



A Lesson on The Gulls of Salt Lake

by Jobeth Griffin

Grade Level: Grade 5

Subject Area: English Language Arts

Lesson Length: 1 hour 30 minutes

Lesson Keywords: 5th Grade Passage

Close Reading

See Gulls

Pioneers

Figurative Language

Character Traits

Lesson Description: The students will read about a journey of pioneers and their determination and help from the gulls.

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.5.2: 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.5.4: 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.5.10: By the end of the year, read and comprehend literature, including stories, dramas, and poetry, at the high end of the grades 4-5 text complexity band independently and proficiently.

CCSS.ELA-Literacy.L.5.5a: Interpret figurative language, including similes and metaphors, in context.

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.

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: hardship **WordPhraseTier:** 2

Question: The author of our story says, "Many had died of illness on the way; many died of hardship during the winter." What does the word "hardship" mean in this sentence?

- A: adventure
- B: A cause of difficulty
- C: easy going
- D: old age

Question: Which uses "hardship" in the same meaning as provided in the passage?

- A: The family experienced hardships after the father lost his job.
- B: The explorers suffered many hardships after traveling across the winter terrain.
- C: Life is full of hardships.
- D: The traffic caused the family to experience hardships.

Q: 2 WordPhrase: succeeded **WordPhraseTier:** 2

Question: The author of the story says "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. What does the word "succeeded" mean in this sentence?

- A: To accomplish something attempted
- B: To follow or come next
- C: To take the place of
- D: To follow order

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

- A: She succeeded to the throne after the king.
- B: President Obama succeeded President Bush as President of the United States.
- C: He succeeded in winning the 5 mile race.
- D: Queen Elizabeth succeeded the throne after her father.

Q: 3 WordPhrase: brave **WordPhraseTier:** 3

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

- A: having or showing courage
- B: having confidence
- C: having intelligence
- D: having experience

Question: Which uses "brave" in the same meaning as provided in the passage?

- A: The Braves won the baseball game!
- B: That's a brave student to confront his teacher.
- C: Firefighters brave many dangers in their line of duty.
- D: My favorite team to play Major League baseball is the Atlanta Braves.

Q: 4 WordPhrase: rose **WordPhraseTier:** 3

Question: The author of our story says "Hundreds of gulls rose and circled and came on." What does the word "rose" mean in this sentence?

- A: shrub or vine that bears such flowers
- B: A fragrant flower
- C: To move from a lower to a higher position
- D: A flower given on special occasions

Question: Which sentence uses "rose" in the same meaning as provided in the passage?

- A: My father gave my mother a rose for their anniversary.
- B: The beautiful bush bloomed with a red rose.
- C: Their yard had a large rose bush at the corner of the fence.
- D: The sea level rose after the long storm.

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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 - Figurative Language-Simile

In the story the author uses the simile, Like a blue jewel at the foot of the western hills was a marvelous lake of salt water, an inland sea. Why did the author compare the lake to a blue jewel? Explain your answer.?

2 - A long hard journey....

Why did the pioneers have a long hard journey? Give examples from the text.?

3 - Determination

How did the pioneers demonstrate their determination? What character traits could you use to describe the pioneers?

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Task 3: Writing Activity

Instructions: Why did the gulls help the pioneers? What did the gulls earn from being helpful? Did the pioneers and gulls both benefit? Explain your answer

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