

# Character Counts

A Lesson Plan Based on Agricultural  
Commodities and Character



*kindness*

*honesty*

*love*

WRITTEN BY:  
TENNESSEE YOUNG FARMERS & RANCHERS  
2018 STATE COMMITTEE



# **Character Counts Lessons**

**Based on Agriculture Commodities and Character**

**Index**

<u>Character</u>	<u>Page Number</u>
Diligence .....	Page 3
Kindness.....	Page 4
Kindness (Anti-bullying/Inclusion).....	Page 6
Honesty.....	Page 8

Each year the Tennessee Farm Bureau’s Young Farmers & Ranchers program selects a philanthropy in which they strongly believe. The 2018 YF&R State Committee felt compelled to help bring character based lessons to the forefront of the agriculture community. In light of recent events, the members decided one way to give back was to develop lesson plans encompassing character, morals, and agriculture readily available for teachers to use in their classroom.

Written and Compiled By  
Tennessee Farm Bureau  
Young Farmers and Ranchers  
2018 State Committee  
Chairman: Hunter Grills  
Cover Design: Micayla Giffin

## **Character Subject: Diligence**

Time: 30 min

Age: K-2nd or Short Intro for Middle School

Agriculture Commodity: Corn/Popcorn

### **Purpose:**

Students will understand the importance of being diligent and the importance that diligence plays in the role of farmers.



Picture courtesy of pixabay.com

### **Supplies:**

1. Popcorn kernels
2. Brown bags
3. Vegetable oil
4. Microwave
5. Or alternate method of making popcorn

### **Discussion/Activities:**

1. Ask, *"Who here loves popcorn?"*
2. After taking answers proceed to pop popcorn for half of the allotted time.
3. While popcorn is popping ask, *"Does anyone know what diligence means?"* Say, *"I know a word that means diligence. It's effort or hard work over a long period of time."*
4. Take popcorn off the heat source after half of the necessary time and look at the kernels that haven't popped. Point out how full the bowl is to the students.
5. Then say, *"Let's put the rest of the kernels back in the microwave!"*
6. While the other half is popping, ask students, *"Why do you think those kernels didn't pop? That's right! We didn't let it pop long enough!"*
7. Explain, *"Sometime we give up too early on a difficult task, or don't give our all after we've been working on a task for a while."*
8. Pull the popcorn out the final time.
9. Say, *"Look how much popcorn we have this time! See how important it is to be diligent in your labor."*

### **Apply:**

1. Ask, *"What are some activities that we have to be diligent in in our lives?"*
2. Allow time for answers.
3. Follow up by saying, *"Yes, those are all excellent answers! It's also very important that farmers are diligent to take care of their plants and animals. Without farmers, we wouldn't have this popcorn. Popcorn comes from CORN! Farmers have to be diligent to weed, irrigate, fertilize, and harvest all of their crops...not just corn, so that we have food on our tables."*

### **Student Take Away:**

1. Have students write on an index card one thing that they can do to be diligent in their school work, Sunday School class, at home for their family, or in any other outside activity like dance or sports.
2. POPCORN!

## **Character Subject: Kindness**

Time: 30 min

Age: 3<sup>rd</sup>-6<sup>th</sup>

Agriculture Commodity: Corn



Picture courtesy of pixabay.com

### **Purpose:**

1. Students will be able to understand why what is on the inside of a person is more important than what is on the outside.
2. Students will understand the importance of helping those who are different.

### **Supplies:**

1. A corn cob with corn kernels to hand out
2. Corn stalks from the inside of a field
3. Corn stalks from the outside edges of a field
4. Snack size ziplock bags

### **Discussion/Activities:**

1. Ask, *"Who has seen a field of corn?"*
2. *"Have you ever noticed what the corn on the outside of a field looks like versus the corn towards the center?"*
3. Look at a corn stalk and ear of corn grown on the outside of a field, and compare it to one grown on the inside. Ask, *"What differences do you see?"* Explain by saying, *"This is because corn on the outside has more competition for nutrients from other plants like trees, and when a farmer is fertilizing they might miss the outside edges because of the turning radius on their equipment."*
4. Ask, *"Why do you think the corn on the inside looks more well developed than that on the outside?"* Explain, how when a farmer is fertilizing their corn they sometimes miss the outside of their fields due to many factors. For example, a tractor and fertilizer sprayer don't always spray the edges because the sprayer doesn't reach the edges when a tractor is turning.
5. Ask, *"Do you think this was the fault of the corn on the outside?"*
6. *"No! The corn on the outside edges of the field is just as good to eat as the corn on the inside. The corn that is fertilized on the inside produces more for others to eat."*

### **Apply:**

1. Ask, *"Are there people who you know or see who are treated differently because they don't appear to be the same?"*
2. *"How can we help to fertilize or nurture those who are treated differently or bullied?"*
3. *"How can we apply this to the people who we are around daily?"*
4. (Optional) In order to give an opportunity for those wanting help from bullies to be identified and followed up with later, a teacher or counselor could choose to add, *"With everyone's eyes closed and heads down, raise your hand if you feel like you need extra nurturing support to become the best you can be."*

**Conclude:**

1. Give a kernel of good corn to each student as a takeaway to be placed in their bag.
2. Ask students to write down the name of someone who they can help to fertilize and care for this week.  
Place it in their bag with their kernel of corn.  
OR
3. Help each student make a living necklace. Follow this link to the National Ag in the Classroom Matrix for this activity's lesson plan.  
[https://www.agclassroom.org/teacher/matrix/lessonplan.cfm?lpid=66&author\\_state=0&search\\_term\\_1p=Glove](https://www.agclassroom.org/teacher/matrix/lessonplan.cfm?lpid=66&author_state=0&search_term_1p=Glove)

**Character Subject: Kindness (Anti-bullying/Inclusion)**

Time: 45 min

Age: 9th-12th

Agriculture Commodity: Corn



Picture courtesy of pixabay.com

**Purpose:**

1. Students will be able to understand why what is on the inside of a person is more important than what is on the outside.
2. Students will understand the importance of helping those who are different.
3. Students will understand the corn growing in the center of the field is fertilized more than that which is on the outside edges.

**Supplies:**

1. A corn cob with corn kernels to hand out
2. Corn stalks from the inside of a field
3. Corn stalks from the outside edges of a field
4. Snack size ziplock bags
5. Index cards

**Discussion/Activities:**

1. Ask, *“Who has seen a field of corn?”* or *“Does anyone here live on a farm where corn is growing for consumption or for feeding livestock?”*
2. *“What observations can be made about the corn on the outside edges of a field of corn before it’s ready to be harvested?”*
3. Look at a corn stalk and ear of corn grown on the outside of a field, then compare it to one that was grown on the inside.
4. Ask students to turn to their neighbor and ask them to discuss the following question for two minutes. *“Why do you think the corn on the inside looks more well developed than that on the outside?”* Explain, how when a farmer is fertilizing their corn they sometimes miss the outside of their fields due to many factors. For example a tractor and fertilizer sprayer don’t always spray the edges because the sprayer doesn’t reach the edges when a tractor is turning.
5. Ask, *“Do you think this was the fault of the corn on the outside?”*
6. *“No! The corn on the outside edges of the field is just as good to eat as the corn on the inside. The corn that is fertilized on the inside produces more for others to eat.”*

**Apply:**

1. Ask, *“Are there people who you know or see who are treated differently because they don’t appear to be the same?”*
2. Ask students to pair up with 2-4 members from other chapters (or others in the class) and ask them to discuss the following questions and be ready to share with the group.
  - a. *“Do we have anyone in your/our chapter who is left on the outside edges because of their appearances or differences?”*
  - b. *“How can we help to fertilize or take care of those who are treated differently or even bullied?”*
  - c. *“How might including them on the inside of the field help to develop our chapter?”*
3. Ask students to share their discussions in voluntary order. On the way back to their seats, have them pick up an index card.

**Student Take Away:**

1. As students return to their seats start to play soft/reflective music.
2. Say, *“Thank you for sharing. Now let’s take 3-5 minutes to write on our cards the importance of what we learned today and how we plan to incorporate those who are left on the outside edges of the field to the inside of the chapter’s field.”*
3. At the end of the time, turn the music off/down and say, *“Thank you for joining us today! We sincerely hope you enjoyed it and will incorporate this in your chapter and everyday life. As you leave please take a kernel of corn from the fertilized cob to remind you to help fertilize those around you and help in the fight against loneliness and bullying.”*

**Conclude:**

1. Give a kernel of good corn to each student as a takeaway to be placed in their bag with their index card.

**Character Subject: Honesty**

Time: 30 min

Age: K-2nd

Agriculture Commodity: Corn, Flowers, Soybeans, Peas



**Purpose:**

1. Students will understand the importance of being honest.
2. Students will understand the consequences of being dishonest.

**Supplies:**

1. Weed(s):
  - a. Examples include: dandelions, vetch, etc.
2. Soybeans, corn, other crops or flowers
3. Peas
4. Green candy (skittles, M&Ms, etc.)

**Discussion/Activities:**

1. Ask, “Does anyone here live on a farm, grow a garden, or have a backyard?”
2. Allow time for answers. Then ask, “Has anyone here ever seen a weed or know what a weed is?”
3. Explain, “That’s right. A weed is a plant that grows in the midst of crops, vegetable gardens, or even in the cracks of your sidewalk. Farmers work really hard to prevent weeds from growing where they aren’t wanted, but sometimes it’s not easy. Sometimes farmers can be deceived.”
4. Complete the “Peas & Candy” activity:  
To prepare buy a bag of frozen peas and place them in a ziploc bag (allow them to thaw). Also, buy a bag of candy (ideally green, but it can be any color). Tell students you have some candy for them and pass it out. Allow students to eat their candy. Ideally, someone will realize it’s not candy. Tell them you’re sorry...you were just teasing them. THEN pass out the candy. You should have one or two students that say they don’t believe you.
5. Further explain, “Deceived can also mean ‘fooled or tricked’.”
6. Pull out a weed. An example would be vetch. Ask students, “Do you think this is a crop or a weed?”
7. Pull out a soybean plant or other forage crop, such as alfalfa. Ask students, “Do you think this is a crop or a weed?”
8. After students give their guesses, reveal which plant was which. “This is an example of how it can sometimes be difficult to tell the truth. It isn’t always easy to tell the truth because it can get us in trouble, expose our wrongdoing, or cause us to be disciplined. However, it’s the right thing for us to do.”

**Apply:**

1. Ask, “What would happen if farmers didn’t manage the weeds in their crops?”
2. Show students an example of a handful of soybeans that have weeds in them versus a handful of soybeans without weeds in them.
3. Ask, “What differences do you see?”
4. Explain, “If farmers chose not to manage their weeds, then our lives would look much more like this. Full of weeds that could have been avoided. If we simply take the time to make good choices and prune the weeds in our lives, we can prevent things in our lives like: hurting people, creating unhealthy environments, and lies that get bigger and bigger as we try to manage them.”

**Student Take Away:**

1. Have students to write on an index card one thing that they can do to be honest. Give examples of similar activities, such as: telling the truth, not taking other people's things.

### **Bibliography**

Debra Spielmaker, Administrator and Yasuko Mitsuoka Grow, Designer. "Farming in a Glove." *National in the Classroom*, 2013,  
[www.agclassroom/Agriculture.org/teacher/matrix/lessonplan.cfm?lpid=66&author\\_state=0&search\\_term\\_lp=Glove](http://www.agclassroom/Agriculture.org/teacher/matrix/lessonplan.cfm?lpid=66&author_state=0&search_term_lp=Glove).

"Free Images - Pixabay." *Free Images - Pixabay*, [pixabay.com/](http://pixabay.com/).