73

Look at our topographical map and you'll see that the middle third of the North American continent from the Rocky Mountains almost to the Mississippi River is pretty flat.

看看咱们的地形图，你将看到北美大陆的中间三分之一，从落基山脉差不多到密西西比河是相当的平。

This is the Great Plains.

这就是大平原。

This kind of area is sometimes called a prairie, sometimes a steppe. That's s-t-e-p-p-e.

这种区域有时被称作大草原，有时（被称作）干草原。那是s-t-e-p-p-e。

The defining features are level terrain, dry climate, and an absence of trees.

最典型的特征是水平的地势，干燥的气候，还有树木的缺乏。

The Great Plains are actually the former bed of a shallow inland sea.

大平原事实上是以前浅内陆海的海底。

Over millions of years, sediment left by glaciers, water, and wind smoothed out the dry sea bed.

数百万年以来，冰川留下的沉积物，水，和风把干燥的海底弄平了。

As I said, the Great Plaints are bordered on the west by the Rocky Mountains.

像我说过那样，大平原在西部同落基山脉接壤。

And it's really the Rockies that are responsible for the formation of the grasslands.

而且落基山脉真的是形成草原的原因。

The mountains are so high that they block the heavy moist air traveling eastward from the Pacific Ocean.

山脉是如此之高以至于它们挡住了来自太平洋的向东面行进的比重大的潮湿空气。

Lighter, drier air passes over the mountains.

轻一些，干燥一些的空气越过了山脉。

Until people intervened with irrigation and farms, only grass could grow on the dry, windy plain.

在人们用灌溉和农场干预之前，只有草能生长在干燥的，多风的平原。

In fact, we can divide the Great Plains into three zones.

事实上，我们能把大平原分成三个区域。

In the west, where it's driest and windiest, the grass is very short.

在西面，那里是最干燥并且风最多的，草是很矮的。

In the eastern zone, there's more rain and grass grows as high as 360 centimeters.

在东部地区，有更多的雨水，草长到高达360厘米。

In the middle third, there's a mix of grass species that grow to an intermediate height.

在中间的第三个（zone），有一个长到中间高度的草地物种的混合体。