



## A Lesson on Seasons on the Prairie by Emily Ostebo

**Grade Level:** Grade 5

**Subject Area:** English Language Arts

**Lesson Length:** 2 hours

**Lesson Keywords:** Reading, writing, prairie, seasons

**Lesson Description:** The goal of this lesson is to give students the opportunity to use their learned skills in reading and writing to comprehend a lesson on the seasons of a prairie. By reading and understanding the text presented to them, students will focus their minds on answering a series of questions and participating in discussions about the passage. Students will identify the different seasons of a prairie and what is present during each time period, including the type of natural occurrences that take place.

### 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.5.4: 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.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.5.8: Explain how an author uses reasons and evidence to support particular points in a text, identifying which reasons and evidence support which point(s).

CCSS.ELA-Literacy.W.5.2: Write informative/explanatory texts to examine a topic and convey ideas and information clearly.

CCSS.ELA-Literacy.W.5.2d: Use precise language and domain-specific vocabulary to inform about or explain the topic.

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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.

### Seasons on the Prairie

by

**Content:** The prairie is a place where plants have lived for hundreds of years. If you see a natural prairie in different seasons, you see bright flowers and tall grasses. In early spring you see shooting stars and violets, and the spring grasses begin to grow. The prairie is very wet then since winter snows melt and leave ponds. There are two kinds of prairie grasses, one that grows a lot in spring, another that grows a lot in summer.

In summer the grasses are so tall you can't see low-growing flowers, but you do see the tall black-eyed Susan. Summer was the prairie's biggest season. In summer, there was so much tall grass that people called it a sea of grass that grew as tall as people. When pioneers were in the prairie, sometimes they got lost and would use a very tall plant called the compass plant to find their way. The compass plant's leaves turned during the day to follow the sunlight. Thousands of animals lived in this grassy area, including bison that grazed on the plants.

In autumn, more flowers bloom - the asters brighten the prairie. The leaves of many prairie plants turn gold in autumn as the grasses dry. In autumn, when the grasses are dry, natural fires take place. Those fires start by lightning. Acres and acres of prairie can burn in one natural fire. When the grasses burn, the native prairie plants do not die. In fact, the fires help the grasses keep the prairie for themselves. Most plants, especially trees, depend on their tips to grow. You'll see that trees have new buds in spring, and that is where they grow. If a tree loses its branches, it will not grow again. But grasses do not need their leaves to grow back. They grow from their roots, and the fires do not burn those roots. So every year, the lightning fires are like gardeners weeding the prairie of plants that do not grow there. The prairie plants were like gardeners, too, because as their leaves died they fertilized the soil.

Some prairie animals migrate in winter to warmer places where they will find food. Some stay in the prairie through winter. And some hibernate. For example, some frogs dig holes under the ground and sleep through the cold prairie winter.

Thousands of bison and hundreds of birds and other animals that used to live in this area are gone, but they did not migrate. They left because their habitat was destroyed. There is hope for the prairie, though; those animals will be able to live in this area again. People are restoring the prairie at Midewin National Tallgrass Prairie. One day that area will look as it did when the bison lived there and the Potawatomi hunted here.

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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:** Restoring **WordPhraseTier:** 2

**Question:** "People are restoring the prairie at Midewin National Tallgrass prairie." What does the word "restoring" mean in this sentence?

- A: Visiting
- B: Fixing
- C: Damaging
- D: Selling

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

- A: I restored the old, broken house to its former beauty.
  - B: The restored woman decided not to teach anymore.
  - C: The restored fire began to burn out.
  - D: I restored my groceries by giving them back to the market.
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**Q: 2 WordPhrase:** Grazed **WordPhraseTier:** 2

**Question:** "Thousands of animals lived in this grassy area, including bison that grazed on the plants."

- A: Walked through the plants
- B: Slept in the plants
- C: Ate the plants
- D: Played in the plants

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

- A: My father and I often go star grazing late at night.
  - B: I grazed my hair back using my new hair gel.
  - C: I grazed through the test quickly because it was so easy.
  - D: The family of elk grazed on the grass by the river.
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**Q: 3 WordPhrase:** Black-eyed Susan **WordPhraseTier:** 3

**Question:** "In summer the grasses are so tall you can't see low-growing flowers, but you do see the tall black-eyed Susan." What does black-eyed Susan mean in this sentence?

- A: A tall girl named Susan with black eyes
- B: A type of food
- C: A type of plant or flower
- D: A type of animal

**Question:** Which one of the sentences below uses the words "black-eyed Susan" correctly?

- A: I saw a black-eyed Susan at the park today.
  - B: Black-eyed Susan's are sold in the refrigerated section of the store.
  - C: Black-eyed Susan's make good homes for sea creatures.
  - D: Many put black-eyed Susan's in their ice cream.
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**Q: 4 WordPhrase:** Potawatomi **WordPhraseTier:** 3

**Question:** "One day that area will look as it did when the bison lived there and the Potawatomi hunted here." What does the word "Potawatomi" mean?

- A: A type of bison
- B: A native tribe to the area
- C: A bushel of plants
- D: A type of river boat

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

- A: The Potawatomi flower is a rare and delicate plant.
  - B: River boats were called Potawatomi's back in the day.
  - C: The Potawatomi tribe is known for hunting bison.
  - D: A group of lions is known as a Potawatomi.
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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 this passage's main purpose?

Is this passage meant to inform readers about the seasons of a prairie or is it meant to tell an interesting story using imagination? Use details from the text to support your answer.

### 2 - What about the animals?

What were the reasons that animals left the prairie during the winter season? Explain what hibernation is and give an example.

### 3 - What happened to the habitat?

The passage states that Thousands of bison and hundreds of birds and other animals that used to live in this area are gone, but they did not migrate. They left because their habitat was destroyed. What is a habitat? Using evidence from the text, explain why the animals' habitat could have been destroyed.

### 4 - Compass

Explain how the pioneers were able to navigate through the prairies without maps or road signs like we have today.

### 5 - Do your part to help

Explain one way you could help restore a prairie, just like those who are restoring the Midwestern National Tallgrass prairie.

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Task 3: Writing Activity

**Instructions:** Summarize the events that occur on the prairie each season. Then, choose which season you found to be the most interesting and explain your reasons why using examples from the text. Your response should be a minimum of two paragraphs.

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