

About the Book

Text Type: Nonfiction/Informational Page Count: 24 Word Count: 1,966

Book Summary

Prairies Alive! teaches readers all about the grasslands of the world. It highlights three types of North American grasslands, tells about the importance of fire, and explains the need to preserve the world's prairies. The book also gives detailed examples of the kinds of plants and animals found on the prairie. Photographs, illustrations, and captions support the text.

About the Lesson

Targeted Reading Strategy

- Ask and answer questions

Objectives

- Use the reading strategy of asking and answering questions to understand text
- Identify details to compare and contrast different grasslands
- Understand the use of a dash as punctuation
- Fluently read symbols, numbers, and abbreviations within the text

Materials

Green text indicates resources available on the website

- Book—*Prairies Alive!* (copy for each student)
- Chalkboard or dry erase board
- World map
- Index cards
- **KWLS, compare and contrast, dash, symbols numbers and abbreviations worksheets**
- **Discussion cards**



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

Vocabulary

*Bold vocabulary words also appear in a pre-made lesson for this title on VocabularyA-Z.com.

Content words:

Story Critical: **drought** (n.), **ecosystem** (n.), **interactions** (.), **mammal** (n.), **rodents** (n.), **species** (n.)
 Enrichment: **bacteria** (n.), **burrows** (n.), **carnivores** (n.), **forage** (n.), **fungi** (n.), **grazing** (v.),
herbivores (n.), **nutrients** (n.)

Before Reading

Build Background

- Write the word *prairies* on the board. Show students magazines and books featuring photographs of prairies and use a map to identify their location. Ask students to describe what they see and discuss what they may already know about prairies.

- Create a KWLS chart on the board and hand out the **KWLS worksheet**. Review or explain that the *K* stands for knowledge we know, the *W* stands for information we want to know, the *L* stands for the knowledge we learned, and the *S* stands for what we still want to know about the topic. As various topics are discussed, fill in the first section (*K*) on the board with information students know about the topic. Have students complete the same section of their KWLS chart.
- Ask students what they would like to know about prairies. Have them fill in the second section (*W*) of their chart. Write their questions on the class chart.

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).

Introduce the Reading Strategy: **Ask and answer questions**

- Discuss with students how having prior knowledge about the topic, and asking and answering questions while reading, can help readers understand and remember information in a book.
- Direct students to the table of contents. Remind them that the table of contents provides an overview of the information in a book and how it is organized. After previewing the table of contents, use it to model asking questions.
Think-aloud: I can use the table of contents to think of questions I would like to have answered about prairies. For example, the second section is titled "Three Types of North American Grasslands." This makes me wonder what those three types of grasslands are and what makes them different from each other. I also wonder whether grasslands are the same as prairies. I'll have to read the book to find out. I'll write these questions on the chart.
- Have students look at the other section titles. Have them write any questions they have, based on the covers and table of contents, in the *W* section of their KWLS chart.
- Have students preview the rest of the book, looking at the photographs, illustrations, and captions. Invite students to read through the glossary and index. Have them add any additional questions they might have to their KWLS chart. Invite students to share their questions aloud. Write shared questions on the class chart.
- As students read, encourage them to use other reading strategies in addition to the targeted strategy presented in this section.

Introduce the Comprehension Skill: **Compare and contrast**

- Explain to students that one way to understand concepts in a book is to identify how they are alike and different.
- Model how to compare and contrast.
Think-aloud: After looking at the photographs in this book and reading the table of contents, I know we will be reading about both plants and animals of the prairies. I know that plants and animals can share similarities and also have differences. They both are living things that require water to survive. However, most animals are able explore their surroundings, while most plants remain stationary.
- Model how to compare and contrast information using a Venn diagram. Draw a Venn diagram on the board. Label the left circle *Plants* and the right circle *Animals*. Explain that information telling how plants and animals are similar is written where both circles overlap. Information that is only true of plants is written in the left side of the left circle. Information that is only true of animals is written in the right side of the right circle.
- Invite students to identify other similarities and differences between plants and animals. Write this information on the Venn diagram.

Introduce the Vocabulary


- Write the following words from the content vocabulary on the board: *bacteria*, *ecosystem*, *fungi*, and *nutrients*.
- Give groups of students four pieces of blank paper. For each word, have them write or draw what they know about the word. Create a definition for each word using students' prior knowledge.
- Review or explain that the glossary and dictionary contain lists of vocabulary words and their definitions.
- Model how students can use the glossary or a dictionary to find a word's meaning. Have students locate the glossary at the back of the book. Invite a volunteer to read the definition for *bacteria* in the glossary. Have students compare the definition with their prior knowledge of the word. Then have students follow along on page 13 as you read the sentence in which the word *bacteria* is found to confirm the meaning of the word. Repeat the exercise with the remaining vocabulary words.

Set the Purpose


- Have students think about what they already know about prairies as they read the book to find answers to their questions, and write what they learned in the *L* section of their KWLS chart.

During Reading

Student Reading

- **Guide the reading:** Have students read to the end of page 9. Remind them to look for information about prairies that will answer questions on their KWLS worksheet. Encourage students who finish early to go back and reread.
 - When students have finished reading, have them circle any questions on their KWLS worksheet that were answered and write any new questions that were generated.
 - Model answering a question and filling in the third section (*L*) of the KWLS chart.
Think-aloud: I wanted to know the three types of grasslands in North America and what makes them different from each other. I found out that the three different types are the tallgrass, mixed-grass, and shortgrass prairies. I also read that the main difference among these three is the height of the grasses, but they are also different due to the amount of rainfall and type of soil found in each one. I also wondered whether grasslands and prairies are the same. I learned that North American grasslands are also known as prairies. I noticed that the third section in the book is titled "The Importance of Fire." Fire is usually destructive. I wonder how fire might be important to the grasslands. I will write this question on my chart.
 - Have students write answers to the questions they circled in the *L* section on their KWLS worksheet. Invite them to share the information they learned and the questions they generated as they read the book. Write shared responses on the class KWLS chart.
 - Review with students the information about the tallgrass prairie and the shortgrass prairie. Discuss similarities and differences between these two grasslands (similarities: both found in North America, both referred to as prairies, both need water to survive; differences: tallgrass is found in the eastern part of North America, shortgrass is found just east of the Rocky Mountains; tallgrass gets 30–40 inches of rain per year, shortgrass gets about 10 inches; tallgrass grows to 8 feet high and has roots 9 feet deep, shortgrass grows to between 8 and 18 inches high and has roots about 3 feet deep). Write this information in a Venn diagram on the board.
-  Have students work with a partner to continue comparing and contrasting tallgrass and shortgrass prairies further. Have them underline the information in their book. Discuss their responses and add the information to the class Venn diagram on the board.

- **Check for understanding:** Have students read to the end of page 17. Have them write answers they found while reading in the *L* section of their KWLS worksheet and additional questions they raised in the *W* section. Invite them to share the information they learned and the questions they generated as they read about the importance of fire on pages 10 and 11. Write shared responses on the class KWLS chart.
- Divide students into pairs. Assign each pair two types of prairie grasses to compare and contrast. Have them write the information in a Venn diagram on a separate piece of paper. When students have finished, discuss their responses.
- Have students read the remainder of the book. Remind them to look for and write answers to the questions on their KWLS worksheet, as well as to look for information to compare and contrast. Encourage them to add new questions they might have to their worksheet as they read.

 Have students make a 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

- **Think-aloud:** *I wanted to know how fire is important to grasslands. I learned that a prairie can survive a fire, and that fires actually make the prairie thrive. The book explains that prairie grasses have deep roots that can survive the fire and are able to quickly give rise to new stems, while trees and shrubs growing on the prairie are usually killed by the flames. I also read that were it not for fires, the trees and shrubs would grow and the prairie would eventually turn into a forest.*
- Ask students to share questions they added to their KWLS worksheet while reading, and ask them what questions were answered (or not answered) in the text. Have students write answers they found while reading in the *L* section of their KWLS worksheet.
- Reinforce that asking questions before and during reading, and looking for the answers while reading, keeps readers interested in the topic. It also encourages them to keep reading to find answers to their questions and helps them understand and enjoy what they have read.
- Point out to students that all of their questions may not have been answered in this text. Brainstorm other sources they might use to locate additional information to answer their questions. Invite students to fill in the final section (*S*) of their worksheet with information they would still like to know about prairies.

Reflect on the Comprehension Skill

- **Discussion:** Review with students how information is organized in a Venn diagram on the board. Discuss how comparing and contrasting information in a book helps them better understand the information.
- **Independent practice:** Introduce, explain, and have students complete the [compare-and-contrast worksheet](#) by comparing two of the animals found on the prairie. If time allows, discuss their answers.
- **Enduring understanding:** This book educates readers about the different types of grasslands, what makes them unique, and what makes them thrive. Now that you know this information, why is knowing about the world's grasslands important?

Build Skills

Grammar and Mechanics: Dash

- Review or explain that a dash (—) is a punctuation mark used to indicate a break or omission. It is also used to clarify information within a sentence.

- Direct students to page 5 in the book. Write the following sentence on the board: *Different kinds of grasslands are found in North and South America, Europe and Asia, Africa, and Australia—every continent on Earth except Antarctica.* Ask students how the dash is used in this instance (to clarify that grasslands are found on all but one continent).
- Direct students to page 10. Write the following sentence on the board: *Most things cannot survive fire—but a prairie can!* Ask students how the dash is used in this instance (to indicate a break and provide clarification).
- Point out to students the difference between a dash and a hyphen. Have students turn to page 12 and locate the word *meat-eating*. Review or explain that hyphens are shorter in length than dashes and are used to connect two words to create a compound word or to indicate a break at the end of a line. Remind students not to confuse a dash with a hyphen.
- Direct students to page 6 in the book. Write the following sentence on the board: *There are three main types—tallgrass, mixed-grass, and shortgrass prairies.* Ask a volunteer to come to the board and circle the dash (after the word types). Ask students how the dash is used in this instance (to clarify the main types). Point out the hyphen in the compound word *mixed-grass*.



Check for understanding: Instruct students to find and circle the dash on page 21, and have them write how the dash is used in this instance. Have them locate the two words on the page that contain a hyphen.

- **Independent practice:** Introduce, explain, and have students complete the [dash worksheet](#). If time allows, discuss their responses.

Word Work: Symbols, numbers, and abbreviations

- Direct students to page 7. Point out that when reading nonfiction text, readers will often encounter many different symbols, numbers, and abbreviations. Ask them to find the numbers and abbreviations on this page (1800s, 76–102 cm, 2.4 m, and so on).
- Write on the board the examples given and review how to read them aloud: 1800s is read as *eighteen hundreds*; 76–102 cm is read as *seventy-six to one hundred two centimeters*; 2.4 m is read as *two point four meters*.
- Have students turn to page 19. Point out that a measurement label follows each number (*feet, miles*). Explain to students that sometimes they will find measurements spelled out, such as *feet* and *miles*. At other times, they will find the measurements abbreviated, such as *ft* and *mi*. Practice reading aloud the numbers and abbreviations on the page.
- Ask students why they think some measurements are spelled out while others are abbreviated. Point out the difference between standard and metric units of measurement. Continue to practice spelling out numbers and abbreviations as necessary.
- Point out the ° symbol on page 10. Ask students to explain where they have seen this symbol previously (thermometers, weather reports, recipes, and so on). Explain that when the ° symbol comes after a number, it means *degrees*. Have a volunteer read aloud the sentence on page 10 that contains the ° symbol.
- **Check for understanding:** Write the following on the board, and ask volunteers to read them aloud:
 - 4–7 kg
 - 2,400 ft
 - 1890
 - 2.7 m
 - 61–91 cm
- **Independent practice:** Introduce, explain, and have students complete the [symbols-numbers-and-abbreviations worksheet](#). Discuss their answers aloud when everyone has completed their work independently.

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 compare and contrast two objects in their home and write the information in a Venn diagram.

Extend the Reading

Informational Writing Connection

Have students review the different types of plants and animals listed in the book that can be found on the North American grasslands. Have them use print and Internet resources to further research one of the plants or animals. Ask students to write the information they collect on index cards. Then have them use the information they collected to write a report about the plant or animal. Invite students to present their work in a multimedia format.

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

Science Connection

Read the sidebar about prairie potholes on page 13. Discuss with students how the potholes are important nesting grounds for ducks and other birds. Ask them to use the Internet to research how individuals are working toward restoring these prairie potholes through Duck Stamps. Invite students to share their findings in a class discussion.

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 card 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:

- consistently ask relevant questions about a topic prior to and during reading; locate answers to their questions and write them on a worksheet
- compare and contrast nonfiction details within the text during discussion and on a worksheet
- correctly identify the use of dashes as punctuation; distinguish dashes from hyphens during discussion and on a worksheet
- understand and fluently read symbols, numbers, and abbreviations during discussion and on a worksheet

Comprehension Checks

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