Agriculture—
The Heartbeat of Oklahoma

Objective
Students will read about the importance of agriculture in Oklahoma and design a bulletin board to illustrate the theme, “Agriculture—The Heartbeat of Oklahoma.”

Background
As you ride along Oklahoma roads you see agriculture everywhere. Look to your right and you see cattle or sheep grazing in a field. Look to your left and you see waving wheat, green fields of soybean or the beautiful yellow flowers of canola. Later in the season you will see white fields of cotton. In the distance you see tall grain elevators that store harvested grain waiting to be sold. On the road you may pass a silver milk truck or a truck packed with giant cylinders of hay or a slatted cattle truck full of cattle on the way to the stockyards.

Agriculture is the heartbeat of Oklahoma. Just as your beating heart keeps you alive by pumping blood through your body, agriculture pumps life through our state. Agriculture gives us the food and other materials we need to survive, jobs to keep the economy healthy and even seasonal celebrations that make Oklahoma a great place to live.

Like the beating heart in your body’s circulation system, agriculture moves food and other products through our food system. Farmers grow wheat, produce and other crops and sell them at grain or produce terminals. Ranchers sell their cattle and other livestock at the stockyards. These products of the farm are the raw materials used to make the food we get from the grocery store. Next stop is the processing company, which make the products and put them in packages for us to buy. Finished food products go by truck or rail to warehouses. From warehouses the products are shipped to the stores where we buy our groceries and other products. And all along the way, agriculture is pumping jobs into Oklahoma communities and helping to keep our economy moving.

Farmers and ranchers add more to the economy by buying the seed, fertilizer, equipment, fencing and other things they need. When they sell their products, they turn around and spend the money they earn on things like cars, furniture and clothing. Without agriculture our economy would lose one in 12 employees.

Oklahoma agriculture keeps our hearts beating with a reliable and heart-healthy food supply. Farmers markets offer Oklahoma-grown fruits and vegetables with nutrients important for heart health. Wheat farmers grow healthy whole grains. Animal agriculture provides healthy sources of protein—beef and dairy products, pork, lamb, chicken and eggs. Pecan and peanut producers provide other sources of heart-healthy protein.

With the regularity of a heartbeat, Oklahoma agriculture gives us celebrations of the seasons. In spring we celebrate new life. On the farm the fields start to turn green, and there are baby animals everywhere. Farmers plant
most of their crops in spring. The summer sun makes everything grow. It is the busiest time on the farm. Mid-summer celebrations provide rest from summer chores and relief from the heat. Fall celebrations began as harvest festivals. In winter work on the farm slows down. It is time for planning for the following growing season. Winter celebrations remind us that the dark, cold days will not last forever, and that the cycle will soon bring spring.

Agriculture truly is the “Heartbeat of Oklahoma.” Without it, how would we survive?

**Vocabulary**

- **agriculture** — the science or occupation of cultivating the soil, producing crops, and raising livestock
- **circulation** — orderly movement through a circuit; especially: the movement of blood through the vessels of the body caused by the pumping action of the heart
- **economy** — of, relating to, or based on the production, distribution, and consumption of goods and services
- **employment** — the relative number of persons in a labor force who are working for wages or a salary
- **grazing** — feeding on growing grass or herbs
- **nutrient** — a substance that furnishes nourishment
- **process** — to change or prepare by special treatment
- **produce** — fresh fruits and vegetables
- **protein** — any of numerous substances that consist of chains of amino acids, contain the elements carbon, hydrogen, nitrogen, oxygen, and often sulfur, include many compounds (as enzymes and hormones) essential for life, and are supplied by various foods (as meat, milk, eggs, nuts, and beans)
- **stockyard** — a yard in which livestock are kept temporarily for slaughter, market, or shipping

**English Language Arts**

1. Read and discuss background and vocabulary. Ask students if they have seen any of the agricultural activity mentioned in the background.
2. Discuss the theme “Agriculture: The Heartbeat of Oklahoma.” How is agriculture like a heartbeat?
   — Students will write stories and/or draw pictures to illustrate the theme.
3. Students will design a bulletin board with the theme “Agriculture: The Heartbeat of Oklahoma.”

**Extra Reading**


Cleary, Brian P., and Martin Goneau, *Macaroni and Rice and Bread by the Slice: What is in the Grains Group? (Food is CATegorical)*, Millbrook, 2011.


Russ, Ayon, Angela, *We Eat Food That’s Fresh*, OurRainbow, 2009.

Webster, Avril, *Off We Go to the Grocery Store*, Woodbine, 2011.