



About the Book

Text Type: Nonfiction/Informational Page Count: 16 Word Count: 546

Book Summary

A Prairie Dog's Life provides information about prairie dogs by describing the adventures of Charlie the prairie dog. The book informs readers about where prairie dogs live, what they look like, and how they respond to danger. The book includes photographs with captions, a diagram, and a map.

About the Lesson

Targeted Reading Strategy

- Summarize

Objectives

- Use the reading strategy of summarizing while reading nonfiction text
- Analyze features of nonfiction text
- Identify examples of the vowel diphthong *ou*
- Recognize and use possessive nouns
- Recognize and use homophones

Materials

Green text indicates resources available on the website

- Book—*A Prairie Dog's Life* (copy for each student)
- Chalkboard or dry erase board
- Dictionaries
- Nonfiction text features, homophones worksheets
- Discussion cards



Indicates an opportunity for students to mark in the book. (All activities may be demonstrated by projecting the book on interactive whiteboard or completed with paper and pencil if books are reused.)

Vocabulary

- High-frequency words: *that, their, there, they*
- Content words: *burrow, colony, coterie, habitat, mammals, pioneers, prairie, predators*

Before Reading

Build Background

- Show students a photograph of a prairie dog. Ask what they know about prairie dogs. Facilitate a discussion using some of the following questions: *Have you ever seen a prairie dog? Where? Why might they be called prairie dogs? Do they look like dogs? Does a prairie dog look like any other animal you've seen?*
- Ask students to think of questions they have about prairie dogs. Record their questions on the board for future reference.

Preview the Book

Introduce the Book

- Give students their copy of the book. Guide them to the front and back covers and read the title. Have students discuss what they see on the covers. Encourage them to offer ideas as to what type of book it is (genre, text type, fiction or nonfiction, and so on) and what it might be about.
- Show students the title page. Discuss the information on the page (title of book, author's name).
- Preview the table of contents on page 3. Remind students that the table of contents provides an overview of the book. Ask students what they expect to read about in the book, based on what they see in the table of contents. (Accept all answers that students can justify.)
- Direct students' attention to the cover of the book. Point out the title of the book and the author's name. Say: *This book does not have an illustrator's name on the cover. Why do you think there is no illustrator?* (Discuss the photographs of real prairie dogs that were taken by a photographer.)

Introduce the Reading Strategy: **Summarize**

- Explain to students that one way to understand and remember details about what they are reading is to summarize in their mind as they read. Explain that when they summarize, they do not tell everything in the story. They must decide which information is most important to know.
- Model how to summarize.
Think-aloud: As I read this book, I am going to look at the photos and think about what I have read. I will stop at the end of the first section. I will ask myself which information was most important in that section, or summarize what I have read so far. After summarizing in my mind, I will continue reading the next section and find the most important information. I will continue reading and summarizing in each section of the book. This strategy will help me remember the important information as I read.
- Direct students to the table of contents on page 3. Point out the list of sections in the book and explain that these are the sections they will use when they summarize. Ask students to turn to the heading on page 4. Explain that the author put the headings in the text to tell them where each new section begins. They should use each heading as a signal to stop and summarize what they have read so far.
- As students read, encourage them to use other reading strategies in addition to the targeted strategy presented in this section.

Introduce the Vocabulary

- As you preview the book, ask students to talk about what they see in the photographs. Model how to use what they know about prairie dogs as they preview the photographs.
- Reinforce new vocabulary by using the words from the text. Incorporate it into the discussion of the text as you preview the book with students. For example, on page 8 you might say: *Each prairie dog family lives in a coterie underground.* Have students repeat the language you used. Ask: *Where do the families live?* They should respond with: *coterie*. Have students look on page 8 as you point out how you used the spelling in parentheses to help you pronounce this unfamiliar word. Repeating some of the language throughout the text will help students when they encounter difficulty as they read.
- Model for students the strategies they can use to work out words they don't know. For example, point to the word *burrow* on page 5. Demonstrate how to say the first part (*bur*) and the last part (*row*). Then have students read the whole sentence to see if the word *burrow* makes sense.

Set the Purpose

- Have students read the book to find out new information about prairie dogs and to see if any of their questions are answered. Remind them to stop at the end of each section to summarize the important details in their mind.

During Reading

Student Reading

- **Guide the reading:** Have students put a sticky note on page 5. Tell them to read to the end of this page. Have students reread the pages if they finish before everyone else.
- When they have finished reading, ask students what words gave them difficulty and review strategies to help them with tricky words.
- **Think-aloud:** *As I was reading the section "The Big Day," I was thinking about what I was reading and summarizing in my mind. When I got to the next heading, I stopped and thought about the most important information to remember from "The Big Day." I found out that a prairie dog is a part of the rodent family, and it is called a dog because of its bark. I also learned that Charlie has three sisters, and they live in a burrow underground. I think the first two details are important to remember, so let's record them on the board. What do you think about the third detail? Is all of the information I remembered important? Because I want to summarize information about prairie dogs, the part about Charlie having three sisters might not be that important. I will just record the parts about prairie dogs being rodents and living in burrows underground.*
- **Check for understanding:** Have students read the next section, "Welcome to the Prairie," and remind them to summarize in their mind as they read the text.
- Ask students what important details they remember from the section titled "Welcome to the Prairie." Record on the board the details that students remember. Discuss each detail recorded and decide as a group if it is important information to remember. Cross out the details that are nice to know but are not important. Narrow down the list of important details to two or three.
- Have students read the remainder of the book. Remind them to summarize in their mind as they read each section.



Have students make a small question mark in their book beside any word they do not understand or cannot pronounce. Encourage them to use the strategies they have learned to read each word and figure out its meaning.

After Reading

- Ask students what words, if any, they marked in their book. Use this opportunity to model how they can read these words using decoding strategies and context clues.

Reflect on the Reading Strategy

- Reinforce with students that stopping to summarize in their mind helps them understand the story. (It encourages students to pay close attention to the story and promotes active engagement.)
- **Think-aloud:** *Stopping to summarize in my mind while reading each section of the story helped me remember the important information better. It helped me be more involved with what I was reading. Now that I have finished reading the story, I know I can record some of the important information I learned about a prairie dog's life. Let's see if we can use the summarizing strategy to help us record other important information about prairie dogs.*
- **Independent practice:** Have students summarize on a separate piece of paper the section titled "Summertime for Charlie." If time allows, discuss their answers.

Teach the Comprehension Skill: Analyze features of nonfiction text

- **Introduce and model:** Review or explain to students the basic difference between fiction and nonfiction text. Ask students if they noticed any parts of this book that might be different from a fiction story they have read. (Use a specific story that students have read for your example.) Students should include mention of the table of contents, glossary, index, photographs with captions, and the maps in the book. If they don't, bring the ones they missed to their attention. Look at each of these special parts of the book and discuss their purpose.
- **Check for understanding:** Ask students which special part of the book they would use to see where the section titled "Danger!" begins (table of contents). Ask which part of the book they would

Lesson Plan *(continued)*

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use to find out what a word means (glossary). Ask what part of the book they would use to find out which pages have information about the prairie (index). Continue the discussion about other parts of the book that students might have mentioned, for example, the photographs with captions and the map with a key.

- **Independent practice:** Introduce, explain, and have students complete the **nonfiction-text-features worksheet**. If time allows, discuss their answers.
- **Enduring understanding:** In this book, you read about the unique habitat of the prairie dog. You also read that some people find prairie dogs a nuisance and destroy their homes. The next time you see an animal on your street, near your home, or in your community, what will you think about?

Build Skills

Phonics: **Vowel diphthong ou**

- Write the word *ground* on the board. Read it with students and challenge them to find the word in the book (page 4). Underline the *ou* in the word *ground*. Explain to students that the *ou* sound in *ground* is called a *diphthong*, which is a vowel sound made by gliding from one sound to another within a syllable.
- Have students turn to page 8 and locate words with the *ou* diphthong (*underground, house, thousands*). Write the words on the board and select a volunteer to come to the board and circle the letters in each word that make the vowel diphthong sound.
- **Check for understanding:** Have students work with a partner to locate and circle on page 9 five words that contain the same diphthong sound (*outside, underground, out, mound, around*). Select a volunteer to share the words. Write them on the board. Have another volunteer identify the letters in each word that make the /ou/ sound.
- **Independent practice:** Challenge students to think of other words, not used in the book, that contain the same /ou/ sound. Have students write the words on a piece of paper. Have students share their words with the class. If time allows, discuss how these words might be used in the book.

Grammar and Mechanics: **Possessive nouns**

- Write the words *animal's call*, *dog's bark*, and *Charlie's name* on the board. Have students turn to pages 5 and 6 to find the words in sentences. Ask students what they notice about these sets of words. Discuss the use of the 's.
- Explain that *possessive nouns* are formed by adding an apostrophe and *s* or sometimes only an apostrophe. Explain that a possessive noun shows ownership, or that something belongs to someone. Ask a volunteer to explain whose name the first sentence on page 6 is referring to (Charlie's). Explain that the word *Charlie's* shows that the name belongs to Charlie.
- **Check for understanding:** Ask several students to tell you something that belongs to them. Write sentences on the board using the possessive form of their name. For example, *I see Jacob's backpack on the floor*.



Independent practice: Have students work in pairs to locate and highlight other possessive nouns in the book. If time allows, discuss their findings.

Word Work: **Homophones**

- Locate the first sentence on page 7, the first sentence on page 9, and the sentence under the photograph on page 15. Write these sentences on the board before the lesson. Read aloud these sentences from the story. Ask students to listen for words that sound the same as you read the sentences that include the words *their*, *there*, and *they're*.
- Show students the sentences written on the board.
- Explain that words that sound the same but are spelled differently and have different meanings are called *homophones*. Discuss the meanings of *their*, *there*, and *they're*.
- Assist students in coming up with other examples of homophones. Write these on the board. Discuss the differences in meaning and spelling of the example words.

Lesson Plan *(continued)*

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- Introduce, explain, and have students complete the [homophones worksheet](#). If time allows, discuss their responses.

Build Fluency

Independent Reading

- Allow students to read their book independently. Additionally, allow partners to take turns reading parts of the book to each other.

Home Connection

- Give students their book to take home to read with parents, caregivers, siblings, or friends. Have students practice summarizing after each section of the book with someone at home.

Extend the Reading

Informational Writing Connection

Have students write a paper based on the information in *A Prairie Dog's Life*. Have them use the book and one other resource as information for their report. Allow students to share their report by posting to a bulletin board in the classroom.

Visit [Writing A–Z](#) for a lesson and leveled materials on narrative writing.

Science Connection

Discuss the habitat of the prairie dog with students. They may want to do research about other animals that share the prairie dog's habitat. Discuss the fact that the prairie dog belongs to the rodent family. Some students may be interested in finding out more information about other animals in the rodent family. Provide library and Internet resources about these topics. Individually or in groups, have students record and share with the class the new information they have found.

Skill Review

[Discussion cards](#) covering comprehension skills and strategies not explicitly taught with the book are provided as an extension activity. The following is a list of some ways these cards can be used with students:

- Use as discussion starters for literature circles.
- Have students choose one or more cards and write a response, either as an essay or as a journal entry.
- Distribute before reading the book and have students use one of the questions as a purpose for reading.
- Cut apart and use the cards as game cards with a board game.
- Conduct a class discussion as a review before the book quiz.

Assessment

Monitor students to determine if they can:

- use the strategy of mentally summarizing to recall and remember important information from text
- use the features of nonfiction text to learn more information about a topic during discussion and on a worksheet
- locate words with the vowel diphthong *ou* in the text; identify and list other words containing this sound
- accurately identify possessive nouns in text and use them correctly
- correctly use and spell the homophones *their*, *there*, and *they're*; practice using other sets of homophones in discussion and on a worksheet

Comprehension Checks

- [Book Quiz](#)
- [Retelling Rubric](#)