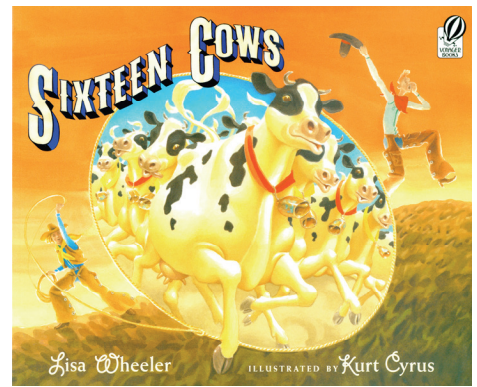


Ideas and Activities to Use with
Sixteen Cows
Written by Lisa Wheeler
Illustrated by Kurt Cyrus
Ideas and Activities
Created and Compiled by Karen Antikajian



Before Reading:

1. Ask the students if they have ever had an argument with someone or couldn't agree with them about something. Ask, "How did you solve it?" Have students turn and talk. List on the board some possible ways to end an argument.
2. Show the cover. Ask for predictions about the story.
3. Review some vocabulary words: **lean**, **blue**, **blew**, **commenced**, **unison**, **fend**, and **truce**. Explain that **lean** has two meanings: to rest against something for support and to be thin. **Blue** and **blew** sound alike but are different words: one is a color and the other means to blow. **Commenced** is a fancy word for began, unison means to do or say something at the same time, a **feud** is like an argument, and a **truce** means you agree to stop the argument. Or use any other explanations that connect with what your students have been learning.
4. Talk about the way people speak in different parts of the country. In the west, sometimes people leave the last sound off words ending with 'ing' so that we have 'singin'' rather than singing.

During Reading:

5. After reading, The Biddle cows all answered, "Moo," read it again and let the students join in on the "Moo."
6. Waddle cows - students join in on the "Moo." Encourage them to make different sounds the way real cows would.
7. After reading, "...dining with a stranger," show the illustration pointing out where the two ranches are and the fence dividing them. Ask what might happen if there were no fence.
8. After reading, "'Don't mingle with those low-down cows', she cried' ask what low-down means. Yes they were down below, but explain the other meaning if they don't know it.
9. After reading Gene's song, ask what is happening to the song.
10. Next page, let the students join in on the "MOO!"
11. Explain the phrase, "really got her goat." Show the illustration and point out her body language. Have some students demonstrate how to walk that way.
12. Explain that the polka is a fast, energetic dance. Ask students to imagine cows dancing!
13. After "cows aren't too bright," stop and ask students to predict what might happen.
14. After "in the middle," ask if they remember what a truce is.
15. "Sixteen cows said MOO" – have students join in again. Show the illustration and ask students what they notice. Can they tell which cows are Biddle and which are Waddle? (Hint: the bandanas Gene and Sue are wearing.) Notice they are each petting the other one's cow.
16. Next page. What do you notice about the names of the cows?
17. Last page – join in on a loud MOO!

After Reading:

18. Ask the class how Gene and Sue could have solved their problem without combining their cows. List possible solutions on the board and think of pros and cons.
19. Look at the back cover. Use the **Reflection Sheet** to let students show what they think Gene and Sue are talking about and to show where they like to be to think about things.

20. Talk about the saying, “Good fences make good neighbors.” What do they think it means? Explore some other proverbs or sayings. See **List 152: Proverbs**. With older students, use the page called **What’s That Again?** to match euphemistic sayings with the originals.
21. Return to the illustration of Gene and Sue petting the cows. Have the students look carefully at the clothing. List some of the items and see if students can decide why they are wearing large hats, bandanas, chaps, and cowboy boots. Are they just for looks or do they have functions? Read **Western Apparel** for more information.
22. Read *Boss of the Plains: The Hat That Won the West* by John Frank to give more information about the cowboy hat. Look at the illustrations in *Sixteen Cows* and notice the different hat styles Gene and Sue have. Gene’s is more like the one in *Boss of the Plains*.
23. Read *The Old Woman Who Named Things* by Cynthia Rylant. Talk about why we name things. Do they know of anyone who named something that wasn’t a person or an animal like the old woman did?
24. Names are important to people, but some people don’t like the names they were given. Read *Chrysanthemum* by Kevin Henkes. Refer to the *Clementine* books if they are familiar with them and how Clementine gives her brother vegetable names since she is named after a fruit.
25. Give the students the **Names of Cows** from *Sixteen Cows*. Have them pick a favorite and think of names for another eight cows. With older students, see if they can get the fourth and eighth name to rhyme.
26. Gene and Sue each had a herd of cows. Read one or two of the books about groups of animals. Then use the **Collective Nouns** page to see if the students can guess what the group names are for other animals. Let students work together as this should be a fun activity. Sometimes there is more than one right answer. If a student has a different answer than that given, check www.thealmightyguru.com/Pointless/AnimalGroups.html or www.enchantedlearning.com/subjects/animals/Animalbabies.shtml for alternatives.
27. Have students practice and perform the **Readers Theater** version of the book. You might also use the **Readers Theater** version of another book by Wheeler and Cyrus called *Mammoths on the Move*.
28. Read *Home on the Range: John A. Lomax and His Cowboy Songs* by Deborah Hopkinson. Learn some songs like ‘Home on the Range.’ “Why was music important to cowboys? Think about sitting around a campfire at night. What do many people do?” (sing and tell stories.) Explain that cowboys often drove herds of cattle to railroad stations or towns a long ways away. They had to spend many nights on the trail.
29. Read the page of **Texas Nursery Rhymes**. Let students look through books of nursery rhymes and see if they can change one into a western rhyme.
30. Let students get into small groups to plan a party for Gene or Sue. See if they can use the theme of *Sixteen Cows* for the party. See the **Party Planning Sheet**.
31. Share the author’s **Story Behind the Story** of *Sixteen Cows*.
32. If you are brave, try the **Cow Pie Recipe** from the author’s website: www.lisawheelerbooks.com.
33. Point out that the illustrator, Kurt Cyrus (who is from Corvallis) created the pictures for *Sixteen Cows* from many different angles. Tell students, “Sometimes it looks like he was in a hot air balloon while other times it seems as if he is right on a hill with a cow and his paintbrush. In one picture, it looks as if he might be stampeded by the cows if he were standing there! This is called perspective. See how he makes the illustrations more interesting by changing the perspective. Wouldn’t it be boring if every picture had the sixteen cows lined up in the same position over and over again? Think about what Kurt Cyrus did and then draw one thing on your desk from two different perspectives. You can move if you need to!” Share both pictures. To see more of his books, visit www.kurtcyrus.com.