KANSAS

THE SUNFLOWER STATE *Became a state January 29, 1861 (34th)*

Kansas sits in the very middle of the country, a land of wide prairie, wheat fields and big skies. It rises slowly from east to west until it is more than 4,000 feet high.



Why the Sunflower State?

Wild sunflowers grow all across Kansas, along roads and at the edges of fields. A young sunflower turns through the day to follow the sun from east to west. Once it is fully grown, it stops moving and faces east, where the morning sun warms it. Kansas made the wild sunflower its state flower in 1903.



People of the South Wind

Kansas is named for the Kansa, or Kaw, a nation that lived along the river that also carries their name. Kansa is often said to mean "people of the south wind." The river, also known as the Kaw, runs about 170 miles to meet the Missouri River at Kansas City. The Kaw Nation has its home in Oklahoma today.



Wheat That Likes Winter

Early Kansas farmers had trouble growing wheat. In 1874, Mennonite families came from Russia looking for a place to farm and worship in peace. They are often credited with bringing a hard wheat called Turkey Red. It is planted in the fall, lives through the cold winter and is ready to cut in early summer. It helped make Kansas a top wheat state.



Where the Buffalo Roam

In the early 1870s a doctor named Brewster Higley lived in a small cabin in Smith County. He wrote a poem about his prairie home, where the buffalo roam and the deer and the antelope play. A friend, Daniel Kelley, made up a tune for it on his guitar. "Home on the Range" became the Kansas state song in 1947.



The Prairie No Plow Could Break

Tallgrass prairie once covered about 170 million acres of North America. Farmers plowed nearly all of it to plant crops. The Flint Hills were spared because the ground is full of a hard rock called flint. Plows could not cut through it, so ranchers grazed cattle there instead. Less than 4 percent of the tallgrass prairie remains, mostly here.



The Girl from Atchison

Amelia Earhart was born in 1897 in her grandparents' house in Atchison, above the Missouri River. In 1932 she became the first woman to fly alone across the Atlantic Ocean. She landed in a pasture in Northern Ireland after about 15 hours in the air. In 1935 she became the first person to fly alone from Hawaii to California.

BY THE NUMBERS

Population	About 3 million (34th most)
Size	About 82,300 square miles (15th largest)
Highest point	Mount Sunflower, 4,039 feet
Counties	105
Neighbors	Nebraska, Missouri, Oklahoma, Colorado

DID YOU KNOW?

- The center of the 48 connected states is near the town of Lebanon, Kansas. A stone marker stands close to the spot.
- In Hutchinson, visitors can ride an elevator 650 feet down into a salt mine.
- Cawker City has a ball of twine that weighs more than 27,000 pounds. Every August, people add more.
- Monument Rocks are made of chalk from a sea that covered Kansas about 80 million years ago.

FIND IT ON THE MAP

1. Which city is the capital?
2. Which city is closest to the Aviation Industry?
3. Which river does the Kansas River flow into?

Answers: 1. Topeka 2. Wichita 3. The Missouri River