



## A Lesson on The Gulls of Salt Lake by Emily Thompson

**Grade Level:** Grade 5

**Subject Area:** English Language Arts

**Lesson Length:** 1 hour 45 minutes

**Lesson Keywords:** Reading, Writing, The Gulls of Salt Lake, Pioneers

**Lesson Description:** This lesson requires students to read a short grade level story, with purpose and understanding. The students will acquire new academic and domain specific vocabulary words, while engaging in collaborative discussions, and writing based on real or imagined experiences.

### Common Core Standards Covered with This Lesson

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.5.4a: Read grade-level text with purpose and understanding.

CCSS.ELA-Literacy.W.5.3: Write narratives to develop real or imagined experiences or events using effective technique, descriptive details, and clear event sequences.

CCSS.ELA-Literacy.SL.5.1: Engage effectively in a range of collaborative discussions (one-on-one, in groups, and teacher-led) with diverse partners on grade 5 topics and texts, building on others' ideas and expressing their own clearly.

CCSS.ELA-Literacy.SL.5.1c: Pose and respond to specific questions by making comments that contribute to the discussion and elaborate on the remarks of others.

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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:** Cried **WordPhraseTier:** 2

**Question:** The author in our story says " The gulls! The gulls! James cried. They have come to help." What does the word "cried" mean in this sentence?

- A: Shouted
- B: Wept
- C: Signaled
- D: Whispered

**Question:** Which one of the sentences below uses the word "cried" correctly

- A: The tears rolled down her face as she cried to her mother.
- B: He cried out to his friends as the bus went by.
- C: The dogs howled and cried at the cats all night long.
- D: The baby cried untill she saw her mother.

**Q: 2 WordPhrase:** Company **WordPhraseTier:** 2

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

- A: A business or store
- B: Beautiful
- C: A group of people
- D: A guest

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

- A: Mr. Brown's company was making a lot of money.
- B: Living close to Disney, you have a lot of company visiting.
- C: A scared company of Girl Scouts was lost in the woods.
- D: The company picnic was ruined by the thunder storm.

**Q: 3 WordPhrase:** Barren **WordPhraseTier:** 3

**Question:** The author in our story says "They made the barren land fertile..." What does the word "barren" mean in the sentence?

- A: Soft
- B: Colorful
- C: Having very few plants
- D: Useful

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

- A: In the barren desert, few things can grow.
- B: The barren garden produced many tomatoes.
- C: The room was barren, it had no furniture.
- D: After the snow storm the streets were barren.

**Q: 4 WordPhrase:** Fertile **WordPhraseTier:** 3

**Question:** The author in our story says " They made the barren land fertile by spreading water from the little streams over it..." What does the word "fertile" mean in this sentence?

- A: Colorful
- B: Swamp
- C: Farmland
- D: Producing many plants

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

- A: The chickens had fertile red feathers.
- B: The goats climbed the fertile hills.
- C: The animals on the farm ate fertile food.
- D: The fertile garden produced many tomatoes.

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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 - How did the streams help the pioneers?

How did the little streams of pure water help the pioneers survive?

### 2 - Why was James excited?

Why was James excited to see the White cloud of sea gulls rising from the lake?

### 3 - The pioneers had moved to the right place after all.

In the final paragraph it says The pioneers had moved to the right place after all. Why do you think the pioneers settled here?

### 4 - How did the men feel?

How do you think the men felt when they saw the crickets swarming to eat their crops?

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Task 3: Writing Activity

**Instructions:** For this writing activity, in 2-3 paragraphs answer the following questions based on the passage from The Gulls of Salt Lake. Other than illness what hardships do you think the pioneers experienced on their journey and first winter.?What hardships do you think you would encounter if your family relocated? Would these hardships compare to those of the pioneers, why or why not?

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