection
- a. Gather students with their completed draw-and-write papers.
 - b. Invite volunteers to share their opinion sentences.
 - c. Ask students:
 - *“What is your opinion?”*
 - *“Which food did you choose?”*
 - *“Can you read your sentence to us?”*
 - d. Encourage students to point to each word as they read.
 - e. Reinforce academic language, ask students:
 - *“Did anyone have a different opinion?”*
 - *“Can two people have different opinions?”*

- *"Is one opinion right and the other opinion wrong?"*
 - f. Guide students to respond: *"No. Opinions are what we think or like."*
 - g. Revisit comparison language, ask students:
 - *"How are popcorn and sorghum the same?"*
 - *"How are popcorn and sorghum different?"*
 - h. Encourage students to respond using:
 - *"Both are..."*
 - *"Popcorn is..."*
 - *"Sorghum is..."*
 - i. Explain to students: *"Today, we compared two crops grown by Kansas farmers. We used our senses to observe. We used descriptive words to compare. Then we wrote our opinion using a complete sentence."*
 - j. Reinforce literacy concepts, ask students:
 - *"What does every sentence start with?"*
 - *"What goes at the end of a sentence?"*
 - *"Why do we put spaces between words?"*
9. Kansas Connection
- a. Display a simple map of Kansas and explain to students: *"We live in Kansas, and Kansas is a farming state. Farmers in Kansas grow many crops."*
 - b. Ask students:
 - *"What crops did we learn about yesterday?" (wheat, corn, soybeans, sorghum, sunflowers)*
 - c. Explain to students: *"Some of the corn grown in Kansas becomes popcorn. Some of the sorghum grown in Kansas can be popped just like the sorghum you tasted today. Farmers grow these crops so people and animals have food."*
 - d. Connect to students' experiences say: *"Every bite you took today, whether you chose the popcorn or the popped sorghum, started in a Kansas field. Corn and sorghum are two of the crops that Kansas farmers plant and harvest every year, and they both start the same way our glove seeds did: as tiny seeds pushed into the soil. If you live in the country or your family has land, you may have seen tall corn or sorghum stalks growing in the summer, or watched a combine move through the rows at harvest time. If you live in town, you might know corn best as popcorn at the movies or frozen corn at dinner, and now you know that a Kansas farmer grew that, too. No matter where you live in Kansas, the food on your table has a field behind it, and a farmer who worked hard to grow it. That is something worth knowing."*
 - e. Ask students:
 - *"Have you seen corn or sorghum fields when you are driving?"*
 - *"Do you know someone who works on a farm or ranch?"*
 - *"Have you ever eaten food that started on a farm?"*

Assessment:

Student understanding is assessed through ongoing formative and observational measures embedded throughout the lesson, including teacher observation of compare-and-contrast discussions, sensory observation and tasting activities, participation in phonological awareness practice, and application of foundational literacy skills during shared and independent opinion writing. Teachers should note whether students can articulate similarities and differences between the two crops, distinguish between fact and opinion, and apply capitalization, spacing,

and end punctuation in their writing. Note students who make spontaneous connections to seeds, soil, or earlier lessons, as these responses demonstrate deeper understanding and cross-unit learning transfer.

Supplemental Activities:

Class Opinion Graph & Sentence Gallery: After students complete their draw-and-write opinion papers, create a simple class pictograph on chart paper with two columns — one labeled “Popcorn” and one labeled “Popped Sorghum.” Each student places a sticky note or writes their name in the column matching their opinion. The class then reads the graph together, counting and comparing: “More students liked popcorn,” or “Both got the same number.” This graphing activity extends the compare-and-contrast work into data and graphing while giving students a real-world reason to use their comparison language one more time; the same vocabulary they practiced all lesson (same, different, both, more, fewer) now applies to their own class data. Following the graph activity, display student opinion papers for a brief gallery walk where students move around the room, point to each other’s sentences word by word, and notice similarities and differences in what their classmates chose. The combination of the graph and the gallery walk gives the opinion writing a genuine audience, reinforces left-to-right tracking, and brings the compare-and-contrast thread full circle, from seeds in Lesson 3, to popped crops in this lesson, to the students’ own opinions about Kansas agriculture.

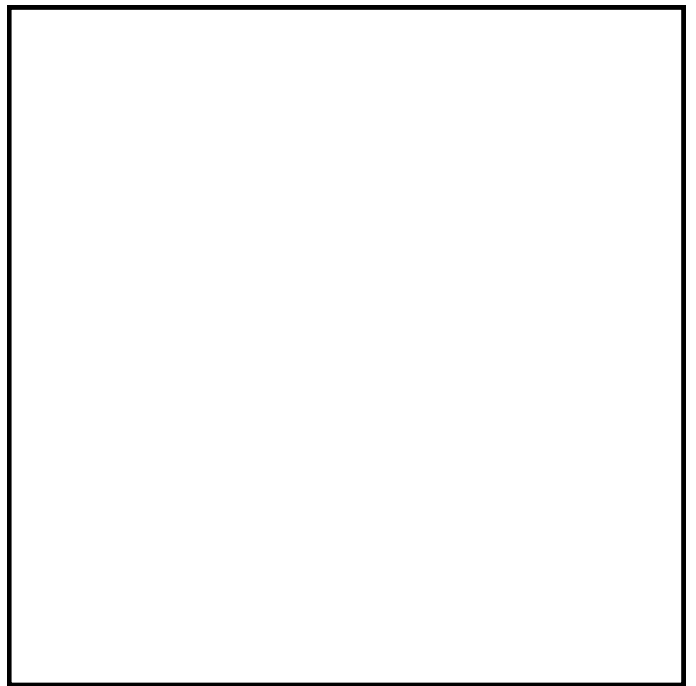
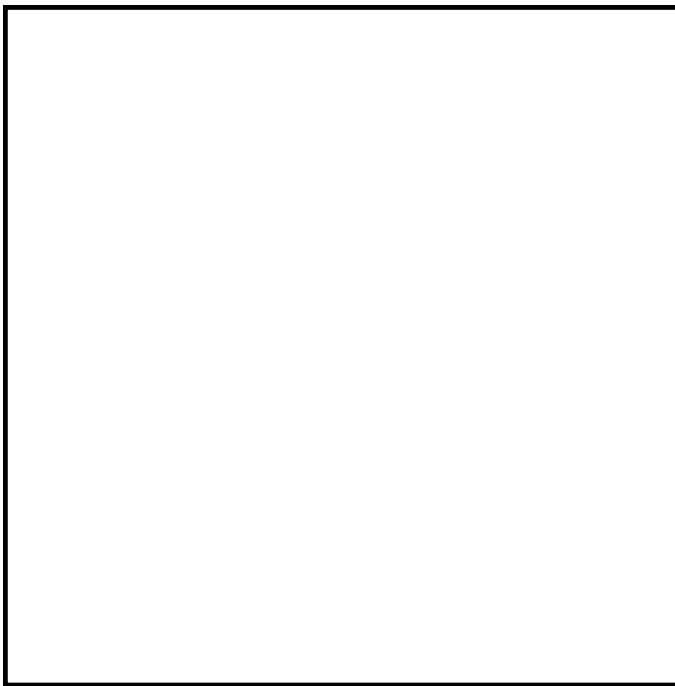
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Name: _____

Draw and Write Your Opinion

Popcorn or Sorghum?

Part 1: Draw popcorn and popped sorghum. Circle the one you like best.



Part 2: Write your opinion.

I like... _____

because... _____