

Lesson 1: Milk Comes From a Cow?

Grade Level: 2nd Grade

Time: 45–50 minutes

Subject: ELA

Overview: This lesson is Lesson 1 of 5 in the *Milk Comes From a Cow?* unit of the *Growing Readers* micro-curriculum, based on the book series by Kansas author Dan Yunk. Serving as the ELA anchor lesson for the unit, students engage in a purposeful first read of the text while asking and answering who, what, where, when, why, and how questions to demonstrate understanding of key details. Through text-based discussions, they identify the author's main purpose, support their thinking with evidence from the text, and build on classmates' ideas during collaborative conversations. The lesson also strengthens connections to the previous *Celebrate Wheat* unit by reinforcing the farm-to-table journey of agricultural products and preparing students for the deeper literacy and cross-curricular investigations in the lessons that follow.

Skillset: Activating and connecting prior knowledge across units, asking and answering who/what/where/when/why/how questions to demonstrate text understanding, identifying the main purpose of a text, sustained academic conversation in which students link their comments to others, synthesizing key ideas across the text, and Kansas connections through dairy farming and food knowledge.

Kansas Academic Standards

Kansas ELA Standards

RI.2.1 Ask and answer such questions as who, what, where, when, why, and how to demonstrate understanding of key details in a text.

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

SL.2.1 Participate in collaborative conversations with diverse partners about topics and texts with peers and adults in small and larger groups to expand language comprehension.

SL.2.1.a Follow agreed-upon rules for discussions (e.g., gaining the floor in respectful ways, listening to others with care, speaking one at a time about the topics and texts under discussion).

SL.2.1.b Build on others' talk in conversations by linking their comments to the remarks of others.

Objectives

English Language Arts Objectives

Students will be able to:

- Ask and answer who, what, where, when, why, and how questions to demonstrate understanding of key details in *Milk Comes From a Cow?*

- Identify the main purpose of *Milk Comes From a Cow?*, including what the author wants to answer, explain, or describe.
- Participate in collaborative conversations in which they link their comments directly to classmates' remarks.
- Follow agreed-upon discussion rules, including gaining the floor respectfully and speaking one at a time.
- Connect key ideas from the text to prior knowledge from *Celebrate Wheat*.

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
- Smartboard or display screen
- Chart paper and markers
- *Celebrate Wheat* anchor chart or unit materials from the previous unit (for reference)

Lesson Procedures

1. Connecting to What We Know

- 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. Today we are going to read a new book by the same author — Dan Yunk. Kailey is back, and this time she is going to investigate a different question: where does milk come from?"
- Ask students:
 - "What do you remember about how food travels from a Kansas farm to our table? Think about the steps wheat took."
 - "In *Celebrate Wheat*, one of the pizza toppings was cheese. What do you think cheese is made from?"
 - "What do you already know about where milk comes from before it gets to the grocery store?"
- Explain to students: "Dan Yunk writes books about where our food comes from. He wants students to understand the farm story behind the food they eat every day. Today we are going to read his book about milk with that same question in mind: what is the farm story behind milk?"
- Kansas Connection: Explain to students: "Kansas is a wheat state — but it is also known for raising cattle. Most cattle in Kansas are beef cattle, but dairy farms are growing across Kansas, and they produce the milk that ends up in our homes, schools, and restaurants every day. Whether you have seen dairy cows in a pasture near your home or you pick up milk at a grocery store in town, Kansas dairy farmers are part of your daily life."

2. Setting the Purpose for Reading

- Explain to students: "In second grade, good readers approach a text with purpose. Before we read, let's set up some questions we want to answer as we listen. We use the words who, what, where, when, why, and how to help us think deeply about what we are reading."
- Record these pre-reading questions on chart paper and leave visible throughout the read-aloud:

- “Who is this book about? Who teaches Kailey?”
 - “What does Kailey learn? What is the main topic?”
 - “Where does the story take place? Where does milk come from and where does it go?”
 - “When does milk get processed? When does it reach our homes?”
 - “Why did Dan Yunk write this book? What is his main purpose?”
 - “How does milk get from a cow to our table? What steps does it take?”
- c. Explain to students: “As we read, keep these questions in your mind. After we finish, we are going to answer them together — and you are going to need to use the text to back up your answers.”
3. First Read: Author Read-Aloud
- a. Play the YouTube Author Read-Aloud or read aloud from the physical copy. Pause only strategically. Stopping Point Suggestions (3 total, brief stops. Keep stops short to maintain the flow of the story.):
- Stop #1: Who, What, Where: After Farmer George introduces the Holstein cows.
Ask students:
 - “Who is teaching Kailey on the dairy farm? What is his name?”
 - “What kind of cows does Farmer George have? What detail does the book give us about why Holsteins are common?”
 - “Where does milk start its journey? Point to the specific place the book describes.”
 - Stop #2: How & Scientific Process: After the milking parlor is described.
Ask students:
 - “How does the milk get from the cow to the tank? What steps does the book describe?”
 - “Look at this picture of the milking parlor. How does this image contribute to what the words are explaining? What does the image show that the words alone could not?”
 - “Why do healthy dairy cows need food and water before they can produce milk?”
 - Stop #3: Why & Author’s Purpose: After the chocolate milk question.
Ask students:
 - “Why do you think Dan Yunk included Kailey’s question about chocolate milk? What does that tell us about his purpose?”
 - “Based on what you have read so far, what do you think Dan Yunk mainly wants to answer, explain, or describe in this book?”
4. Answering Questions to Demonstrate Understanding
- a. Return to the pre-reading chart. Work through each question as a class, asking students to support their answers with specific details from the text:
- “Who: Who are the main people in this book? Who does the teaching?”
 - “What: What is the main topic? What did Kailey learn that she did not know before?”
 - “Where: Where does milk start? Where does it go after the farm?”
 - “When: When does the processing happen? When does the milk reach a grocery store?”
 - “Why: Why do you think Kailey’s grandma took her to Farmer George’s farm? Why do you think the author told this story through Kailey’s eyes?”

- “How: How does milk get from the cow to our homes? Can you describe each step in order?”
 - b. Push for specificity: “Don’t just tell me it comes from a cow — tell me how. What happens first? What happens after that? What is the last step before it gets to us?” This is the core comprehension step of the lesson. Students should be able to trace the process from cow to consumer using language from the book. If responses are vague, return to the text to locate specific evidence.
5. Author’s Purpose
- a. Explain to students: “Every author writes with a purpose. In informational text, authors usually want to do one or more of three things: answer a question, explain something, or describe something. Let’s think about what Dan Yunk wanted to do in this book.”
 - b. Ask students:
 - “What question does the title *Milk Comes From a Cow*? suggest the author wants to answer?”
 - “Does this book mainly answer, explain, or describe — or does it do more than one of those things?”
 - “Why do you think Dan Yunk chose to tell this story through Kailey’s eyes? How does that choice serve his purpose?”
 - “Dan Yunk also wrote *Celebrate Wheat*. What seems to be his overall purpose as an author? What does he want Kansas students to understand?”
 - c. Guide students toward a precise statement of purpose. Model one if needed:
 - “Dan Yunk’s main purpose in this book is to explain where milk comes from by describing the scientific process from dairy farm to consumer, and to answer the question that many children have: does milk really come from a cow?”
 - d. Ask students to refine or add to that statement using their own thinking.
6. Structured Academic Discussion
- a. Explain to students: “Now we are going to have a structured academic discussion about what we read. In second grade, we do not just share our own ideas — we link what we say directly to what a classmate said. Listen carefully, because you will need to connect your comment to someone else’s.”
 - b. Teach and post sentence starters for linking comments:
 - “I agree with ___ because...”
 - “Adding on to what ___ said...”
 - “I want to build on ___’s idea by...”
 - “I see it differently than ___ because...”
 - “___ made me think about...”
 - c. Model with a student or teacher example before releasing:
 - “Let me show you what linking your comment looks like. If Mia says, ‘Milk comes from a cow on a dairy farm,’ I do not just agree and move on. I use one of our sentence starters to connect what I say directly to what she said. Watch: ‘Adding on to what Mia said, the milk doesn’t go straight to the store — it has to be processed at a plant first and then transported by truck.’ I named Mia, I used a sentence starter, and I added new information that built on her idea. That is what linking looks like.”

- d. Discussion prompts. Use two or three:
 - “What surprised you most about where milk comes from? Link your comment to someone else’s idea.”
 - “What is the most important step in the milk journey and why? Do you agree or disagree with what a classmate said?”
 - “How is the journey of milk similar to the journey of wheat in *Celebrate Wheat*? Build on what someone else noticed.”
 - “What do you think Dan Yunk wants students to understand after reading this book? Can you link your idea to something a classmate said?”
 - e. Remind students of discussion rules:
 - Gain the floor respectfully — raise your hand or wait for a pause; do not interrupt.
 - Listen with care while others are speaking — you need to hear what they said to link to it.
 - Speak one at a time and stay on the topic of the text. If students struggle to link comments, prompt them: “Who said something you want to connect to? Use one of our sentence starters.” Resist the urge to simply validate — push for the connection to be explicit and named.
7. Kansas Connection & Synthesis
- a. Explain to students: “Kansas is not just a wheat state — it is also a dairy and cattle state. Dairy cows are raised on farms across Kansas, and the milk they produce travels through the scientific process we described today — from the milking parlor to the processing plant to grocery stores and schools all across the state.”
 - b. Ask students:
 - “Thinking about what we learned from the book, which parts of the milk journey happen right here in Kansas? Which parts might happen in other states?”
 - “Why do you think it matters for students to understand where their food comes from?”
 - “Dan Yunk wrote both *Celebrate Wheat* and *Milk Comes From a Cow*? What does that tell you about what he thinks students need to know?”
 - c. Explain to students: “The book we read today showed us that milk does not just appear on a shelf — it starts with a cow, travels through a milking parlor, moves to a processing plant, rides on a truck, and lands in a store before it ever gets to your table. That journey happens every single day, for every carton of milk in Kansas and every other state. Wherever you live — on a ranch, in a small town, or in the middle of a city — that journey connects you to a Kansas dairy farmer. Dan Yunk wrote this book so that students just like you would understand that connection.”

Assessment: Student understanding is assessed entirely through observation and oral participation throughout this lesson. Teacher should note whether students can ask and answer who, what, where, when, why, and how questions with text-based specificity rather than vague or general responses, articulate the author's main purpose and distinguish between answering, explaining, and describing as authorial goals, and link their discussion comments explicitly to a named classmate's remarks using provided sentence starters. Students who independently connect the milk journey to the wheat journey from *Celebrate Wheat*, or who identify that Dan

Yunk's purpose spans both books, demonstrate a level of synthesis beyond the standard and should be noted.

Supplemental Activities: Display the Steps of Milk Production chart alongside the wheat farm-to-table anchor chart from *Celebrate Wheat* so students can visually compare the two processes and identify similarities and differences across units.

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