

Lesson Plan on Urban Agriculture/Animals

published in the online anthology [Nobody's Home: Modern Southern Folklore](#)

CCSS Standard(s): CCS.ELA-LITERACY.CCRA R.1, 3, 4, 5, 6; W. 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8; SL 1, 6
([ELA Anchor](#))

Objective(s): To consider the changing role of agriculture and animals in Southern culture

Essential Question(s): How have Southerners looked back to older practices in new ways? How have beliefs and narratives about barnyard animals changed? Could a barnyard animal fit into my life?

Preparation for Teacher (Strategy and Purpose): From the arrival of Europeans in the 1600s through the urbanization period of the mid-1900s, most Southerners lived on farms and kept animals for a variety of purposes. Using the editor's introduction from *Nobody's Home*, a teacher will consider how beliefs, myths, and narratives affect individuals within Southern society in myriad ways. Then, the teacher will select and read essays from the list below that offer examples of how personal experiences shaped one person's worldview. This concept could then be applied to teaching students to, as NCTE's Beliefs on the Teaching of Writing put it, use writing as "a tool for thinking" about their own lives.

Preparation of Students (Strategy and Purpose): The teacher will conduct a unit on personal narrative writing that includes direct instruction (see comments below) and some or all of the following three essays:

"Gallagher's Goat" by Claude Clayton Smith • "Backyard Barnyard" by Karen Luke Jackson • "The Rooster" by Spike Anderson

All of these essays involve barnyard animals in the context of a modern, suburban life in the South in ways that might go against common beliefs, myths, and narratives. Any or all of these can provide model examples for students to follow and offer an array of structures, tones, and voices.

In-class activities (recommended): Using the essays as examples, the teacher will lead class discussions about the readings, focusing on how the subject has become larger than life for that individual/writer. For the writing portion of the unit, students should begin by choosing an animal that would normally be considered a barnyard animal, and asking themselves how it could fit into their lives. The teacher may choose to have students write drafts in class or for homework.

Lesson Follow-up (Recommendations): Students will participate in a peer review process to improve the clarity of the writing. The teacher will acknowledge to students that, when a subject is close to one's own heart, a writer may trouble encountering criticism. It should be made clear that the peer review and revision processes are not to second-guess the content or sentiment in the essay, but to help the writer express them fully.

Technology: SmartBoard, Elmo, other device for sharing the texts

Tiered Instruction/Intervention/Differentiation: If the teacher's classes contain students with varying levels of writing ability, the need for direct instruction about grammar and other fundamentals may differ dramatically.

Assessment: Students will write personal narrative essays about how one kind of barnyard animal might fit into their lives.

Homework: See assessment suggestion above.

Comments: In writing these essays, students should consider the beliefs and narratives held by those around them: how would their parents, neighbors, or friends react to the incorporation of a barnyard animal? If the students live in rural areas, the addition might be normal and easily accepted, so those should ask themselves what beliefs and narratives allow for that easy inclusion. If the students live in suburban or urban areas, the addition might be abnormal and met with resistance, so those should ask themselves what beliefs and narratives cause that opposition.