



## A Lesson on The Gulls of Salt Lake by Morgan Castellucio

**Grade Level:** Grade 5

**Subject Area:** English Language Arts

**Lesson Length:** 1 hour 45 minutes

**Lesson Keywords:** Short Story, Reading, Writing.

**Lesson Description:** The goal of this lesson is to give students the opportunity to practice reading and writing. By reading and rereading the passage closely, and focusing their reading through a series of questions and discussion about the text, students will identify what pioneers face. When combined with writing about the passage, students will discover how much they learn from the text they read.

### Common Core Standards Covered with This Lesson

CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RL.5.2: Determine a theme of a story, drama, or poem from details in the text, including how characters in a story or drama respond to challenges or how the speaker in a poem reflects upon a topic; summarize 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.5.5: Explain how a series of chapters, scenes, or stanzas fits together to provide the overall structure of a particular story, drama, or poem.

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

CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RI.5.2: Determine two or more main ideas of a text and explain how they are supported by key details; summarize the text.

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.RI.5.5: Compare and contrast the overall structure (e.g., chronology, comparison, cause/effect, problem/solution) of events, ideas, concepts, or information in two or more texts.

CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RF.5.3: Know and apply grade-level phonics and word analysis skills in decoding words.

CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RF.5.3a: Use combined knowledge of all letter-sound correspondences, syllabication patterns, and morphology (e.g., roots and affixes) to read accurately unfamiliar multisyllabic words in context and out of context.

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

CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RF.5.4a: Read grade-level text with purpose and understanding.



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## 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:** blue jewel **WordPhraseTier:** 2

**Question:** In the second paragraph, what does "blue jewel" refer to?

- A: sparkling water
- B: beautiful gem
- C: precious ornament
- D: flowered herbs

**Question:** Which sentence uses the word "blue jewel" in the same context as the sentence in the story.

- A: The gem was a blue jewel.
  - B: The florist named the flower the blue jewel.
  - C: The lake was very beautiful, it was the blue jewel they had been looking for to settle.
  - D: The lake was a good resource for water, as precious as a blue jewel.
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**Q: 2 WordPhrase:** Collaborated **WordPhraseTier:** 2

**Question:** As it is used in the passage, collaborated most likely means:

- A: studied the land.
- B: worked hard.
- C: worked together.
- D: planted crops.

**Question:** Which one of the sentence below uses the word "collaborated" correctly?

- A: The dog and the cat collaborated on their meal.
  - B: The students collaborate their research about pioneers and created a projected.
  - C: Do not forget to collaborate before you plant the seeds.
  - D: The fan collaborated and broke.
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**Q: 3 WordPhrase:** irrigating **WordPhraseTier:** 2

**Question:** In the sentence, "They made the barren land fertile by spreading water from the little streams over it, what we call "irrigating", what does the term irrigating mean?

- A: supply water to land or crops to help growth.
- B: planted crops.
- C: irritating.
- D: the soil

**Question:** Which one of the sentence below uses the word "irrigating" correctly?

- A: The boy was very irrigating.
  - B: When the children went for a swim they were irrigating.
  - C: Rising annually, the river irrigated and fertilized crop.
  - D: The lake was a good resource for water, and used for irrigating the crops.
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**Q: 4 WordPhrase:** hardship **WordPhraseTier:** 2

**Question:** As it used in the passage "hardship" most likely means:?

- A: suffering
- B: a hard time
- C: cold
- D: difficult

**Question:** Which one of the sentence below uses "hardship" correctly?

- A: He believed the trip would be hot but he was faced with hardship.
  - B: His last days were spent in a cave and there he died in 1686, worn out by hardship and privation.
  - C: The boys were rough and thought they could face the hardship they were about to encounter.
  - D: The man was a hardship at work.
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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 two peer responses for each topic.

### 1 - Character Traits

Name one character. What is one trait you infer that character has? Explain why you think that?

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### 2 - Why does the author compare the number of crickets to the sea?

In paragraph five the author writes, Everyone tried to kill the crickets by beating them down, but the numbers were so great that it was like beating at the sea. Why does the author compare the number of crickets to the sea?

### 3 - Conflict

How did the settlers hard journey set up the conflict for the rest of the story?

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Task 3: Writing Activity

**Instructions:** For your writing assignment, write in 2-3 paragraphs (minimum 250 words) about the life of a pioneer based on what you read. Give examples of challenges you may face.

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