

Ag in Your Classroom

Skills: Language Arts, Social Studies, Math

Objective: The student will consider all the things in the classroom that come from agriculture and write an essay on the topic “Ag in My Classroom.”

Background

“Ag” is short for agriculture. When you think of what we get from agriculture you probably think of food, but agriculture is much more. Look around your classroom and you will see many things made from products grown on farms.

The wood on your pencil may be made from cedar grown on a tree farm. You may also have a ruler made from wood. Your paper is probably from the pulp of trees like the loblolly pine, which grows on tree farms in southeastern Oklahoma. Cotton is used to make high quality paper for some documents and in money. Feathers and eggshells from the poultry industry and peanut shells are used to make some kinds of paper too. Poultry and eggs were Oklahoma’s second most valuable agricultural commodity in 2006. Cotton ranked number eight. Peanuts ranked number 13.

The covers of hard back books may be made from cotton. Cotton fibers are also used to make cellophane tape.

The ink in your textbooks could be soy ink, made from the oil of soybeans that grow in Oklahoma. Soybeans were Oklahoma’s 10th most valuable agricultural commodity in 2006. Ink may also be made from the oil of cottonseed, corn and sunflower seeds or from the fat of beef and cows—all Oklahoma agricultural commodities. Your crayons may be made from soybean oil or from the fat of a pig or cow grown on an Oklahoma farm. Cattle and calves ranked number one among Oklahoma’s most valuable agricultural commodities in 2006. Hogs and pigs ranked number three.

The chalk your teacher uses may be from the bones of cows or pigs. Paint brushes may be made from the hair of a pig or from the hair in a cow’s tail. Glue and other adhesives are made from other parts of cows and pigs.

The concrete on your playground could be reinforced with wheat, Oklahoma’s third most valuable agricultural commodity in 2006.

Many agricultural products can be used to make plastic. These include corn, soybeans, cotton, peanut shells and chicken feathers. Plastic made from agricultural products is biodegradable, which means it is better for the environment than plastics made from petroleum products.

Oklahoma corn is used mostly as a feed for the livestock raised in our state, but corn has many nonfood uses. Cornstarch serves as an electrical conductor in batteries. Corn is also used in some paper and as an adhesive for wallpaper.

Agricultural products can even be found on the walls and floor of your classroom. Beef products are used in the production of linoleum flooring, insulation and wallpaper. Soybean products can be found in caulking com-

P.A.S.S.

GRADE 7

Reading—1.1; 3.1a

Writing—1.1,2,3,4,5,6;
2.4ab,8

Oral Language—1.1,2

GRADE 8

Reading—1.1; 3.1a

Writing—1.1,2,3,4,5,6;
2.5a,8

Oral Language—1.1,2

Vocabulary

adhesive—a substance that sticks (as glue or cement)

agriculture—the science or occupation of cultivating the soil, producing crops, and raising livestock

bristle—a short stiff coarse hair or filament

cellophane—a thin transparent material made from cellulose

cellulose—a white stringy substance from the cell wall of plants which is used in making various products such as paper

commodity—a product of agriculture or mining

farm—a piece of land used for growing crops or raising livestock

fiber—a slender and very long natural or synthetic unit of material (as wool, cotton, asbestos, gold, glass, or rayon) usually able to be spun into yarn

insulation—material used to prevent transfer of electricity, heat, or sound

plastic—any of numerous synthetic or processed materials that can be formed into objects, films, or fibers

poultry—domesticated birds kept for eggs or meat

pulp—a material prepared chiefly from wood but also from other materials (as rags) and used in making paper products

varnish—a liquid that when spread and allowed to dry on a surface forms a hard shiny typically transparent coating

pounds, electrical insulation, plywood and wallboard. Peanut shells are used in wallboard. Cotton and wool is used to make curtains, rugs and carpets. Peanut oil is used to make paints and varnishes. Wheat is used in roofing tiles, insulation and soundproofing materials. Beef, soybeans, peanut oil and cottonseed products also help keep your classroom clean with detergents and other cleaning products.

Activities

1. Read and discuss background and vocabulary.
 - Ask students what surprises them about the products named in the background that are made from agricultural commodities?
2. Students will take 5-10 minutes and write about their surroundings in as much detail as possible.
 - On a separate sheet of paper, students will list every object they have described.
 - As a class or in groups students will discuss the objects they have listed.
 - Each group will create two columns and label one “Made from Agriculture,” and the other “Not made from Agriculture.” As students list the objects from their writing they will place the items in the correct column, based on what they have learned from the background.
3. Discuss the components of an essay, using the hand graphic below.
 - Students will complete essays on the topic “Agriculture in My Classroom.”

