

NEBRASKA  
**AGRICULTURE  
IN THE CLASSROOM**  
NEBRASKA FARM BUREAU FOUNDATION

**Book: *A Leaf Can Be...***

By: Laura Purdie Salas

**Activity Level: Basic**

Source: Adapted from *A Leaf Can Be... Teacher's Guide* by Laura Purdie Salas

**Purpose**

*A Leaf Can Be...* is a beautiful, whimsical, rhythmic, imaginative story highlighting some long-known roles and surprising, not-before-realized roles leaves play in nature and in connection with other creatures. Children will grasp a sense of the complexity of the natural world and the way animals, plants, sun, soil, and water depend on each other.

**Vocabulary**

bursts	linger	orioles
ladle	welter	concealer

**What's the Connection to Agriculture?**

This book shows leaves in different seasons. A seasonal climate is an important factor in the life of farmers, people who are growing plants to be used for food, fiber, and fuel. It is important to be able to plant the seeds with enough time for them to sprout, grow, produce seeds (some of them), mature, and be harvested before snowy weather sets in.

**State Standards It Supports**

**LA 0.1.6.c, LA 1.1.6.c, LA 2.1.6.c**—Identify and explain why authors use literary devices (e.g., simile, alliteration, onomatopoeia, imagery, rhythm, personification).  
**LA 0.2.1.g, LA 1.2.1.g, LA 2.2.1.g**—Persevere in writing tasks of various length and complexity.  
**LA 0.2.2.e, LA 1.2.2.e, LA 2.2.2.e**—Compare various mentor texts and/or exemplars to create a similar piece.  
**LA 0.3.3.d, LA 1.3.3.d, LA 2.3.3.d**—Listen, ask clarifying questions, and respond to information being communicated about a topic, text, or issue under study.

**Materials**

- Book, *A Leaf Can Be...* by Laura Purdie Salas and Violeta Dabija
- Pencil
- Printer paper
- Crayons
- Leaves – green (not dry) leaves for rubbings

**Links to Resources (cross reference materials & activities)**

*A Leaf Can Be...* Teacher's Guide by book's author Laura Purdie Salas

[http://laurasalas.com/wp-content/uploads/2015/09/Leaf\\_TG.pdf](http://laurasalas.com/wp-content/uploads/2015/09/Leaf_TG.pdf)

Life of a Tree Enactment (NE AITC)

<https://nefbfoundation.org/educators/teacher-resources/enriching-activities>

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**BASIC ACTIVITY:**

**1. Background Information**

A seasonal climate has distinct changes in seasons from spring to summer, fall to winter, etc. The changes in leaves described in *A Leaf Can Be...* demonstrate a seasonal climate, like Nebraska residents enjoy.

Agricultural products grown by farmers play many roles, especially providing us with food, fiber, and fuel. Plants produce food for people or livestock (soybeans for oil or edamame, corn for popcorn or cattle feed), fiber for carpet and upholstery (soybeans for carpet backing and car seat foam), and fuel (soybeans for biodiesel, corn for ethanol).

**2. Interest Approach**

Go on a walk and look at leaves. If possible, collect larger leaves (at least 3-6" at one point) for optional rubbings activity.

If not possible to go on a walk, ask students where they can see leaves at their home, on their way to school, etc.

Ask students questions:

- Where do you see leaves?
- What are they doing?
- How are people or animals using them?

Ask the class to brainstorm different things leaves can do or be used for. Start a brainstorming list on the board.

**3. Listening Questions**

*Prepare students for the story to be read aloud with these pre-reading questions:*

- Name some plants that grow near us. Can we name some plants that grow things we eat?
- Have you ever seen an animal drinking water from a leaf? If you go outside in the early morning when there is dew on the leaves, you might see insects or other small animals sipping up the dew. Can you think of other ways animals might get water from leaves?
- What kind of plants might give you welts on your skin? Poison ivy has a liquid inside its leaves that gives most people a rash. Some plants, like nettles and thistles, have sharp, stinging leaves. Have you ever gotten a rash or cut from a plant?

**4. Procedure**

*Take a book walk:*

- Ask students to look at the front and back cover of the book carefully.
- As you page through the book, invite students to notice the change in seasons – leaves are spring and summer green in the first half of the book, and then fall colors and in winter snow in the second half of the book.

*Read A Leaf Can Be... aloud.*

- Ask students to share the leaf roles that surprised them the most.

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*Be the Leaf!*

- Encourage students to imagine that we are leaves.
- Pick one job leaves do and write about your job in a poem or a story. *For Kindergarten classes, take input for a class poem. For 1<sup>st</sup> and 2<sup>nd</sup> graders, allow students to write their own poems.*
- We write as if we ARE the leaf. This is called 'personification' in writing. For instance, if we choose "water ladle," we might write a poem like this:

Waiting Water  
I cup my edges,  
catch May rain  
and wait wait wait  
until a lizard steps on me  
flickers its tongue  
and gobbles my drops

- If students were able to make leaf rubbings, encourage them to write their final poem on the page with their leaf rubbing (1<sup>st</sup> & 2<sup>nd</sup> grade), or display leaf rubbings with class poem (Kindergarten).

## 5. Follow-Up Questions

- Can you name a few examples of plants that grow parts we eat? Parts we use in other ways? Parts we use for fiber? Parts we use for fuel?
- Leaves are food for many animals, including humans. What's your favorite edible leaf: Romaine lettuce? Spinach? Kale? Did you know that some kinds of dandelion leaves are edible? Note: Never eat a leaf without checking with your parents first!
- Growing plants is one way to help planet Earth, since plants filter tiny bits of pollution out of the air. Have you ever grown a plant? What are the three things every plant needs to grow? (Soil, sun, water.)
- Leaves are definitely useful, but they are beautiful, too. When do you think leaves are the prettiest? Have you ever picked a leaf up off the ground just because it looked neat?

## 6. Extension Activities

- Nebraska Ag Facts Brochure  
[http://www.nda.nebraska.gov/publications/ne\\_ag\\_facts\\_brochure.pdf](http://www.nda.nebraska.gov/publications/ne_ag_facts_brochure.pdf)
- The Apple Cycle (NE AITC)  
<https://nefbfoundation.org/images/FOUndation/Educators/Enriching-Activities/The-Apple-Cycle.pdf>
- Edible Plant Parts (NE AITC)  
<https://nefbfoundation.org/images/FOUndation/Educators/Enriching-Activities/Edible-Plants.pdf>
- Farming in a Glove (NE AITC)  
<https://nefbfoundation.org/images/FOUndation/Educators/Enriching-Activities/Farming-in-a-Glove.pdf>