



A Lesson on Seasons on the Prairie by Alicia Hoover

Grade Level: Grade 4

Subject Area: English Language Arts

Lesson Length: 2 hours

Lesson Keywords: <http://lessonfarm.com>

Lesson Description: Students will expand their vocabulary in this lesson by understanding the meaning of new words introduced in the story and also by being able to use them correctly in a sentence. Students will respond to three forum questions and provide two peer responses for each question. Then, the students will write a short essay about their predictions for what caused the destruction of the prairie, what could have been done differently to avoid the destruction, and what might be being done to restore the prairie.

Common Core Standards Covered with This Lesson

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.4.3: Explain events, procedures, ideas, or concepts in a historical, scientific, or technical text, including what happened and why, based on specific information in the text.

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.

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

CCSS.ELA-Literacy.W.4.2: Write informative/explanatory texts to examine a topic and convey ideas and information clearly.

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, 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.

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: habitat **WordPhraseTier:** 3

Question: In the story the author says, "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 does the word "habitat" mean?

- A: Home
- B: Friendship
- C: Fur
- D: Feathers

Question: In which sentence is the word "habitat" used correctly?

- A: Our dog's habitat was soft and clean after we gave her a bath.
- B: Wow, that bird has such beautiful blue habitat!
- C: The zookeepers made the baby tiger happy by making her a habitat like one she would have in the wild.
- D: Annie and I have been best friends for 5 years, we have a great habitat because we get along so well.

Q: 2 WordPhrase: natural **WordPhraseTier:** 2

Question: The author in this story says, "If you see a natural prairie in different seasons, you see bright flowers and tall grasses." What does the word "natural" mean in this sentence?

- A: Big
- B: Caused by nature
- C: Colorful
- D: Caused by humans

Question: Which one of these sentences uses the word "natural" correctly?

- A: Last year, many natural disasters such as tornadoes and earthquakes occurred all over the world.
- B: My little sister drew a picture, she used a lot of different markers to make it natural.
- C: We moved into a new house, it is really natural compared to our old house.
- D: Airplanes are made natural in a factory.

Q: 3 WordPhrase: migrate **WordPhraseTier:** 2

Question: In this story, the author says, "Some prairie animals migrate in winter to warmer places where they will find food." What does the word "migrate" mean in this sentence?

- A: Hide
- B: Play
- C: Sleep
- D: Move

Question: Which sentence below uses the word "migrate" correctly?

- A: I like to migrate outside in the summer.
- B: The new kittens were very tired and after drinking their milk they would migrate.
- C: We watched as the birds flew above us, starting their long journey to migrate.
- D: My brother was so scared from the thunderstorm, he ran into his closet to migrate.

Q: 4 WordPhrase: restoring **WordPhraseTier:** 3

Question: The author in this story says, "People are restoring the prairie at Midewin National Tallgrass prairie. One day that area will look as it did when the bison live there and the Potawatomi hunted there." What does the word "restoring" mean?

- A: Cut down
- B: Mowing
- C: Bring back
- D: Building

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

- A: The old painting that was ruined in the flood was able to be restored to like new condition.
- B: There are too many trees that are getting restoring in the rainforest.
- C: The builders began restoring all the brand new houses in the new neighborhood.
- D: Mom says I am grounded from video games unless I get out the lawn mower and start restoring.

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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 do different seasons impact the prairie?

The story discusses what happens in the prairie during different seasons. Briefly explain what happens during each of these seasons (1-2 sentences per season).

2 - How are the fires beneficial?

The story discusses how the lightning causes fires when the grass is dry in autumn. In 3-5 sentences, please explain how these fires are beneficial.

3 - What do the animals do in the winter?

Why do some animals hibernate or migrate in the winter? What might happen if they did not go anywhere and stayed in the prairie during the winter months?

Task 3: Writing Activity

Instructions: You are to write and post here a 500 words essay on the restoring of the prairie. The story did not explain why it was destroyed, but I want you to think of at least two possible explanations for the destruction. Explain each of your theories and what could have been done differently to avoid destroying the prairie. Then, discuss what you think the people are doing to restore the prairie to make it liveable for various animals again. Make sure to provide specific examples!