



Home on the Range

Sometimes people refer to the center of the United States as “flyover country” because most planes fly over going somewhere else. But our 34th state, Kansas, is home to important history, essential industry and cultural icons.

The Sunflower State was added to the Union on Jan. 29, 1861. The geographical center of the contiguous United States is in Smith County, Kansas.

Kansas history

The word “Kansas” comes from an Algonquin word, Akansa, and Kansa, which the Kaw people were sometimes called. Native Americans lived throughout the Plains states, hunting buffalo and living along the great rivers.

The first civilians to settle in Kansas founded the city of Lawrence, where the University of Kansas is today. Many of these people were “free-staters” who supported **abolition**, or the freeing of enslaved people.

Dust Bowl and beyond

In the 1930s, many people left southwest Kansas after extreme **drought** (drowt) left farmland and homes destroyed by dust storms.

Later, as World War II began, Wichita and other cities in Kansas became centers for manufacturing aircraft. Aviation is still a big industry in the state.



Nearly 90% of land in Kansas is used for agriculture, where farmers raise cattle, sheep, wheat, sorghum, cotton and hogs.

Kansas’ biggest city is Wichita, in the south central region. The Kansas City Metro area is bigger, but the city straddles the Missouri River and state line. The state capital is Topeka, which lies along the Kansas River. About 3 million people live in Kansas.

Kansas culture

Most people know Kansas as the home of Dorothy in “The Wizard of Oz.” In addition, Laura Ingalls Wilder’s book “Little House on the Prairie” is set in Kansas.



KU’s mascot, the Jayhawk. People who came to Kansas to fight against slavery were called “jayhawkers.”

The oldest operating film theater in the world is in Ottawa, Kansas. The state is home to the University of Kansas and Kansas State University, along with many other public and private colleges.

Sports in Kansas

Most football and baseball fans in Kansas support the

Chiefs and Royals, although the teams play in Missouri. Other professional sports teams include Sporting KC (MLS), the Wichita Thunder (ice hockey) and Missouri’s Kansas City Current (NWSL).

People in Kansas like to hike, bike, ride horses, follow NASCAR, kayak, fish and hunt.

Famous Kansans

• **Aviator Amelia Earhart** was born in Atchison, Kansas, in 1897. Earhart hoped to become the first female pilot to fly all the way around the world. But in 1937, as she and her navigator, Fred Noonan, flew from Lae, New Guinea, toward Howland Island in the Pacific Ocean, the plane disappeared. Experts believe the plane ran out of fuel and crashed into the ocean. Earhart’s remains were never found.



Amelia Earhart

• **Dwight D. Eisenhower** was the 34th president of the United States, serving from 1953 to 1961. He was born in Denison, Texas, but grew up in Abilene, Kansas. During World War II, Eisenhower served as the General of the Army.



Dwight Eisenhower

• **Phog Allen**, who was born in 1885, attended the University of Kansas, where he was coached by the inventor of basketball, James Naismith. Allen went on to coach at KU from 1919 to 1956. He is sometimes called the “father of basketball coaching.”



Phog Allen

Resources



On the Web:
• bit.ly/MPKansas

At the library:
• “Amelia Earhart: The Woman Who Soared Above the Clouds” by Diana Hope

Try ‘n’ Find

Words that remind us of Kansas are hidden in this puzzle. Some words are hidden backward or diagonally, and some letters are used twice. See if you can find:



ABOLITION, ALGONQUIN, ALLEN, AVIATION, CENTER, DOROTHY, DROUGHT, EARHART, EISENHOWER, FLYOVER, JAYHAWKERS, KANSAS, KAW, LAWRENCE, SUNFLOWER, WHEAT, WICHITA, WIZARD.

E S L F J A Y H A W K E R S A
C A N D I Y H T O R O D B W T
N S O R E V O Y L F H A K A I
E N I M S U N F L O W E R K H
R A T R A H R A E R E T N E C
W K I L N W I Z A R D Z I R I
A B L N O I T A I V A B Q D W
L E O E A E I S E N H O W E R
N N B R W N E T H G U O R D M
U T A E H W A L G O N Q U I N



Cook’s Corner

Monkey Shake

You’ll need:
• 1 cup milk
• 2 bananas, cut into small pieces
• 1/3 cup pineapple juice concentrate, thawed

• 2 cups vanilla ice cream, softened



What to do:
1. Combine milk, banana pieces and pineapple juice concentrate in a blender. Cover and blend until smooth.
2. Add ice cream. Cover and blend a few seconds until smooth. Serves 2.

* You’ll need an adult’s help with this recipe.

1. Using land to raise crops and animals (7-letter noun)

2. The nickname for those who fought against slavery (10-letter plural noun)

3. An industry focused on airplanes and aerospace (8-letter noun)

4. Tall plants with large yellow flower heads (10-letter plural noun)

1. Much of Kansas land is used for _____ wheat and cattle.
2. _____ battled pro-slavery forces in Missouri.
3. _____ is important to Kansas’ economy.
4. Sara saw giant yellow _____ growing in fields.

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by Jan & Carey Orr Cook



Study the definition. When you know the missing word, fill in the letter boxes and the sentence blanks.

Answers: Farming, Jayhawkers, Aviation, Sunflowers.

Mini Jokes



Mark: What does a bird call a cupcake?
Maddie: A sweet tweet!

Eco Note



Light pollution is causing birds worldwide to sing for nearly an hour longer each day, according to a report in the journal Science. By analyzing more than 4.4 million dawn and dusk vocalization records from 583 species, scientists found that birds in lighted areas start singing 18 minutes earlier and end 32 minutes later than those in darker habitats. The effect is strongest in species with large eyes, open nests or migratory behavior, and it is most pronounced during breeding season. The extended vocal activity could disrupt birds’ rest cycles and reproduction.

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For later:

Look in your newspaper for articles about things happening in Kansas.

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