



A Lesson on The Gulls of Salt Lake

by Brooke Johncheck

Grade Level: Grade 5

Subject Area: English Language Arts

Lesson Length: 1 hour 15 minutes

Lesson Keywords: Reading, writing, vocabulary and A Lesson on the Gulls of Salt Lake

Lesson Description: The goal of this lesson is to have students dig deep into the reading and understand symbols and meaning in different parts of the text. By taking a look at the reading multiple times students will be able to understand sentences and words that they did not notice before.

Common Core Standards Covered with This Lesson

CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RL.5.1: Quote accurately from a text when explaining what the text says explicitly and when drawing inferences from the text.

CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RL.5.3: Compare and contrast two or more characters, settings, or events in a story or drama, drawing on specific details in the text (e.g., how characters interact).

CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RL.5.4: Determine the meaning of words and phrases as they are used in a text, including figurative language such as metaphors and similes.

CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RL.5.9: Compare and contrast stories in the same genre (e.g., mysteries and adventure stories) on their approaches to similar themes and topics.

CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RI.5.4: Determine the meaning of general academic and domain-specific words and phrases in a text relevant to a grade 5 topic or subject area.

CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RF.5.4: Read with sufficient accuracy and fluency to support comprehension.

Lesson Content: Book/Story/Reading Passage

Instructions: Please read the following reading passage as many times as needed (aloud and silent) before starting to go through other lesson pages. Understanding the content of this passage is very important since the lesson activities will be all about this content. Feel free to print the passage if needed.

The Gulls of Salt Lake

by

Content: At last. They were safe. A brave little company of pioneers from the Atlantic coast crossed the Mississippi River. They finally succeeded in climbing to the top of the great Rockies and down again into a valley in the very midst of the mountains. It was a valley of brown, bare, desert soil, in a climate where almost no rain falls. But the snow on the mountain-tops sent down little streams of pure water, the winds were gentle. Like a blue jewel at the foot of the western hills was a marvelous lake of salt water, an inland sea. Some wanted to keep going. But most said, this is where we should live. So the pioneers settled there and built themselves huts and cabins for the first winter.

It had taken them many months to make the terrible trip. Many had died of illness on the way; many died of hardship during the winter. The supplies they had brought in their wagons were so nearly gone that, by spring, they were living partly on roots, dug from the ground. All their lives now depended on the crops they could raise in the valley. They made the barren land fertile by spreading water from the little streams over it, what we call irrigating. They planted corn and grain and vegetables. Every one helped, and every one watched for the plants to grow, with hopes, and prayers, and careful eyes.

In good time the brown earth was covered with a carpet of tender, green, growing things. No farmer's garden could have looked better than the great garden of the desert valley. And from day to day the little plants grew and flourished till they were all well above the ground. James, who was the head of the group, said, We finally will have all the food we need.

Then a terrible thing happened. One day, the men who were watering the crops saw a great number of crickets swarming over the ground at the edge of the gardens nearest the mountains. They were hopping from the barren places into the young, green crops, and as they settled down they ate the tiny shoots and leaves to the ground. More came, and more, and ever more, and as they came they spread out till they covered a big corner of the grain field. And still more and more, till it was like an army of black, hopping, crawling crickets, streaming down the side of the mountain. James said, Watch out, they're going to eat our food.

Everyone tried to kill the crickets by beating them down, but the numbers were so great that it was like beating at the sea. Suddenly, from far off in the air toward the great salt lake, there was the sound of flapping wings. It grew louder. It looked like a white cloud rising from the lake, a flock of sea gulls flying toward them. Hundreds of gulls rose and circled and came on.

The gulls! The gulls! James cried. They have come to help. The gulls flew overhead, with a shrill chorus of whimpering cries, and then, in a marvelous white cloud of outspread wings and hovering breasts, they settled down over the field. Look, look, James said. See! They are eating the crickets! They are saving our food.

It was true. The gulls ate the crickets. And when at last they finished, they had stripped the fields of the crickets. The pioneers had moved to the right place after all. It had taken a lot of work. It had taken determination. They had met obstacles. They had solved problems. They would survive.

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Task 1: Vocabulary

Instructions: Please complete the following vocabulary activity by choosing the correct meaning of each word selected from the passage and use of each word correctly in a sentence.

Q: 1 WordPhrase: Pioneers **WordPhraseTier:** 3

Question: A brave little company of pioneers from the Atlantic coast crossed the Mississippi River. What does the word "pioneers" mean in this sentence?

- A: Trees
- B: Explorers
- C: Animals
- D: Boats

Question: Which one of the sentences below uses "pioneer" correctly?

- A: He pioneered his way across the sea.
 - B: The eco-friendly spa was recognized for being a pioneer in green practices.
 - C: The pioneers traveled across many bodies of water to reach their destination.
 - D: He has pioneered many innovative techniques.
- =====

Q: 2 WordPhrase: barren **WordPhraseTier:** 3

Question: "They were hopping from the barren places into the young, green crops." What does the word "barren" mean in this sentence?

- A: grass
- B: weedy
- C: rocky
- D: empty/dirt

Question: Which one of the sentences below uses the word "barren" correctly?

- A: The road to town was completely barren.
 - B: The lady had never had kids, and was considered to be barren.
 - C: The barren land provided no refuge from the hot sun.
 - D: The old building was barren looking.
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Q: 3 WordPhrase: Flourished **WordPhraseTier:** 2

Question: "And from day to day the little plants grew and flourished till they were well above the ground." What does the word "flourished" mean in this sentence?

- A: grow well
- B: die
- C: wave
- D: learn quickly

Question: Which one of the sentences below uses "flourished" correctly?

- A: The flowers flourished in the garden and grew over four feet tall.
 - B: He flourished in his classes, and finished his assignments with ease.
 - C: The wilting flower was said to be flourishing.
 - D: The mom flourished in the kitchen, and was said to make the best meals.
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Q: 4 WordPhrase: Hopping **WordPhraseTier:** 2

Question: "And still more and more, till it was like an army of black, hopping, crawling crickets, streaming down the side of the mountain." What does the word "hopping" mean in this sentence?

- A: Dancing
- B: Walking
- C: Bouncing
- D: Jumping

Question: Which one of the sentences below uses the word "hopping" correctly?

- A: The restaurant was hopping with many people.
 - B: The boy was doing laundry and threw the hopping clothes into the washer.
 - C: The girl was seen hopping on one foot across the room.
 - D: Over the weekend many people said that downtown was hopping.
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Task 2: Forum Discussion

Instructions: This discussion forum will have questions for students to respond. Read the posted questions, and respond to each. Students are responsible for posting one initial and and two peer responses for each topic.

1 - A brave little company

A brave little company of pioneers from the Atlantic coast crossed the Mississippi River. They finally succeeded in climbing to the top of the great Rockies and down again into a valley in the very midst of the mountains. Explain why the pioneers were considered brave.

2 - white cloud rising

Suddenly, from far off in the air toward the great salt lake, there was the sound of flapping wings. It grew louder. It looked like a white cloud rising from the lake, a flock of sea gulls flying toward them. Hundreds of gulls rose and circled and came on. Explain what flock of sea gulls represents in this story.

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Task 3: Writing Activity

Instructions: You are to write and post here a 500 word essay comparing the destructive army of crickets in the reading to a destructive force in the world you have read about or watched on tv. Identify and discuss at least two similarities and differences between the destructive crickets and the destructive force you choose to write about. Be sure to provide specific examples from the story.

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