

Lesson 3: Protein Powers Us Up!

Grade Level: 2nd 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 the fruit and vegetable rainbow, this lesson shifts to another important part of a healthy plate: protein. The lesson opens with a purposeful second read of *Growing Up Strong*, identifying the main purpose of a text section and describing how a reason supports that purpose. Students learn what protein does for the body, then read decodable sentences about farm animals with purpose and understanding, matching each animal or plant to the protein food it provides. The lesson closes with an informative writing task in which students introduce a topic, develop it with facts and a definition, use adjectives, and provide a concluding statement, consulting a beginning dictionary to check their spelling.

Skillset: Purposeful second reading, identifying the main purpose of a text, describing how reasons support a specific point, reading with purpose and understanding, using adjectives to describe nouns, informative writing with a topic, facts, a definition, and a concluding statement, recalling information from experience, and consulting reference materials to check and correct spelling.

Kansas Academic Standards

Kansas ELA Standards

RF.2.4.a Read text with purpose and understanding.

RI.2.6 Identify the main purpose of a text, including what the author wants to answer, explain or describe.

RI.2.8 Describe how reasons support specific points the author makes in a text.

W.2.2 Write informative/explanatory texts in which they introduce a topic, use facts and definitions to develop points, and provide a concluding statement or section.

W.2.8 Recall information from experiences or gather information from provided sources to answer a question.

W.2.10.e Use adjectives and adverbs and choose between them depending on what is to be modified. (This lesson focuses only on adjectives; adverbs are not addressed.)

W.2.11.e Consult reference materials, including beginning dictionaries, as needed to check and correct spellings.

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 purpose of a section of *Growing Up Strong* and describe how a reason supports that purpose.
- Read decodable sentences about farm animals with purpose and understanding.
- Use adjectives to describe animals and foods in writing.
- Write an informative piece that introduces a topic, develops it with facts and a definition, and provides a concluding statement.
- Recall information from the matching activity to support their writing.
- Consult a beginning dictionary to check and correct spelling.

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

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, nuts (one set per small group)
- 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)
- Beginning dictionaries or classroom word-reference books (one per table)
- Pencils and crayons

Lesson Procedures

1. Connecting to What We Know. 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.”
 - a. 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 — Reasons Support a Point: Page 5 — farmers and ranchers producing safe, nutritious food
 - Ask students: “The author’s point is that eating healthy food helps us grow up strong. What reason does the book give about farmers and ranchers? How does that reason support the point that healthy food helps us grow?”
 - Stop #2 — Main Purpose: Pages 11–12 — even babies need good nutrition from birth
 - Ask students: “What does the author want us to understand by telling us that even babies need good nutrition? What is the main purpose of this part of the book?”
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 a short 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. Decodable Sentences and Protein Matching. Explain to students: “Today we are going to read short sentences about farm animals. After we read each sentence, we are going to match the animal or plant to the protein food it provides.”
 - a. Model one full match. Display the cattle card and a decodable sentence card: “A hungry cow grazes in the pasture all day.”
 - 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 with expression, then think aloud about its meaning:
 - “A hungry cow grazes in the pasture all day. Grazes means the cow is eating grass. This sentence tells me the cow is out in a field, eating grass, because it is hungry.”
- 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.” Place the beef picture card in the Protein from Animals column, 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 with purpose, ask students to predict the matching protein food, then reveal it, place it in the correct column, and connect it to a familiar dish. These four were chosen for whole-group instruction because their protein foods (lamb, goat meat, turkey, beans) are less familiar to most students and benefit from extra teacher support before small groups work independently. Name 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 Protein from Plants, 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? Have you ever eaten that food?”
 - “A woolly sheep runs across the field.” → sheep → lamb, placed in Protein from Animals. “Lamb can be cooked as lamb chops. This one might be new to you; that is okay!”
 - “A goat climbs and jumps on rocky hills.” → goat → goat meat, placed in Protein from Animals. “Goat meat is enjoyed in many meals around the world, even if it is new to us.”
 - “A turkey struts around the barnyard.” → turkey → turkey, placed in Protein from Animals. “Turkey is often eaten as a sandwich or on Thanksgiving. Have you ever eaten turkey?”
 - “A bean plant grows tall, with its vines twisting upward.” → bean plant → beans, placed in 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!”
5. Small-Group Hands-On Practice. Divide students into small groups. Give each group a complete mixed set of animal/plant 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 with purpose, find the matching animal or plant, 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?”
 - “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.
6. Whole-Group Retrieval Game and Closing the Conceptual Connection
 - a. Gather students back together.
 - b. Play a quick retrieval game using question words: “Which animal gives us pork? Which food comes from a chicken? Which animal gives us both meat and eggs?”
 - c. 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.”
 - d. 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.”
7. Adjectives and Writing an Informative Piece. Gather students where they can see chart paper clearly.
 - a. Explain to students: “You just did such a great job matching animals and plants to the protein foods they give us. Now it is your turn to write about one of those matches. Before we start writing, we need one more tool: a special kind of describing word called an adjective. Adjectives are going to help us make our writing more interesting and specific.”
 - b. Explain adjectives: “An adjective describes a noun, a person, place, thing, or animal. Adjectives tell us more about what something looks like, feels like, or is like. Watch how this works: in the tough meat, tough is an adjective describing the meat. It tells us something specific about that meat: that it is hard to chew. In a large cow, large is an adjective describing the cow. It tells us something specific about the size of that cow.”
 - c. Ask students: “What does the adjective tough tell us about the meat? What does the adjective large tell us about the cow?”
 - d. Model a few more examples: “Here are a few more adjectives we might use today. A lean cut of meat has very little fat, so lean describes the meat as not fatty. A juicy piece of chicken is full of flavor and moisture, so juicy describes how it might taste. A strong animal has powerful muscles, so strong describes how the animal’s body is built.”
 - e. Ask students: “Can you think of an adjective to describe one of the animals or foods we matched today? What does your adjective tell us about it?”
 - f. Explain to students: “Great thinking! Now that we have some adjectives ready, let’s use them in our writing. We are going to write a whole informative piece about one of our matches today, and it has four parts.”

- g. Explain each part before modeling any of them:
- "First, we introduce our topic. This tells our reader exactly what we are writing about, right from the start."
 - "Second, we use facts to develop our topic. Facts are true information that help our reader understand more."
 - "Third, we include a definition. That means we explain what a tricky word means, in case our reader does not know it."
 - "Fourth, we end with a concluding statement. That is one sentence that wraps up our whole piece, not just our last fact."
- h. Model a complete example on chart paper, thinking aloud at each part:
- "My topic: Today I am writing about a hen and the protein food it gives us. This tells my reader exactly what I am writing about."
 - "My facts: A hen gives us a fresh egg. A fresh egg has protein. Notice I used the adjective fresh to describe the egg."
 - "My definition: Protein is a nutrient that helps our bodies grow and build strong muscles. I am defining a word my reader might not know."
 - "My concluding statement: Eating protein foods like eggs helps my body grow strong. This sentence wraps up my whole piece."
 - Point to and name each part: topic sentence, fact sentences, definition sentence, concluding statement. Point out the adjective fresh and what it describes.
- i. Explain to students: "As I was writing, I came across a tricky word to spell. Let me show you what to do when that happens." Model the sound-it-out-then-check strategy: "I want to spell nutrient. Let me sound it out first: n-oo-tree-ent. That is my best try. Now let me check our beginning dictionary to see if I am right... I see it is actually spelled n-u-t-r-i-e-n-t. Let me fix my spelling to match. That is what good writers do: try your best, then check to make sure."
- j. Ask students:
- "Which animal and food will you write about?"
 - What is one fact?
 - How will you use protein in a definition?
 - What adjective could you add?
 - How will you end your piece?"
8. Independent Writing — Protein Match Writing. Distribute the Protein Match writing sheet.
- a. Explain to students: "Choose one animal and protein food match from today. Write your own topic, facts, a definition of the word protein, and a concluding statement, the same way we did together on the chart paper. Try to use at least one adjective to describe your animal or food."
- b. Students write their own informative piece independently. Circulate and support:
- Prompt for topic and facts: "Which animal and food are you writing about? What does that animal give us?"
 - Prompt for definition: "How would you explain what protein means to someone who has never heard the word?"
 - Prompt for adjectives: "Can you add a describing word to tell more about your animal or food?"
 - Prompt for concluding statement: "How could you end your piece? What is one more thing you want your reader to know?"
 - Support for spelling: "Say the word slowly and write the sounds you hear. Then check our beginning dictionary to see if you spelled it correctly."

(Differentiation: Students who need additional support may use a sentence frame, such as "Today I am writing about a _____. A _____ gives us a _____ [adjective] [food]. Protein is a nutrient that helps our bodies _____. Eating _____ helps me grow strong," to help structure their piece while still writing independently. Students ready for a challenge can add a second fact or a second adjective.)

9. Closing Discussion and Kansas Connection. Gather students together with their completed writing sheets.
 - a. 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?"
 - b. 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. Whether you live out in the country and drive past fields and pastures every day, or 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."
 - c. 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?"
 - "What is one protein food your family buys or eats that you think came from a farm?"

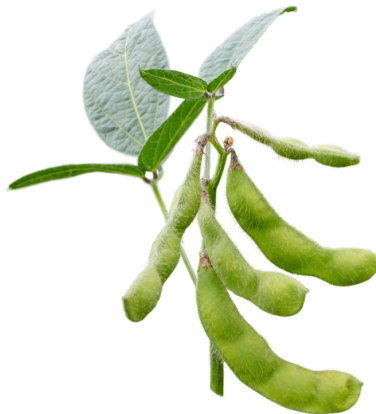
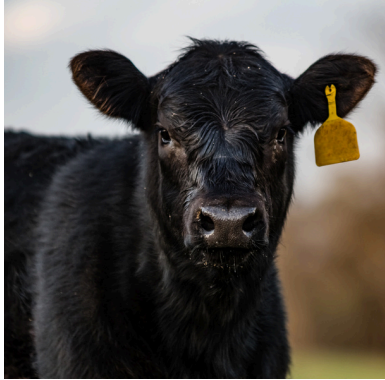
Assessment: Assess student understanding through teacher observation during the second read-aloud, protein introduction, decodable sentence reading, matching activity, small-group practice, retrieval game, shared writing, and independent writing. The teacher should note whether students can identify the main purpose of a section of text and describe how a reason supports a point the author makes, read decodable sentences with purpose and understanding, use adjectives to describe animals and foods, write an informative piece that introduces a topic, develops it with facts and a definition, and provides a concluding statement, recall information from the matching activity to support their writing, and consult a beginning dictionary to check and correct spelling. 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 practice throughout the week, and invite students to think of an adjective to describe each animal or food as they review the cards.

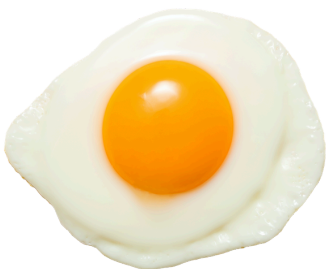
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Farm Animal Picture Cards



Protein Picture Cards



Decodable Sentence Cards

A hungry cow grazes in
the pasture all day.

A wooly sheep runs
across the field.

A goat climbs and jumps
on rocky hills.

A turkey struts around
the barnyard.

Decodable Sentence Cards

A bean plant grows tall, with
its vines twisting upwards.

A pink pig rolls around
in the mud.

A chicken pecks at the
ground, looking for food.

A fish swims quickly
through the pond.

A fish swims quickly
through the pond.

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.

Check Your Writing!



Topic



Fact



Spelling



Closure



Period at
the end.