

Lesson 3: Protein Powers Us Up!

Grade Level: 1st Grade

Time: 60 minutes

Subjects: ELA

Overview: This lesson is Lesson 3 of 5 in the *Growing Up Strong* unit within the *Growing Readers* micro-curriculum, based on a series of books written by Kansas author Dan Yunk. Building on Lesson 2's focus on fruit and vegetables, students explore protein and the foods that provide it. Through a purposeful second read of *Growing Up Strong*, students examine the connection between agriculture and food production, apply consonant digraph knowledge to read sentences, sort and match protein foods from animals and plants, and compose an informative piece that names a topic, supplies facts, and provides a sense of closure.

Skillset: Purposeful second reading, identifying main topic and key details, identifying an author's reasons, applying consonant digraphs, reading with purpose and understanding, sorting words into categories, using common nouns in writing, informative writing with a topic, facts, and closure, recalling information from experience, and spelling untaught words phonetically.

Kansas Academic Standards

Kansas ELA Standards

RF.1.3.a Know the phoneme-grapheme correspondences for common consonant digraphs (e.g., sh, ch, wh, th, gh).

RF.1.4.a Read text with purpose and understanding.

RI.1.2 Identify the main topic and retell key details of a text.

RI.1.8 Identify the reasons an author gives to support points in a text.

RI.1.12.a Sort words into categories to gain a sense of the concepts the categories represent.

W.1.2 Write informative/explanatory texts in which they name a topic, supply some facts about the topic, and provide some sense of closure.

W.1.8 With guidance and support from adults, recall information from experiences or gather information from provided sources to answer a question.

W.1.10.b Use common, proper and possessive nouns when writing. (*This lesson focuses only on common nouns.*)

W.1.11.e Spell untaught words phonetically, drawing on phonemic awareness and spelling conventions.

National Agriculture Literacy Outcomes

Plants and Animals for Food, Fiber, and Energy

T2.K-2.b Identify animals involved in agricultural production and their uses (i.e., work, meat, dairy, eggs).

T2.K-2.c Recognize that farmers and ranchers are responsible for raising animals that provide food and fiber for people.

Objectives

English Language Arts Objectives

Students will be able to:

- Identify the main topic, retell key details, and identify the reasons an author gives to support points.
- Demonstrate knowledge of the phoneme-grapheme correspondences for common consonant digraphs by identifying and reading taught digraphs in words.
- Read text with purpose and understanding by reading decodable sentences and identifying the animal or plant described.
- Sort words into categories to gain a sense of the concepts the categories represent, distinguishing between protein foods from animals and plants.
- Incorporate common nouns to label animals and foods in writing.
- Write an informative piece that names a topic, supplies some facts about the topic, and provides a sense of closure.
- Recall information from the matching activity to support their informative writing.
- Spell untaught words phonetically, drawing on phonemic awareness and spelling conventions.

Materials Needed

Read-Aloud:

- Book: *Growing Up Strong* by Dan Yunk, illustrated by Michelle Johnson (physical copy)
- Chart paper titled: “What Does Protein Do for Our Bodies?”
- YouTube, Eat Happy Project: Why do our bodies need protein?
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=KSKPgaSGSYA>
- Markers

Consonant Digraphs:

- Chart paper for digraph reference (sh, ch, th, wh, gh)

Farm Animal to Protein Food Matching:

- Farm animal picture cards or plastic figures: cattle, pig, chicken, turkey, sheep, goat, plus fish, bean plant, and peanut plant cards (one set per small group)
- Protein food picture cards: beef, pork, chicken, turkey, lamb, goat meat, egg, fish, beans, peanuts (one set per small group)
- Word cards for each animal, plant source, and protein food listed above (one set per small group) — used for sorting into categories, in addition to the picture cards
- Decodable sentence cards, one per animal/plant source (companion document)
- Chart paper divided into two columns titled “Protein from Animals” and “Protein from Plants”

Writing:

- Protein Match writing sheet — companion document (one per student)
- Pencils and crayons

Lesson Procedures

1. Connecting to What We Know
 - a. Explain to students: “In our last lesson, we learned about the rainbow of fruits and vegetables and how each color helps our bodies in a different way. Today we are going to learn about another important part of a healthy plate: protein. Let’s read our book one more time and listen carefully for clues about protein and the animals that provide it.”

- b. Ask students:
 - “What do you remember about the rainbow of foods from our last lesson?”
 - “Have you ever eaten eggs, chicken, or beef? Where do you think those foods come from?”
 2. Purposeful Second Read-Aloud. Set a listening purpose: “We have already read this book once. Today, listen for how farmers and ranchers help give us the food we need to grow strong.”
 - a. Read Growing Up Strong aloud. Pause at two key moments. Stopping Point Suggestions (2 total, brief stops to maintain flow. Keep stops brief. This is a purposeful second read; the goal is to sharpen comprehension around the agriculture-to-nutrition connection before moving into the protein activity.):
 - Stop #1 — Author’s Reason: Page 5 — farmers and ranchers producing safe, nutritious food. Ask students:
 - What reason does the book give for why farmers and ranchers care for their land and animals?”
 - Stop #2 — Main Topic and Key Details: Pages 7–9 — food groups and the rainbow of foods. Ask students:
 - “What is the main topic of this part of the book?”
 - “What foods does Kailey’s mom say we should eat? Name one, and tell me one more detail about it.”
 3. Introduce Protein. Explain to students: “Today we are going to learn about something called protein. Protein is something found in many foods, and our bodies need protein to grow and build strong muscles.”
 - a. Have students flex their muscles or stretch tall and say: Protein helps me grow and build strong muscles!
 - b. Ask students:
 - “What is something you have eaten before that might have protein in it? Think about breakfast, lunch, or dinner.”
 - “Have you ever eaten eggs, a hamburger, chicken nuggets, or bacon? Those foods all have protein!”
 - c. Play the YouTube video: Eat Happy Project: Why do our bodies need protein?
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=KSKPgaSGSYA>
 - d. After the video, ask students:
 - “The video showed us that protein helps our body in different ways: it helps fix us when we are hurt, it helps our muscles and hair grow, and it helps us breathe. What is one job protein does that you remember?”
 - “The video showed foods like chicken, beef, fish, eggs, and beans. Which of those foods have you eaten before?”
 - e. Explain to students: “Farmers and ranchers raise and care for animals like cattle, pigs, chickens, turkeys, sheep, and goats. These animals provide foods that contain protein. Farmers also raise fish on fish farms, and farmers grow crops like beans and peanuts that are also full of protein. Protein does not just come from animals; it can come from plants too, and farmers grow both!”
 - f. Display the farm animal cards or figures (cattle, pig, chicken, turkey, sheep, goat) along with the fish, bean plant, and peanut plant cards where all students can see them.
 4. Consonant Digraphs: Getting Ready to Read Our Sentences. Explain to students: “Before we read our sentences about farm animals today, let’s look at a special kind of letter team called a digraph. A digraph is two consonant letters that team up to make one

brand new sound. We do not hear each letter separately; together they make a different sound.”

- a. Teach each digraph explicitly, writing it on chart paper:
 - “Sh, /sh/, sheep. Say it with me: sheep. The s and h team up to make one new sound, /sh/, at the beginning of sheep.”
 - “Ch, /ch/, chick. Say it with me: chick. The c and h team up to make /ch/.”
 - “Th, /th/, this. We are going to see the word this in some of our sentences today. The t and h team up to make /th/.”
 - “Wh, /wh/, which. Later, we are going to ask each other questions using the word which. The w and h team up to make /wh/.”
 - b. Explain to students: “One more digraph is gh. It does not show up in our farm sentences today, but you will see it in other words. Sometimes gh is silent, like in the word night, and sometimes it says /f/, like in the word laugh.”
 - c. Ask students: “What sound do s and h make together? What sound do c and h make together?”
 - d. Explain to students: “Now that we know these digraphs, let’s use them to read some sentences about farm animals.”
5. Decodable Sentences and Word Sorting. Explain to students: “Today we are going to read short sentences about farm animals using the letters, sounds, and digraphs we know. After we read each sentence, we are going to sort a word card into a category, and match the animal to the protein food it provides.”
- a. Model one full match. Display the cattle card, the word card cattle, and a decodable sentence card: “A cow is big.”
 - b. Set a purpose before reading: “Before we read, let’s set a purpose. We are reading to find out which animal this sentence describes, and to understand what the sentence is telling us, not just to say the words.”
 - c. Read the sentence aloud, sounding out each word explicitly and pointing to each one:
 - “First word: A. That’s just the letter ‘a’ by itself.”
 - “Next word: cow. Let’s sound it out: /c/ /ow/. Blend it together: cow.”
 - “Next word: is. That’s a word we already know by sight: is.”
 - “Last word: big. Let’s sound it out: /b/ /i/ /g/. Blend it together: big.”
 - “Now let’s read the whole sentence together: A cow is big. I used the letters, sounds, and digraphs I already know to read this sentence, and I understand that it is telling me about a cow.”
 - d. Ask students: “Now, what food do cattle provide? Beef! Cattle provide beef. Beef gives our bodies protein. Protein helps us grow and build strong muscles.”
 - e. Display the two-column chart: “Protein from Animals” and “Protein from Plants.” Sort the beef word card into the Protein from Animals column, and place the beef picture card next to the cattle card.
 - f. Introduce the call-and-response students will use throughout the activity:
 - Teacher: “This food gives our bodies...” Students: “Protein!”
 - Teacher: “Protein helps us...” Students: “Grow and build strong muscles!”
 - g. Guided matching: as a whole class, complete four more matches using the same routine: draw a decodable sentence card, read it together, ask students to predict the matching protein food, then reveal it, sort the word card into the correct column, and connect it to a familiar dish. These four were chosen for whole-group instruction because their protein foods and vocabulary (lamb, goat meat, turkey, beans) are less familiar to most students and benefit from extra

teacher support before small groups work independently. Identify unfamiliar protein food terms (lamb, goat meat) for students before asking them to predict, since these words are new vocabulary. Treat incorrect predictions as part of learning, not errors. Repeat the call-and-response after every match. Point out that beans belong in the Protein from Plants column, since they do not come from an animal at all, reinforcing that protein can come from both animals and plants. Ask students after each match: “What does this animal or plant provide that gives our bodies protein? Which column does that word belong in? Have you ever eaten that food?”

- “A sheep can run.” → sheep → lamb, sorted into Protein from Animals.
“Lamb can be cooked as lamb chops. This one might be new to you; that is okay!”
 - “A goat can jump.” → goat → goat meat, sorted into Protein from Animals.
“Goat meat is enjoyed in many meals around the world, even if it is new to us.”
 - “I see a turkey.” → turkey → turkey, sorted into Protein from Animals.
“Turkey is often eaten as a sandwich or on Thanksgiving. Have you ever eaten turkey?”
 - “I see a bean.” → bean plant → beans, sorted into Protein from Plants.
“Beans are not from an animal; they grow on a plant! Kansas farmers grow soybeans, which are a kind of bean, in huge fields. Have you eaten beans in a soup or a burrito?”
- h. Explain to students: “We have matched cattle, sheep, goats, turkeys, and beans together as a class. The rest of our cards, pig, chicken, fish, and nuts, are waiting for you and your small group to match in just a few minutes!”
6. Small-Group Hands-On Practice. Divide students into small groups. Give each group a complete mixed set of animal/plant cards, word cards, protein food cards, decodable sentence cards, and a copy of the Protein from Animals / Protein from Plants column chart, including the four matches not yet covered as a whole class: pig/pork, chicken/egg, fish/fish, and peanut plant/nuts. These four are familiar, common protein foods most students already recognize, making them well suited for independent small-group work.
- a. Explain to students: “Now it is your turn. Work with your group to read each sentence, find the matching animal or plant, sort the protein word into the correct column, and match it to the correct protein food. Everyone in your group should get a turn to read a sentence or place a card.” Circulate and support:
- “Can you read this sentence? What animal is it about?”
 - “Which animal provides this food?”
 - “Does this protein word belong in the animal column or the plant column? How do you know?”
 - “Which animal provides both meat and eggs?”
 - “What does protein help our bodies do?”
- b. Ensure every student has the opportunity to physically select or place at least one card during this small-group practice.
7. Whole-Group Retrieval Game and Closing the Conceptual Connection. Gather students back together.
- a. Play a quick retrieval game using question words, including our new digraph word ‘which’: “Which animal gives us pork? Which food comes from a chicken? Which animal gives us both meat and eggs?”

- b. Explain to students: "Let's put it all together: farmers and ranchers raise and care for animals. Those animals provide us with different foods. Those foods give us protein. And protein helps our bodies grow and build strong muscles."
 - c. Ask students to repeat the chain back with you, one part at a time:
 - Teacher: "Farmers and ranchers..." Students: "...raise and care for animals."
 - Teacher: "Those animals..." Students: "...give us food."
 - Teacher: "That food..." Students: "...gives us protein."
 - Teacher: "And protein..." Students: "...helps our bodies grow and build strong muscles."
8. Writing an Informative Piece with Common Nouns
 - a. Gather students where they can see chart paper clearly.
 - b. Explain to students: "You just did such a great job matching animals to the protein foods they give us and sorting them into animal and plant protein. Now we are going to write a whole informative piece about one of those matches, with three parts: we name our topic, we give some facts, and we end with a closing thought."
 - c. Explain common nouns: "Before we write, let's talk about the kind of words we will be using. A noun is a word that names a person, place, thing, or animal. Today we are using common nouns, words like hen and egg that name a general kind of animal or thing, not a specific name."
 - d. On chart paper, write the three sentence frames students will use:
 - Topic: "Today I am writing about a ____ and the food it gives us."
 - Facts: "A ____ gives us _____. ____ has protein."
 - Closing: "Eating ____ helps my body grow strong."
 - e. Explain to students: "Here are our three sentence frames. Watch me think about my own hen and egg match and fill in the blanks."
 - f. Model filling in each frame aloud, thinking through the blanks one at a time:
 - "My topic: Today I am writing about a hen and the protein food it gives us. This sentence tells my reader what I am writing about."
 - "My facts: A hen gives us an egg. An egg has protein. These sentences give my reader more information about my topic."
 - "My closing thought: Eating eggs helps my body grow strong. This sentence wraps up my whole piece, not just my last fact."
 - g. Point to and name each part: topic sentence, fact sentences, closing sentence. Point out the common nouns used, such as hen, egg, and protein.
 - h. Model spelling an untaught word phonetically while filling in a blank: "Let's say my animal is a chicken instead of a hen. I want to spell chicken. That is a bigger word we have not spelled together before. Let me say it slowly and listen for the sounds: chick-en. Remember our ch digraph from earlier? Ch, i, ck, e, n. I will write down every sound I hear, even though this word has a few tricky letters. That is what good writers do with words they have not learned yet."
 - i. Ask students: "What animal and food will you write about? What will you fill in for your fact sentences? How will you finish your closing sentence?"
9. Independent Writing — Protein Match Writing
 - a. Distribute the Protein Match writing sheet.
 - b. Explain to students: "Choose one animal and protein food match from today. Use our three sentence frames to write your topic, your fact, and your closing thought,

just like we did together on the chart paper. Remember to use common nouns to name your animal and food.”

- c. Students write their informative piece independently, using drawing and dictating for differentiation as needed.
- d. Circulate and support:
 - Prompt for topic: “Which animal and food are you writing about? What noun names your animal? What noun names your food?”
 - Prompt for facts: “What goes in the first blank of your fact sentence? What goes in the second blank? Remember, your second sentence tells us that food has protein.”
 - Prompt for closure: “What food are you eating in your closing sentence? Remember, it should be the same food from your fact sentence.”
 - Support for phonetic spelling: “Say the word slowly. What sounds do you hear? Write the letters that match.”

(Differentiation: Drawing and dictation are for differentiation only, not the primary task. Students who need additional support may draw their animal and food match and dictate their piece to the teacher or a classroom helper, who scribes while the student watches. Students ready for a challenge can move beyond the frames to write in their own words, add a second fact, or write about a second animal and food match.)

10. Closing Discussion and Kansas Connection

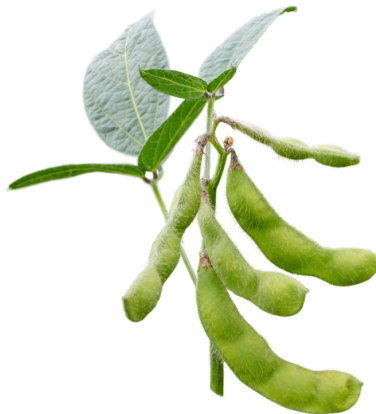
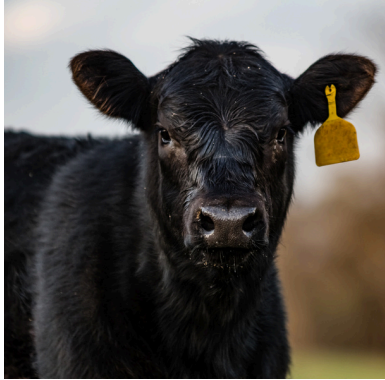
- a. Gather students together with their completed writing sheets.
- b. Ask students:
 - “What does protein help our bodies do?”
 - “Which animal and food did you write about today? Can you tell me the whole chain: farmer, animal, food, protein?”
- c. Kansas Connection. Explain to students: “Kansas farmers and ranchers raise cattle, pigs, chickens, turkeys, sheep, and goats every single day. The beef, pork, chicken, turkey, lamb, and eggs on our plates all started with a farmer or rancher caring for an animal. Farmers also grow soybeans, a kind of bean, in huge fields all across our state; soybeans are actually one of the biggest crops grown in Kansas! Some farmers also raise fish on fish farms. Whether protein comes from an animal a rancher raised, a bean a farmer grew, or a fish a farmer raised in water, it all connects back to the hard work of Kansas agriculture. And just like the farmers and ranchers who work hard every day, that protein works hard for your body too, helping you grow up strong. It does not matter if you live out in the country and drive past fields and pastures every day, or if you live in a town or city and mostly see your food at the grocery store; every protein food on your plate connects back to a farmer or rancher.”
- d. Ask students:
 - “If you live out in the country, have you ever seen cattle, pigs, or chickens on a farm or ranch? What did you see?”
 - “If you live in a town or city, have you ever gone to a grocery store, a farmers market, or a fish counter and seen beans, nuts, or fish for sale? What did you notice?”
 - “Everyone, no matter where you live: what is one protein food your family buys or eats that you think came from a farm?”
- e. Ask students: “What protein food will you look for the next time you eat a meal?”

Assessment: Assess student understanding through teacher observation during the second read-aloud, protein introduction, digraph instruction, decodable sentence reading, word sorting, matching activity, small-group practice, retrieval game, shared writing, and independent writing. The teacher should note whether students can identify the main topic and retell key details, identify a reason the author gives for farmers and ranchers providing nutritious food, know the phoneme-grapheme correspondences for common consonant digraphs, read decodable sentences with purpose and understanding, sort protein words into animal and plant categories and explain what each category represents, use common nouns to label their writing, write an informative piece that names a topic, supplies facts, and provides a sense of closure, recall information from the matching activity to support their writing, and spell untaught words phonetically. The completed Protein Match writing sheet serves as the primary written artifact for this lesson.

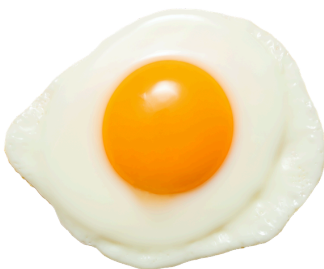
Supplemental Activities: Display the completed Protein Match writing sheets alongside the “*What Does Protein Do for Our Bodies?*” chart, the “*Protein from Animals / Protein from Plants*” chart, and the rainbow crafts from Lesson 2. Guide students to see that a healthy plate needs both a rainbow of fruits and vegetables and protein foods from farm animals and plants. For an extension activity, place the animal, plant, and protein food cards in a classroom center for continued matching and sorting practice throughout the week, and invite students to add new decodable sentences for animals not covered in this lesson, such as a duck, using digraphs when they can.

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Farm Animal Picture Cards



Protein Picture Cards



Farm Animal Word Cards

cattle

pig

chicken

turkey

sheep

goat

fish

bean plant

peanuts

Protein Word Cards

beef

pork

chicken

turkey

lamb

goat meat

egg

fish

beans

peanuts

Decodable Sentence Cards

A c o w is big.

A p i g can dig.

A s h e e p can run.

I see a c h i c k e n.

A g o a t can jump.

I see a f i s h.

I see a t u r k e y.

I see a p e a n u t.

I see a b e a n.

Student Name: _____

Protein Match

This image shows a full page of handwriting practice paper. It features ten identical sets of horizontal guidelines arranged vertically. Each set includes three lines: a solid top line, a dashed middle line, and a solid bottom line, providing a structured space for practicing letter formation and alignment. The entire page is white, and the lines are green.

Check Your Writing!



Topic



Fact



Spelling



Closure



Period at
the end.