



# Farms

## **Adventures in Reading:**

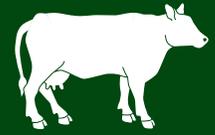
*Family Literacy Bags from Reading Rockets*

### **Contents:**

- Two books — one fiction, one nonfiction
- Parent information sheet
- Three activity sheets
- Bookmark
- Parent survey

## for teachers and librarians

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*This Reading Rockets Activity Packet is designed to support reading activities at home. We've chosen a fiction and nonfiction book about farms, appropriate for a kindergarten listening level, and included related activities to encourage some hands-on fun and learning. Just assemble the packet in a two-gallon zip top bag, and send home with your students.*

Reading Rockets carefully chose books that are widely available and appealing to young readers. The titles selected should be available in your school library. If the two featured titles are not available, or you prefer another title, feel free to substitute books related to the theme. You'll find a list of suggested alternative titles included in the bookmark.

The featured books for the Farms Activity Packet are **The Oxcart Man** by Donald Hall and illustrated by Barbara Cooney and **Farming** by Gail Gibbons. **The Oxcart Man** is the story of a self-sufficient farm of years past that takes readers through the rhythms of traditional life on a family farm. **Farming** explores farms, general farming practices, and the role the seasons and weather play in farming.

The parent information sheet includes an introductory note that you can personalize, instructions about how to use the packet, and tips for sharing fiction and nonfiction books with children.

The activities are designed to encourage further exploration and learning at home:

- >> the Creativity Activity is a hands-on craft project
- >> the Imagination Activity encourages imaginative play, writing, or drawing
- >> the Get Real Activity focuses on real-world experiences for parent and child
- >> The bookmark lists both the featured titles and additional titles

### Putting it all together

Print out copies of the parent information sheet, the activities, the survey, and a master for making bookmarks. Cut the bookmark page into strips. You may wish to print the activity pages and bookmark on card stock for durability.

Into a two-gallon zip top bag, place:

- >> two books — one fiction and one nonfiction
- >> parent information sheet
- >> three themed activity pages
- >> bookmark
- >> survey for parents

Send the packet home with your student. Encourage parents to keep the parent information sheet, the activities, and bookmark, and return the books and survey to you.

Let Reading Rockets know what you think of the family activity packets by e-mailing us through our website: [www.readingrockets.org/sitecontact](http://www.readingrockets.org/sitecontact). Click on "Family Literacy Bags"

## ADVENTURES IN READING!

# Welcome

Dear \_\_\_\_\_

Exploring new ideas and enjoying books with you sends a powerful message to your child: Reading and learning are fun, and happen everywhere — not just at school. This Reading Rockets Activity Packet about \_\_\_\_\_ was created to help you and your child enjoy reading and learning together.

Start your learning adventure by reading some books with your child about this popular topic. Then explore the topic with three activities. Enclosed you'll find what you need:

- >> two books to share with your child
- >> three related activities
- >> bookmark with a list of other books to extend the fun, if you wish
- >> short survey to tell me if you enjoyed using the packet

The simple steps on the back explain how to use the packet.

The bookmark, this parent information sheet, and the activities are yours to keep.

When you've finished with the materials, please return the books and the completed survey to school in your child's backpack. Please return the Reading Rockets Activity Packet by \_\_\_\_\_.

I hope you'll enjoy reading and learning together!

\_\_\_\_\_  
*Teacher signature*

**To learn more about children's books, reading with your child, and information about helping kids become confident readers, please visit [www.ReadingRockets.org](http://www.ReadingRockets.org)**

# ADVENTURES IN READING!

## Instructions

### *How to use your Reading Rockets Activity Packet*

#### **Getting ready**

**1.** Before you read the books to your child, be sure to read them yourself. One book is fiction — a “make-believe” story. The other book is nonfiction, or informational and true. Reading the books first will give you the “inside scoop” to the twists and turns of the story, the interesting information inside, and the parts of the books that will appeal most to your child.

**2.** Next, read the three activities to see which of them you think your child will enjoy most, and which one you have the time and materials on-hand to do right away. Chances are, after you read one (or both) of the books with your child, he or she may want to do an activity right away.

#### **Start the fun**

**3.** When you know you’ll have at least enough time to read and talk about one of the books, grab your child and a book, and dive right in. Start with the fiction selection. Talk about the cover of the book with your child — can he guess what it is about? Have they ever read a book by the same author or illustrator or about the same topic?

Read the book to your child. Take time to ask and answer questions, explore the pictures, and wonder what will happen next. Read it again, if your child asks you to. Then, try the nonfiction book or one of the activities.

**4.** When you read the nonfiction book, take a moment to explain to your child the difference between the two types of books. The first book told a made-up, make-believe story, and a nonfiction book is about real people, places, and things. The information in nonfiction books can answer lots of questions.

**5.** Feel free to pick and choose from the activities, or change them to suit your child’s interests. Read the books again over the next few days and try different activities. Most important: have fun!

#### **When you’re done...**

**6.** Keep the bookmark, the activities, and this page. Complete the survey and return it with the books to your child’s school.

Make the most of the excitement the books create, and try some hands-on learning or make-believe fun. Exploring new ideas alongside you lets your child see you learning — and reading — too, and gives your child personal experiences to support her growing knowledge.

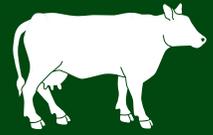
#### **Tips for reading nonfiction books with kids:**

- >> *Wonder out loud. As you are reading, or afterward, talk about facts you find interesting or questions you have.*
- >> *Show your child how to use the table of contents, section headings, index, and word list (glossary) to find the answer to a specific question.*
- >> *Don’t be afraid to jump around, reading pages that especially interest your child. You don’t have to read a nonfiction book straight through.*

#### **Tips for reading fiction books with kids:**

- >> *Take your time and talk about the story with your child. Ask your child questions.*
- >> *Explore the pictures with your child.*
- >> *Read with expression. Change your voice or how fast you read to create excitement. Ham it up!*
- >> *You don’t need to read every word. Keeping your child interested is the goal.*

## make a field crop collage



Since most of us don't live on or even visit farms, when we think of farms, we often picture a barn, cows, chickens, pigs, and that noisy rooster! Talk with your child about the many different foods and resources farms produce.

There are probably several items in your home that were farmed as field crops. What items can you find in your house? To make a farm field collage, look for durable, dry materials such as:

- >> unpopped popcorn
- >> dried beans: navy beans, pinto beans, black beans, lentils, lima beans, etc.
- >> cotton balls
- >> rice

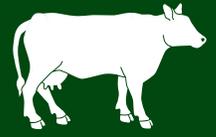
**You'll also need:**

- >> a large piece of construction paper
- >> liquid glue
- >> crayons or markers (optional)

Making this collage gives your child the chance to experiment with different shapes, textures and colors. You can suggest that glue be squeezed in rows, and use the opportunity to talk about how farmers plant in rows to give different crops enough room to grow and to make it easier to harvest crops using machines. You might also talk about the other things that crops need to grow, such as water, sunlight, and dirt. Since those would be hard to glue on, drawing them on the construction paper with crayons or markers is a good option.

But remember, collage for young children is an opportunity to express what they think is important to emphasize, so let them take the lead.

**Variation:** Depending on what you have on hand, your child could create collages based on other horticultural crops, such as an herb garden collage from herbs in your spice rack. Or make an edible orchard collage with dried tree fruits like apricots, cherries, apples, or peaches on a plate spread with softened cream cheese or a chocolate hazelnut spread like Nutella®.



# do you dig it?

Ask your child to name a fruit that grows on a tree — and thanks to banana-loving cartoon monkeys, he will probably answer “banana.” But bananas don’t grow on trees. The banana plant is actually a large perennial herb that grows very tall in tropical and subtropical climates.

Get to know how your food grows. Which foods do you dig and pull up from the earth and which do you pick from plants, trees, or vines? Make a meal log that tracks all the different plant types for the foods you eat. Your chart might look something like this:

My Lunch		
Dish	Ingredients	Plant type
Peanut butter and grape jelly sandwich	peanuts	legume plant with fruit that grows underground
	grapes	vine
	wheat bread	grass
apple slices	apples	tree
chocolate milk	milk	cows eat grass to make milk!
	chocolate	tree (cacao seeds)

If you’re feeling ambitious, also look at which parts of the world your food comes from. Most fruits and vegetables have stickers that indicate country of origin. Talk with your child about why different places are good for growing different foods.

## Farm Detective

Farms are a big part of your life even if you’ve never visited one. Ask your child if he thinks farms are important. Talk with him about how the foods he eats and many of the clothes he wears start on the farm. From your closets and bureaus, gather items like:

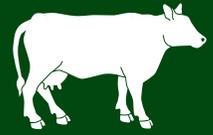
- >> a wool sweater or scarf
- >> cotton jeans or cotton T-shirt
- >> a feather pillow or down comforter
- >> a linen tablecloth or handkerchief

Have your child handle these items and talk with him about the different textures. See if he can guess what plants or animals played a role in the making of these items.

## Visit a farm

You can’t get any more real than a hands-on visit to a local farm. Of the almost two million farms in the United States, many are small family owned farms. For more on how and where to visit a local farm, try this resource: [www.localharvest.org/organic-farms/visiting.html](http://www.localharvest.org/organic-farms/visiting.html).

## udder madness



Kid favorites like yogurt, cheese, and ice cream all start at the dairy farm. Help your child understand the processes involved in raising cows and getting milk to your refrigerator by setting up a “dairy farm” at home. You’ll need:

- >> Clean latex glove
- >> String
- >> Needle or pin
- >> Pail or bucket
- >> Saucepan
- >> Clean empty milk container

And if your “farmer” wants to dress the part, you might provide boots, a hat, or other costume options.

Talk about all the things you might find on a farm and what a farmer needs to do to keep a dairy farm running, like feeding cows, milking them, and keeping them healthy. Let your child gather what he likes — from stuffed animals (barnyard friends) to houseplants (crops and food for the cows) and set up the farm.

To make it complete, add this “cow” to “milk.” Fill the latex glove with water and tie the wrist end closed. Then use string to tie the glove to the under side of a chair or small table. Prick a small hole in each finger (not the thumb — cows only have four teats). Have your farmer get his pail and start “milking”. The saucepan is to pasteurize (pretend heat) and homogenize (stir, stir!) the “milk.” Then pour it into the milk container and it’s ready to go!

You can also watch online how cows get milked on a real dairy farm: [www.stonyfield.com/farm\\_cam/index.jsp](http://www.stonyfield.com/farm_cam/index.jsp)

**Variation:** Invent a milk machine for your dairy farm. Most dairy farms use milking machines to milk cows and then more machines to pasteurize, homogenize, and bottle the milk. See if your farmer can draw an invention that does all the work of the dairy farmer or use Lego® blocks, K’NEX®, or even items for the recycling bin to build a model of a fantastic milk machine.



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## Featured titles

### Fiction

*The Oxcart Man* by Donald Hall

### Nonfiction

*Farming* by Gail Gibbons

## Additional fiction titles

*Big Red Barn* by  
Margaret Wise Brown

*On the Farm* by David Elliott

*Old MacDonald Had a Farm*  
by Carol Jones or by  
Glen Rounds

## Additional nonfiction titles

*The Milk Makers* by  
Gail Gibbons

*The Year at Maple Hill Farm*  
by Alice Provensen

*A Farm Through Time*  
by Angela Wilkes

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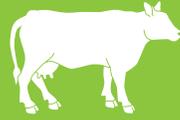
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