



A Lesson on Prairie Changes by Deborah Guyton

Grade Level: Grade 4

Subject Area: English Language Arts

Lesson Length: 1 hour

Lesson Keywords: prairie, changes

Lesson Description: Lesson on the prairie and the changes that occur within.

Common Core Standards Covered with This Lesson

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).

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

CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RI.4.2: Determine the main idea of a text and explain how it is supported by key details; summarize the text.

CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RI.4.8: Explain how an author uses reasons and evidence to support particular points in a text.

CCSS.ELA-Literacy.W.4.1b: Provide reasons that are supported by facts and details.

CCSS.ELA-Literacy.SL.4.1a: Come to discussions prepared, having read or studied required material; explicitly draw on that preparation and other information known about the topic to explore ideas under discussion.

CCSS.ELA-Literacy.L.4.1: Demonstrate command of the conventions of standard English grammar and usage when writing or speaking.

CCSS.ELA-Literacy.L.4.4: Determine or clarify the meaning of unknown and multiple-meaning words and phrases based on grade 4 reading and content, choosing flexibly from a range of strategies.

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 Changes

by

Content: In many environments, changes, called succession, take place over time. One kind of plant succeeds another. Weeds start to grow. Then woody plants come. The woody plants take over. The environment becomes a forest. But trees do not survive fires. The lightning and the bison protected the prairie from those changes. So millions of acres stayed prairie.

The animals that live in the prairie needed all that prairie to live. You can understand that when you look at one bird. The meadowlark is a bird that nests in the prairie. It gets its food there, too. In summer, it eats insects. In winter, it eats seeds. To stay alive, the meadowlark needs at least 20 acres of prairie land. If 100 meadowlarks live in one prairie, they need a 2,000 acre prairie.

That's just one bird. The Henslow sparrow needs 80 acres to live. Some small farms are 80 acres. They produce a lot of food for the farm family. The family sells food to people in other places. What if the family buys another 80 acres of prairie to expand its farm. They will grow more food. At least one sparrow and four meadowlarks will lose their habitat.

After the invention of the steel plow, farmers turned more prairie into cornfields. People built more homes and roads. Over time, what was left of the natural prairies were small and widely scattered pieces of prairie. Birds could not nest there. The seeds that the wind blew from the prairie plants fell on highways, in backyards, and in cornfields. The prairie land that was left lost the bison, and weeds began to move in.

What was left of the prairie was in small patches, called remnants. People use the word remnant to talk about leftover pieces of cloth. When people make clothing, some cloth is left. People may use that cloth to patch clothing. Pioneers used remnant cloth to make quilts. But if a prairie remnant is only about ten acres, it has a limited future.

What would the rest of the century bring for prairies? Each year, there were fewer and fewer acres, and in time only remnants of prairie remained in Illinois, the prairie state. Today, less than 1% of the original Illinois prairie is left.

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: succession **WordPhraseTier:** 3

Question: "In many environments succession take place over time." What is the author referring to when he uses succession in this sentence?

- A: How well the plants grew in the prairie.
- B: The changes in the prairie.
- C: The amount of cornfields that were created.
- D: How long the plants lasted in the prairie.

Question: Which sentences uses the word succession in the correct context?

- A: Academic succession is essential to receiving good grades.
- B: Succession in planning allows others to give their input.
- C: Leaders use succession to become greater leaders.
- D: The succession in the soil is documented using a pie chart.

Q: 2 WordPhrase: bison **WordPhraseTier:** 2

Question: "The lightning and the bison protected the prairie from those changes." What does the word bison refer to in this sentence?

- A: bulls
- B: thunder
- C: trees
- D: rain

Question: Which sentence uses the word "bison" correctly?

- A: The bison keep the prairie clean.
- B: The bison grow more cornfields.
- C: The bison live on the prairie.
- D: The farmers harvest the bison during a certain time of year.

Q: 3 WordPhrase: meadowlark **WordPhraseTier:** 2

Question: "To stay alive, the meadowlark needs at least 20 acres of prairie land. If 100 meadowlarks live in one prairie, they need a 2,000 acre prairie. What is a meadowlark?

- A: A worm that lives underground.
- B: The only source of food on the prairie.
- C: A prairie dog.
- D: A bird that lives on the prairie.

Question: Which of these sentences gives the correct meaning to the word meadowlark?

- A: A meadowlark uses its beak to pick up food in the prairie.
- B: A meadowlark protects the prairie along with the lightning.
- C: Meadowlarks make burrows underground for shelter.
- D: Meadowlarks are good at hunting other animals.

Q: 4 WordPhrase: remnant **WordPhraseTier:** 2

Question: "Pioneers used remnant cloth to make quilts." What is the definition of the word "remnant" in this sentence?

- A: small
- B: huge
- C: leftover pieces
- D: cotton

Question: Which sentence demonstrates the correct use of the word "remnant"?

- A: There was a remnant in the oven.
- B: Heather knew the dog had chewed her shoes due to the remnant of the shoelace left on the floor.
- C: Remnants are delicious.
- D: Turtles are remnants.

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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 - What is the author's purpose in writing this passage?

Why do you think the author wrote this passage?

2 - Why does the author refer to the animals on the prairie?

Why are animals the main thing on the prairie that the author refers to?

3 - What changes occurred on the prairie?

Exactly how did the prairie change? Use examples from the passage.

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Task 3: Writing Activity

Instructions: You are to write and post here 200 words essay explaining the effect of the changes in the prairie. How could these changes have been prevented? What caused the changes??Make sure to provide specific examples from the passage.

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