

Lesson 1: Milk Comes From a Cow?

Grade Level: 1st Grade

Time: 45–50 minutes

Subject: ELA

Overview: This lesson is Lesson 1 of 5 and serves as the anchor lesson in the *Milk Comes From a Cow?* unit of the *Growing Readers* micro-curriculum, based on the book series by Kansas author Dan Yunk. Through a first read of the text, students build background knowledge about dairy farming while developing comprehension by identifying the main topic, retelling key details, and exploring how illustrations and text work together to convey meaning. The lesson intentionally bridges learning from *Celebrate Wheat*, connecting students' understanding that food has a farm story to the journey of milk from a Kansas dairy farm to the foods they enjoy every day. This shared foundation prepares students for deeper literacy, science, and agricultural learning throughout the remainder of the unit.

Skillset: Activating and connecting prior knowledge across units, comprehension during initial reading, vocabulary development, distinguishing illustration information from text information, using illustrations and details to describe key ideas, describing connections between individuals and events in a text, collaborative conversation that builds on others' ideas, sequencing key events, asking and answering questions about key details, identifying an author's reasons, and Kansas connections through dairy farming and food knowledge.

Kansas Academic Standards

Kansas ELA Standards

SL.1.1 Participate in collaborative conversations with diverse partners about topics and texts with peers and adults in small and large groups to expand language comprehension.

SL.1.1.a Follow agreed-upon rules for discussions (e.g., listening to others with care, speaking one at a time about the topics and texts under discussion).

SL.1.1.b Build on others' talk in conversations by responding to the comments of others through multiple exchanges.

SL.1.2 Ask and answer questions about key details in a text read aloud, information presented orally or through media.

RI.1.1 Ask and answer questions about key details in a text.

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

RI.1.3 Describe the connection between two individuals, events, ideas or pieces of information in a text.

RI.1.6 Distinguish between information provided by illustrations or other graphics and information provided by the words in a text.

RI.1.7 Use the illustrations and details in a text to describe its key ideas.

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

Objectives

English Language Arts Objectives

Students will be able to:

- Identify the main topic of the book, *Milk Comes From a Cow?*, and retell key details from the text.
- Ask and answer questions about key details in the book during and after the read-aloud.
- Describe the connection between two individuals, events, or pieces of information in the text (e.g., Farmer George and Kailey, or eating/drinking and milk production).
- Distinguish between information shown in the illustrations and information given in the words of the text.
- Describe key ideas about dairy farming using illustrations and details in the text.
- Identify reasons the author gives for why it is important to know where milk comes from.
- Participate in collaborative conversations, building on a partner's comments through multiple exchanges.
- Sequence three major events from the story (first–next–last).
- Connect ideas from what they learned about farming in *Celebrate Wheat* and new learning about dairy.

Materials Needed

- Book: *Milk Comes From a Cow?* by Dan Yunk, illustrated by Michelle Johnson, physical copy or author read-aloud on the unit landing page
- Chart paper titled: "What Do We Know About Milk?"
- Markers
- *Celebrate Wheat* anchor chart or unit materials from the previous unit (for reference)

Lesson Procedures

1. Connecting to What We Know
 - a. Explain to students: "In our last unit, we read *Celebrate Wheat* and learned that Kansas farmers grow wheat that becomes the food we eat every day. We followed Kailey as she learned where pizza crust comes from. Remember how surprised she was to find out wheat becomes flour, and flour becomes pizza crust?"
 - b. Ask students:
 - "What is one thing you remember about wheat and Kansas farming from our last book?"
 - "Kailey loved the pizza at her birthday party. What was the crust made from?"
 - "What other foods did we learn about that come from Kansas farms?"
 - c. Explain/bridge the connection to students: "In *Celebrate Wheat*, one of the pizza toppings was cheese. Do you remember where cheese comes from? Today we are going to read a new book called *Milk Comes From a Cow?* It is written by Dan Yunk — the same author who wrote *Celebrate Wheat* — and illustrated by Michelle Johnson. Kailey is back, and this time she is going to learn about another important food that comes from Kansas farms. Just like wheat, this food has a surprising journey before it gets to our table."

- d. Kansas Connection
Explain to students: “In our last book, we learned that Kansas is a wheat state. But Kansas is also a cattle state. All around Kansas — on farms and ranches, in fields and pastures — there are cows. Some of those cows are dairy cows, and they produce something we use every single day: milk. Whether you live in the country and have seen cows grazing in a pasture, or you live in town and pick up a gallon of milk at the grocery store, dairy farming is part of your Kansas story too.”
2. Building Background Knowledge
 - a. Explain to students: “Now let’s think about what we already know about milk and where it comes from. In our last unit, we learned that food has a farm story behind it. Milk has a farm story too.”
 - b. Ask students:
 - “Where do you think milk comes from before it gets to the grocery store?”
 - “What foods do you eat or drink that are made from milk? Think about cheese, yogurt, butter, or ice cream.”
 - “Have you ever seen cows on a farm or on a drive through Kansas?”
 - c. Kansas Connection:
Explain to students: “Milk starts on a dairy farm, and Kansas has dairy farms all across the state. If you live out in the country or your family has land, you might have seen dairy cows in a pasture or heard about a neighbor who milks cows. If you live in town, you might not have thought about where your cereal milk comes from before today. Both experiences are part of Kansas — and today we are going to learn how that milk gets from a cow all the way to your bowl.”
 - d. Record student responses on chart paper under “What Do We Know About Milk?” to reference throughout the unit.
3. Setting the Purpose for Listening
 - a. Explain to students: “Today is our first read of *Milk Comes From a Cow*? Our job is to listen and understand what is happening in the story. We will follow Kailey as she learns where milk really comes from. As you listen, think about how this story reminds you of what Kailey learned in *Celebrate Wheat*. Also pay attention to the pictures — sometimes pictures show us things the words do not say.”
 - b. Prompt students to encourage thinking:
 - “What is the main topic Kailey is curious about?”
 - “Who teaches Kailey in this story?”
 - “How does milk get from a cow to our homes?”
4. First Read: Author Read-Aloud
 - a. Play the YouTube Author Read-Aloud or read aloud from the physical copy. Pause only strategically for best-practice comprehension moves. Stopping Point Suggestions: 3 total, brief stops. Keep stops short to maintain the flow of the story.
 - Stop #1 — Vocabulary & Key Details: Holstein / dairy cow / udder
Ask students:
 - “Farmer George showed Kailey black and white cows. What are they called?”
 - “What is the main topic of our book so far? What key details have we learned?”

- “The book says the udder is a large bag between a cow’s rear legs. What do you think the udder is used for?”
- Stop #2 — Illustration vs. Text & Connections: After the milking parlor is described.
Ask students:
 - “What does the picture of the milking parlor show us that the words do not fully explain?”
 - “What is the connection between the cow eating and drinking and the cow producing milk?”
 - “In *Celebrate Wheat*, wheat traveled from the field to the elevator to the mill. Where does milk travel after the farm?”
- Stop #3 — Clarification & Fun Question: After Kailey asks if chocolate milk comes from brown cows.
 - Explain to students: “Kailey asked a great question! It is okay to wonder about things. What questions do YOU have about milk or dairy farms?”

5. Illustration & Text Connection

- Display a selected page (recommended: the milking parlor or the Holstein cows). Explain to students: “Good readers notice that sometimes a picture shows us something the words do not say, and sometimes the words tell us something we cannot see in the picture. Let’s look closely at this page.”

Ask students:

- “What does this picture show us?”
- “What do the words on this page tell us that the picture does not show?”
- “What does the picture show us that the words do not say?”
- “Using both the picture and the words, what is the key idea on this page?”

Guide students to see that illustrations show us places and processes we may not be able to visit — like a milking parlor — just as *Celebrate Wheat* showed us kernels being unloaded into trucks. Words and pictures work together to give us the full idea.

6. Turn-and-Talk: Building on Each Other’s Ideas

- Pair students with a partner before beginning the discussion.
- Explain to students while modeling rules: “Now we are going to talk with a partner about what we just heard. Remember our discussion rules: listen with care, and speak one at a time. We are also working on building on what our partner says — that means after your partner shares, you respond to their idea before sharing your own.”
- Model building on a partner’s talk:
 - “If your partner says, ‘Milk comes from cows,’ you could respond: ‘That’s right, and I also remember that the cow has to eat and drink first.’ You are adding on to what they said.”
- Prompt students:
 - “Tell your partner one thing you learned about where milk comes from. If you can, connect it to something we learned about farming in *Celebrate Wheat*.”
 - “Listen to your partner’s idea, then respond by adding more information or asking a question about what they said.”

- e. Example teacher follow-up:
 - “I heard you say milk comes from cows. Can you tell me more about what happens to the milk after the cow is milked?” (Extending the exchange)
 - “You mentioned trucks carry the milk. How is that like what happened to the wheat in our last book?” (Cross-unit connection)
- 7. Checking Comprehension & Sequencing Key Ideas
 - a. Ask the whole group:
 - “What is the main topic of this book?”
 - “What happened first in our book?”
 - “What happened next?”
 - “What happened last?”
 - b. Record student ideas in a simple three-step chart on the board or chart paper.
Possible 1st grade responses:
 - First: “Kailey wanted milk for cereal, but the carton was empty, so Grandma took her to a dairy farm.”
 - Next: “Farmer George showed Kailey his Holstein cows, how they eat and drink, and how a milking machine gets the milk out of the udder.”
 - Last: “The milk traveled by truck to a processing plant and then to grocery stores. Kailey could not wait to tell her parents that milk comes from cows!”
- 8. Author’s Reasons
 - a. Ask students: “Why does the author think it is important for kids to know where milk comes from? What reasons does he give?”
Students may respond:
 - So we know it comes from cows, not just the store.
 - So we understand how hard farmers work.
 - So we know where our food really comes from.
 - b. Extend with a cross-unit bridge: “Dan Yunk also wrote *Celebrate Wheat*. He writes books about where our food comes from. Why do you think he keeps writing books like this? What does he want kids to know about Kansas farms and farmers?”
 - c. Record responses on chart paper.
- 9. Kansas Connection: Explain to students: “Kansas is not just a wheat state — it is also a cattle state. Dairy cows are raised on farms all across Kansas, and the milk they produce ends up in our homes, schools, and restaurants every single day.”
 - a. Ask students:
 - “Now that you know milk comes from cows on a dairy farm — what dairy foods do YOU love?”
 - “Why do YOU think dairy farming is important to people in Kansas?”
 - “Can you see a connection between what we learned in *Celebrate Wheat* and what we learned today?”
 - b. Explain to students: “No matter where you live in Kansas — on a farm or ranch, in a small town, or in a bigger city — dairy farming is part of your life. If your family has land or lives near farms, you might have seen dairy cows grazing in a pasture or heard about a neighbor who milks cows every morning. If you live in town, you might not have thought much about where your milk comes from — but now you do. The cereal milk, the cheese on your pizza, the butter on your toast

— it all started with a cow on a Kansas farm. Kailey figured that out when her milk carton was empty, and now you know it too.”

Assessment: Student understanding is assessed through ongoing formative and observational measures embedded throughout the lesson, including participation in collaborative discussions that build on a partner’s ideas, use of dairy-related vocabulary, identification of the main topic and retelling of key details, sequencing of key events from the text, ability to distinguish information shown in illustrations from information given in the words, and verbal responses that demonstrate comprehension of connections within the text and the author’s reasons for why knowing where milk comes from is important. Special attention should be given to moments where students make unprompted connections between this text and *Celebrate Wheat*, as these cross-unit connections indicate developing schema and meaningful learning transfer.

Supplemental Activities: Have students draw their favorite dairy food and write one to two sentences about it (e.g., “My favorite dairy food is cheese. It comes from milk.”). For an extended cross-unit connection, invite students to draw a simple two-part picture: a cow on one side of the page and the dairy product it becomes on the other, connected by an arrow, with a sentence describing the connection. Display drawings alongside the “What Do We Know About Milk?” chart to build classroom community and reinforce the farm-to-table connection. These drawings can be compared with the wheat-to-food drawings from the *Celebrate Wheat* unit to show students how different Kansas farm products connect to the food on their tables.

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