



Lesson 1: The Soil Neighborhood

Grade Level: 2nd Grade

Time: 40–45 minutes

Subject: ELA

Overview: This lesson is Lesson 1 of 5 in *The Soil Neighborhood* unit within the *Growing Readers* micro-curriculum, based on a series of books written by Kansas author Dan Yunk. Lesson 1 serves as an ELA-only anchor lesson focused on a first read of the text through an author read-aloud. Students build comprehension by listening for the main topic, identifying key details, analyzing how illustrations support meaning, and identifying the author’s reasons why soil is important. Students engage in structured discussion and connect the text to their own experiences with soil, land, and agriculture. This lesson establishes a shared understanding of the text, supporting deeper analysis and cross-curricular connections in later lessons.

Skillset: Listening comprehension during initial reading, vocabulary, illustrations/text connections, discussion norms, identifying the main topic and author’s reasons, and Kansas connections through soil knowledge.

Kansas Academic Standards:

Kansas ELA Standards

SL.2.1 Participate in collaborative conversations with diverse partners about grade 2 and texts with peers and adults in small and larger groups.

SL.2.2 Recount or describe key ideas or details from a text read aloud or information presented orally or through other media.

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.

RI.2.7 Explain how specific images (e.g., a diagram showing how a machine works) contribute to and clarify a text.

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

Objectives:

English Language Arts Objectives

Students will be able to:

- Ask and answer questions about key details in a text read aloud.
- Ask questions to clarify any confusion about the text during the discussion.
- Participate in collaborative conversations by following agreed-upon discussion rules (listening to others, taking turns speaking).
- Build on a partner’s ideas by responding with a related comment or question.
- Identify the main topic of the text and retell key details using first–next–last language.
- Explain how illustrations help clarify information in the text.

- Identify the author’s purpose for writing the text
- Identify the reasons the author gives for why soil is important.

Materials Needed

- Book: *The Soil Neighborhood* by Dan Yunk
- Smartboard/projector
- Chart paper titled: “Why Soil Is Important?”

Lesson Procedures

1. Building Background Knowledge
 - a. Explain to students: “Today, *we are going to read The Soil Neighborhood!* Before we start, think about all the times you’ve seen soil or touched soil, maybe on your family’s ranch, in a garden, in a pasture, near cattle tanks, or along the driveway. Soil is a big part of our lives here in Kansas.”
 - b. Ask students:
 - “Where have you seen soil in your daily life?”
 - “What grows in soil here where we live?”
 - “Why do you think soil matters to people in our community?”
2. Setting the Purpose for Listening
 - a. Explain to Students: “Today is our first read of the text. During a first read, our goal is to understand the main topic and key ideas the author wants us to learn. We will reread this book later to look more closely at details.”
 - b. Prompt students to encourage thinking:
 - “What is this text mostly about?”
 - “What does the author want to explain?”
 - “Why does the author think soil is important?”
3. First Read: The Soil Neighborhood
 - a. Read the book or play the author read aloud.
Pause only strategically for best-practice comprehension moves
Stopping Point Suggestions (2-3 total, briefstops to maintain flow):
 - b. Stop #1 Vocabulary: Soil / Neighborhood
Ask students: “Based on what we’ve heard and seen, what does the author mean by a ‘soil neighborhood’?”
 - c. Stop #2 Characters (Soil Friends):
Ask students:
 - “Who are some of the soil neighbors the author talks about?”
 - “What do they do to help the soil?”
 - d. Stop #3 Clarification:
Explain to students: “Good readers stop and ask questions when something is confusing. What questions do you have about the information we just heard?”
4. Turn-and-Talk: Following Discussion Rules
 - a. Teacher pairs up students and explains while modeling rules:
 - “Face your partner.”
 - “Listen quietly.”
 - “Take turns.”
 - b. Prompt students: “Tell your partner one important thing you learned about soil from the text. Then respond to what your partner shared.”

- c. Example teacher follow-up:
“I heard you say soil helps plants grow. What did the author say that helped you understand that?” (Extending the exchange)
5. Checking Comprehension & Sequencing Key Ideas
 - a. Ask the whole group:
 - “What was explained first in the text?”
 - “What information came next?”
 - “What was explained last?”
 - b. Record student ideas in a simple three-step chart labeled First/Next/Last using student language. Possible student responses:
 - First: “The author explained that soil is like a neighborhood.”
 - Next: “The author described what different soil neighbors do.”
 - Last: “The author explained why soil helps crops grow.”
6. Text–Illustration Connection
 - a. Display a selected illustration from the text.
 - b. Ask students:
 - “What information does this illustration show?”
 - “How does this picture help explain the words the author wrote?”
 - “What information does this illustration give us?”
 - c. Guide students to explain how illustrations clarify information, rather than just decorating the page.
7. Author’s Reasons
 - a. Ask students:
 - “What was the author’s main purpose for writing this text?”
 - “What reason(s) does the author give to support the idea that soil is important?”
 - b. Record responses on chart paper titled “Why Soil Is Important.”
8. Kansas Connection
 - a. Explain to students: “In Kansas, especially in our rural communities, soil is part of our lives every day. Farmers, ranchers, and gardeners depend on healthy soil so crops, grass, and pastures can grow for livestock and families.”
 - b. Ask students: “Why do YOU think soil matters to the people who live here?” Encourage ranch/garden/farm stories; these deepen comprehension by attaching new information to familiar contexts.

Assessment:

Student understanding is assessed through ongoing formative and observational measures embedded throughout the lesson, including participation in collaborative discussions, responses to text-based questions, explanation of how illustrations clarify meaning, identification of the author’s purpose, and identification of the author’s reasons for why soil is important.

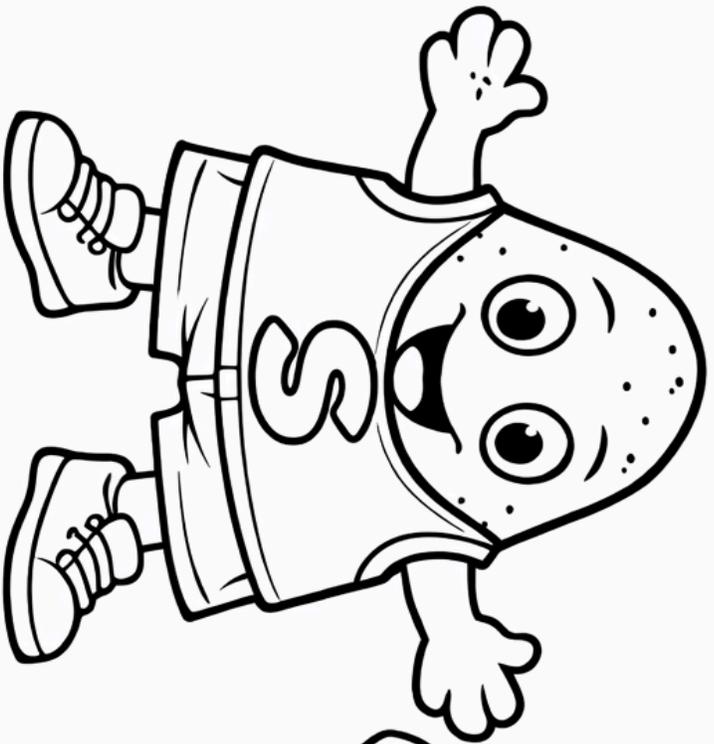
Supplemental Activities:

Have students color the coloring sheet with Sandy, Rocky, and Clay provided below.

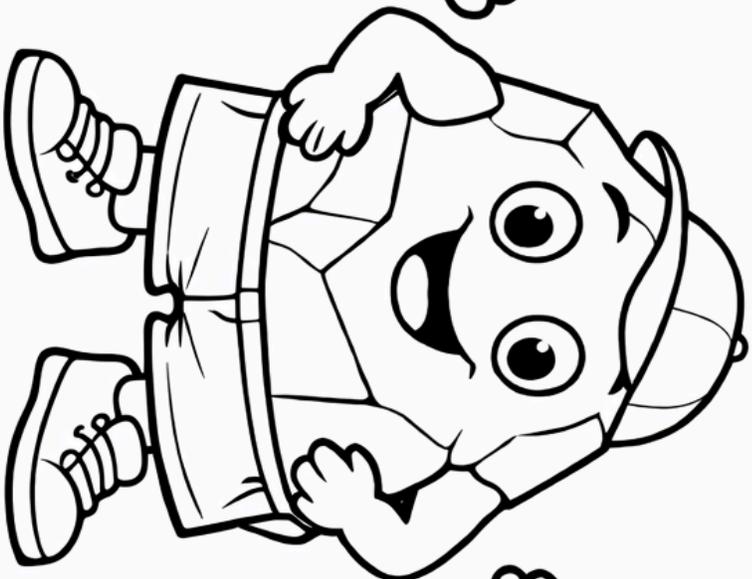
Author: Kelsy Sproul, Literacy Specialist, 2026 KFAC Teacher of the Year, KFAC Curriculum Advisory Council, Former Elementary Teacher.



Sandy



Rocky



Clay

