

A Leaf Can Be...

By: Laura Purdie Salas

Activity Level: Basic

PURPOSE

Students will write a personified poem about a leaf to grasp a sense of the complexity of the natural world and the way animals, plants, sun, soil, and water depend on each other.

NEBRASKA STATE EDUCATION CONTENT STANDARDS CONNECTION

LA.K.RP.4 | LA.1.RP.4 | LA.2.RP.4

Describe the basic structure of a literary text, including how literary elements are introduced and developed and conflicts are resolved.

LA.K.W.2.b | LA.1.W.2.b | LA.2.W.2.b

Adapt writing processes to sustain engagement in short and long-term writing tasks of increasing complexity.

LA.K.SL.1 | LA.1.SL.1.a | LA.2.SL.1.a

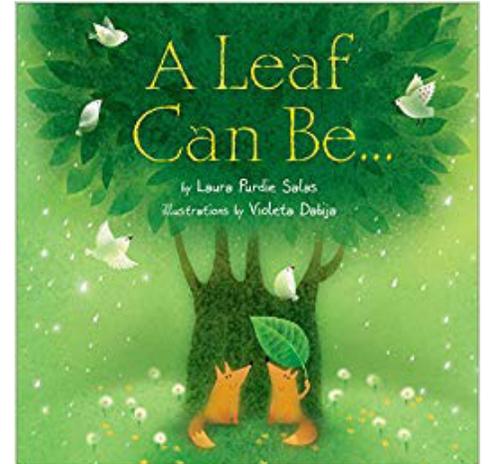
Ask pertinent questions to acquire or confirm information.

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.

MATERIALS

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



VOCABULARY

Bursts – break open suddenly, often from internal pressure

Linger – stay in a place longer than necessary

Orioles – bird with black and orange or yellow plumage

Ladle – large, long-handled spoon with a cup-shaped bowl

Welter – to twist or roll one’s body about

Conceal – to hide, prevent from being noticed

BACKGROUND AGRICULTURAL 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).

INTEREST APPROACH

- Go on a walk to look at leaves. If possible, collect larger leaves (at least 3-6” at one point) for optimal rubbings activity. If it’s 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.
- 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?

PROCEDURE

1. Take a book walk:
 - a. Ask students to look at the front and back cover of the book carefully.
 - b. 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.
2. Read *A Leaf Can Be...* aloud.
 - a. Ask students to share the leaf roles that surprised them the most.
3. Be the Leaf!
 - a. Encourage students to imagine that they are leaves.
 - b. Pick one job leaves do and write about that job in a poem or a story. *For Kindergarten classes, take input for a class poem. For 1st and 2nd graders, allow students to write their own poems.*
 - c. Write as if they ARE the leaf. This is called ‘personification’ in writing. For instance, if they choose “water ladle,” they 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

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

FOLLOW UP QUESTIONS

- Can you name a few examples of plants that grow parts we eat?
 - *Responses will vary. Carrots, potatoes, soybeans, peas, sugar beets (a few examples)*
- Parts we use in other ways? Fiber? Fuel?
 - *Responses will vary. Soybeans-biodiesel, corn- ethanol, cotton-shirt/clothes*
- 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!
 - *Responses will vary.*
- 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*

- When do you think leaves are the prettiest? Have you ever picked a leaf up off the ground just because it looked neat?
 - *Responses will vary. Consider different seasons—small budding leaves in the spring, big green leaves in the summer, colorful leaves in the fall, brown crunchy leaves in the winter.*

EXTENSION ACTIVITIES

- Nebraska Ag Facts Brochure
 - http://www.nda.nebraska.gov/publications/ne_ag_facts_brochure.pdf
- The Apple Cycle
 - <https://nefbfoundation.org/images/FOUndation/Educators/Enriching-Activities/The-Apple-Cycle.pdf>
- Edible Plant Parts
 - <https://nefbfoundation.org/images/FOUndation/Educators/Enriching-Activities/Edible-Plants.pdf>
- Farming in a Glove
 - <https://nefbfoundation.org/images/FOUndation/Educators/Enriching-Activities/Farming-in-a-Glove.pdf>
- Life of a Tree Enactment
 - <https://nefbfoundation.org/images/FOUndation/Educators/Enriching-Activities/Life-of-a-Tree-Enactment.pdf>

COMPANION RESOURCES

- *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

NATIONAL AGRICULTURAL LITERACY OUTCOMES

- Plants and Animals for Food, Fiber & Energy
 - **T2.K-2a** Explain how farmers/ranchers work with the lifecycle of plants and animals (planting/breeding) to harvest a crop.
 - **T2.K-2f** Identify the types of plants and animals found on farms and compare with plants and animals found in wild landscape.