

American Heartland

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For over six decades, *English Teaching Forum* has offered teachers around the world a window into American life. These windows are sometimes through big ideas, like celebrating NASA's early missions, and sometimes through the delightfully small ones, like a cassette tape full of American English jokes and riddles. As the United States celebrates its 250th year, we're looking back at some of the fun and impactful ways *Forum* has shared snapshots of American culture with classrooms everywhere.

As I dug through the drawers of archives, something caught my eye: a brightly illustrated insert titled *American Heartland*, complete with cornfields, farm machinery,

and snapshots of rural life. Volume 34 of *English Teaching Forum* included these removable, fold-out features designed to open up like a brochure. *American Heartland* invited readers to explore the everyday rhythms of American farming communities through stories, poetry, and regional phrases. It's charming, a little retro, and wonderfully emblematic of *Forum's* mission over the decades: helping classrooms discover both the extraordinary and the ordinary sides of American life.

Take a peek back into 1990's America and the *Forum* pages that brought it to life, and explore how they can be integrated into the American English classroom:



The cover of the insert featured photos of corn, apples, chickens, and cows.

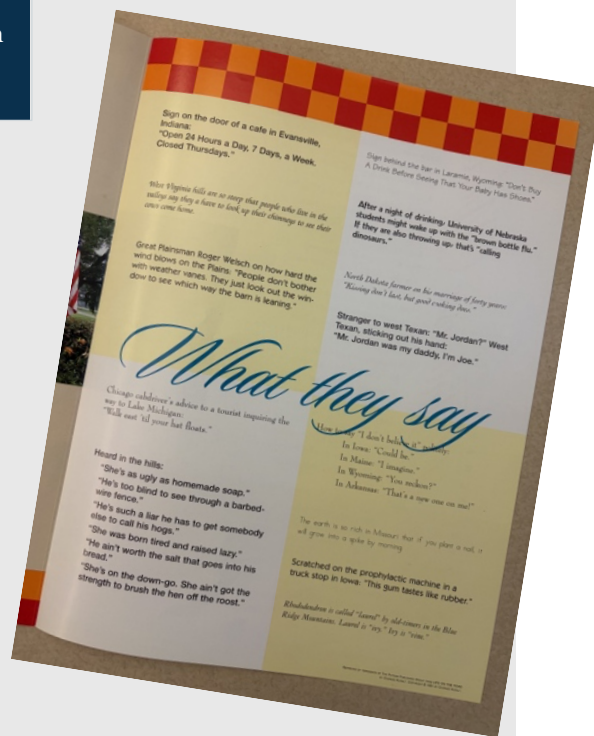
Teachers can use images like these to spark conversations about daily life in the U.S. Another option is to use the title "American Heartland" as a conversation starter: What do you think 'heartland' means? Why would this area of the U.S. and these pictures be considered American 'heartland'?

The last page of the insert included some fun regional phrases that Americans might say.

For example, people from different states would use different phrases to say “I don’t believe it” politely.

- **In Iowa:** “Could be.”
- **In Maine:** “I imagine.”
- **In Wyoming:** “You reckon?”
- **In Arkansas:** “That’s a new one on me!”

I had a lot of fun thinking of other phrases that could be used. In Texas, one might say, “You don’t say!” or “Well, ain’t that something!” In New York: “Get outta here.” And, in California, I’d probably say, “Seriously?” or “For real?” Do you have any others to add?



If you liked these regional phrases, take a *Forum Flash-Forward* and explore more on our ‘Talk Like You’re From...’ series on the [American English at State Facebook](#) page! The page is currently featuring common sayings and idioms from each state as part of this year’s celebration of America’s 250th anniversary.

I’m so glad I dug into those drawers! Thanks for joining me on this little trip into *Forum*’s past. I hope it inspires new ideas for your classroom today. There’s more to explore, so watch for the next *Forum Flashback* in the upcoming issue.