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## A Lesson on Prairie Farmers by Jennifer Ponterio

**Grade Level:** Grade 4

**Subject Area:** English Language Arts

**Lesson Length:** 1 hour 45 minutes

**Lesson Keywords:** Prairie 100 years ago farm

**Lesson Description:** A Lesson on Prairie Farmers is intended to enhance children's critical thinking skills, as well as their creative writing skills. I want the students to compare and contrast their lives to the life of this young boy. The students should really dig deep into this passage and try to see themselves 100 years ago.

### Common Core Standards Covered with This Lesson

CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RL.4.1: Refer to details and examples in a text when explaining what the text says explicitly and when drawing inferences from the text.

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CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RL.4.3: Describe in depth a character, setting, or event in a story or drama, drawing on specific details in the text (e.g., a character's thoughts, words, or actions).

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CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RL.4.4: Determine the meaning of words and phrases as they are used in a text, including those that allude to significant characters found in mythology (e.g., Herculean).

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CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RI.4.4: Determine the meaning of general academic and domain-specific words or phrases in a text relevant to a grade 4 topic or subject area.

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CCSS.ELA-Literacy.W.4.1: Write opinion pieces on topics or texts, supporting a point of view with reasons and information.

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CCSS.ELA-Literacy.W.4.2d: Use precise language and domain-specific vocabulary to inform about or explain the topic.

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CCSS.ELA-Literacy.W.4.4: Produce clear and coherent writing in which the development and organization are appropriate to task, purpose, and audience. (Grade-specific expectations for writing types are defined in standards 1-3 above.)

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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.

### Prairie Farmers

by

**Content:** This is a journal that a child might have written about living on a farm in the Chicago area 100 years ago.

June 10th ? ? ? Today, we put up a fence. It will keep our cows out of our cornfield. The cows and horses have lots of grass to eat in the prairie. It makes a great pasture. Father says it's a good place for them. We just have a small farm because it's hard to plow the ground.

July 4th ? ? ? It's Independence Day. The corn is very high. The prairie grasses are even higher. I saw hundreds of butterflies today. It was so hot that we went to the creek for the day.

August 21st ? ? ? It has not rained for three weeks. I got so tired carrying buckets of water to the squash plants. I wonder how the prairie plants stay green without the rain.

September 30th ? ? ? The prairie is very dry. We cleared a path between the prairie and our garden. Mother says that the lightning will catch the dry grass on fire and we need to protect our home.

October 15th ? ? ? Mother was right about the fire. There was much thunder and lightning, and then the fire burned the whole prairie. All I can see there is burned land. It's a wonder that the plants can grow back again.

December 20th ? ? ? Our fire went out today. We had to go to the Johnsons to get a coal to restart the fire. I'll be more careful to watch the fire so it does not go out again.

January 20th ? ? ? Another snowy day. We are almost out of fire wood. I went with Tom to look for wood. We looked near the creek. Last week we found some branches there. I guess they had floated downstream from some woods. We didn't find any. We saw some animal tracks on the snow. They were small feet, close together.

February 28th ? ? ? Most of the snow has melted. We went to visit the Johnsons. It took two hours to get there because the trail was so muddy. We almost turned back. Mr. Johnson asked us if we had seen any onions along the way. He told us that Chicago is named after onions. He said that the Native Americans called it Checagou, which means wild onions. He said that's because when winter ends the wild onions start to grow and you can eat them. He said it's a sign spring is here. We looked for wild onion plants along the way back, but we didn't see any.

March 15th ? ? ? Mr. Johnson stopped to see us on his way from Chicago. He had a steel plow. He showed it to us. He told us he had gone all the way to Chicago to get it. He says it's going to make it easier to cut through the grass so he can plant. He said if we help him with his planting, he will let us use the plow.

? ? ? April 20th ? ? ? We've borrowed Mr. Johnson's plow. We have cleared the prairie plants from our land. Now we can grow corn on all this land. Father says we'll sell the corn and be able to buy more animals. This will be a busy summer.

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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:** pasture **WordPhraseTier:** 2

**Question:** The cows and horses have lots of grass to eat in the prairie. It makes a great pasture. Based on this sentence from the passage, what does the word "pasture" mean?

- A: an area of land where animals eat
- B: a shelter for the animals
- C: a place to buy cows and horses
- D: a store to buy food for animals

**Question:** Which one of these sentences uses the word "pasture" incorrectly?

- A: You can see the lake from across the pasture when you sit in the tree.
- B: The meat is pasture raised from Kentucky.
- C: The pasture of the church told the children to behave last Sunday.
- D: Me and Mike raced across the pasture to save the little bird.

**Q: 2 WordPhrase:** squash **WordPhraseTier:** 2

**Question:** It has not rained for three weeks. I got so tired carrying buckets of water to the squash plants. Based on this sentence, what does the word "squash" mean?

- A: flat
- B: crowded
- C: broken
- D: a vegetable plant

**Question:** Which sentence uses the word "squash" correctly?

- A: I am scared of spiders, so I had my dad squash it.
- B: When Lisa came home, she came home to her doll squashed under her father's work boots.
- C: Can you get off of me, you are squashing my bladder!
- D: I asked to waiter for the fried squash.

**Q: 3 WordPhrase:** track **WordPhraseTier:** 3

**Question:** We saw some animal tracks on the snow. What does the word "tracks" mean in this sentence?

- A: to follow
- B: to watch
- C: a path/trail
- D: a place to race cars

**Question:** Which sentences uses the word "track" in the same context as the passage?

- A: The cars go over 100 miles per hour on the race track!
- B: The snail left behind a slimy track.
- C: Have you been keeping track of your homework?
- D: I cannot keep track of what happened to my car keys.

**Q: 4 WordPhrase:** independence **WordPhraseTier:** 2

**Question:** July 4th- It's Independence Day. What does the word "independence" mean?

- A: sunny
- B: happy
- C: freedom
- D: backwards

**Question:** Which sentence uses the word "independence" correctly?

- A: She gained her independence when she graduated college.
- B: She said
- C: They all started laughing with independence.
- D: When the car comes to a complete stop, the independence kicks in.

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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 - Then and Now

Your summer?fun was probably not the same as this young boy's. Compare and contrast how your summer, and the narrator's summer are similar or different. Give at least three examples.

### 2 - Fire

Why do you think the thunder and lightening caused a fire? Do you think the fire could of been preventable, why or why not?

### 3 - What Would You Do?

Would you have given up on the 2 hour travel? Do you think that their travel was worth it?

### 4 - Spring

Based on this story what is a sign of spring? Give me two different names of the sign of spring.

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Task 3: Writing Activity

**Instructions:** Pretend it is 100 years ago, and you have to farm just like the boy in this story. Write a 2-3 paragraph story of your daily routine. Remember 100 years ago was a?completely different time period then now. Use the passage to get ideas on how life was back then.

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