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Grasslands

Reading Comprehension

The reading passage introduces students to grasslands. It gives a description of a temperate grassland, discusses grassland plant and animal adaptations, explains what threatens to destroy grasslands, and differentiates between temperate and tropical grasslands.

This is a longer reading passage, particularly for younger grades. Support students as needed.

The pictures included in this reading passage are in color, but you can print them in gray scale to save ink.

Students will still be able to get the information necessary if you print the pictures in gray scale.

Grasslands

Temperate grasslands are known by several other names depending on the location, including prairies, plains, steppes, pampas, and veldts. Whatever the name, temperate grasslands have a **lot** of grass. The temperate grasslands in the United States are usually referred to as plains or prairies.

Why Don't Grasslands Have Trees?

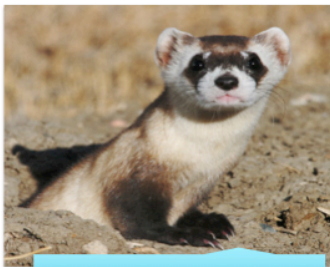
There are several reasons why trees are not common in the grassland biome. First, temperate grasslands have droughts (long periods without rain).



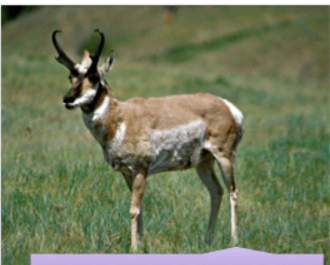
Bison



Prairie Dog



Ferret



Pronghorn



Badger



Rattlesnake

Trees need a lot of water in order to grow, and the lack of rain sometimes keeps them from being able to survive. Also, grasslands have periodic fires that keep trees from developing. Lightning or humans usually start these fires, and they are very important in preserving the grassland biome. Finally, there are many herbivores (plant-eaters) that live on grasslands. These animals - such as bison, deer, and pronghorns - eat plants, including small trees that might be trying to grow.

Plant and Animal Adaptations

Grasses in the grassland have to be able to survive droughts and fires in order to survive. Many of them have developed underground root systems that help them endure.

Animals that live in temperate grasslands have had to adapt to being

exposed to predators in the open spaces. Animals like prairie dogs and ferrets are a brownish color, helping them camouflage with their surroundings. There are also several animals, like badgers, burrowing owls, and prairie dogs, that have adapted to the lack of hiding spaces by burrowing underground.

Since grass is readily available in the grasslands, many of the animals that live there are herbivores (animals that eat plants instead of meat). Some of these herbivores have special digestive systems that help them process all the grasses they eat.

Threats to Temperate Grasslands

The temperate grasslands of the world are shrinking, mostly because of people. The soil in temperate grasslands is great for farming, so a lot of the land has been changed into farmland or grazing land for farm animals. Humans have also hurt many of the animals of the temperate grasslands. For example, prairie dogs are often poisoned when they become an annoyance to



farmers. Also, so many bison were killed that they almost became extinct!

Fortunately, efforts are now being made to preserve the temperate grasslands and the plants and animals that live there.

Temperate grasslands have very few trees.

Temperate Grassland VS. Tropical Grassland

There are two types of grassland biomes – tropical grasslands, also known as savannas - and temperate grasslands. Although both types of grasslands have grass as their most important trait, there are some important differences. Temperate grasslands usually have a hot summer and a cold winter, while tropical grasslands stay warm all year long. Temperate grasslands usually get between 10 and 35 inches of rain every year, while tropical grasslands receive 20 – 50 inches of rain annually. Because of the amount of rain, tropical grasslands have some scattered trees and shrubs, while trees are few and far between in temperate grasslands.

Scaffolded Questions

The questions in this section are scaffolded to help you differentiate. This section will help support your lower level students or ELL learners.

There are two levels of scaffolding:

1. The question tells students which section to go to to find the answer.
2. Sentence starters are provided to help students when answering the questions.

Other than the two levels of scaffolding listed above, these questions are the same as the on-level questions.

The answer key on pages 14 – 16 applies to this section of questions as well as the on-level section of questions.

Name: _____

Date: _____

Grasslands: Reading Comprehension Questions

1. Reread the first paragraph. What are temperate grasslands usually called in the United States? Give two other names for grasslands.

In the United States, temperate grasslands are also called _____
_____.

2. Reread the section titled "Why Don't Grasslands Have Trees?" What effect does drought have on trees?

Droughts _____
_____.

3. Reread the section "Plant and Animal Adaptations." How have badgers, owls, and prairie dogs adapted to the temperate grasslands?

Badgers, owls, and prairie dogs have adapted to the temperate grasslands by _____
_____.

4. Of all of the adaptations included in the section "Plant and Animal Adaptations," which adaptation is the best? Why?

The best adaptation is _____
because _____
_____.

5. Look at the pictures of the animals in the reading passage. What would be a good title for that collection of pictures? Why?

_____ would make a good title
because _____
_____.

Grasslands: Reading Comprehension Questions

6. Reread the section “Threats to Temperate Grasslands.” What problems have prairie dogs had?

Prairie dogs _____
_____.

7. Reread the section “Threats to Temperate Grasslands.” Why did the author include this section?

The author included this section because _____
_____.

8. Reread the section titled “Temperate Grassland vs. Tropical Grassland.” Use the information to fill in the chart below.

	Temperate Grassland	Tropical Grassland
Other Names	Prairie, steppes	
Temperature		Warm all year
Rainfall		
Trees	Very few	

9. Reread the entire reading passage. What problems would you face living in a temperate grassland? Give at least 1 example from the text.

Living in a temperate grassland would be difficult because _____
_____.

10. What is another title that would be appropriate for this reading passage?

Title: _____

On-Level Questions

The questions in this section are more straightforward than the questions in the Scaffolded Questions section.

These questions and answers do not have any scaffolding to support students.

Students are given a question and expected to write a short answer in a complete sentence.

The answer key on pages 14 – 16 applies to this section of questions as well as the Scaffolded Questions section.

Name: _____

Date: _____

Grasslands: Reading Comprehension Questions

1. What are temperate grasslands usually called in the United States? Give two other names for grasslands.

2. What effect does drought have on trees?

3. How have badgers, owls, and prairie dogs adapted to the temperate grasslands?

4. Of all of the adaptations included in the section "Plant and Animal Adaptations," which adaptation is the best? Why?

5. Look at the pictures of the animals in the reading passage. What would be a good title for that collection of pictures? Why?

Grasslands: Reading Comprehension Questions

6. What problems have prairie dogs had?

7. Reread the section "Threats to Temperate Grasslands." Why did the author include this section?

8. Use the information from the reading passage to fill in the chart below.

	Temperate Grassland	Tropical Grassland
Other Names	Prairie, steppes	
Temperature		
Rainfall		
Trees		

9. What problems would you face living in a temperate grassland? Give at least 1 example from the text.

10. What is another title that would be appropriate for this reading passage?

Title: _____

Extension Activity

This extension activity has students complete a foldable using the information they learned in the "Grasslands Reading Passage."

A rubric is provided for easy grading.

Student Instructions and Rubric

Page 12

Foldable

Pages 13

Grasslands: Extension Activity

Read each section of the "Grasslands Reading Passage" carefully. Use that information to write at least 3 details for each section of the foldable.

Grading Rubric

3 points

2 points

1 point

	<u>3 points</u>	<u>2 points</u>	<u>1 point</u>
<u>Accuracy</u>	The student showed a thorough understanding of temperate grasslands. All of the information was accurate.	The student showed some understanding of temperate grasslands. Some of the information was incorrect.	The student showed very limited understanding of temperate grasslands.
<u>Content - Details</u>	The student provided at least 3 details for each section that were on topic.	The student provided at least 2 details for each section that were on topic.	The student provided 1 or fewer details for each section that were on topic.
<u>Conventions</u>	There are very few errors in spelling, capitalization, punctuation, and grammar.	There are several errors in spelling, capitalization, punctuation, or grammar.	There are many errors in spelling, capitalization, punctuation, and grammar. Because of these errors, the essay is very difficult to read.

Total Points out of 9:

Fold on the black line. Cut on
the dotted lines.

Description of Grasslands

Grassland Plant and Animal Adaptations

Threats to Grasslands

Answer Key

This answer key applies to both the Scaffolded Questions (pages 5 – 7) and the On-Level Questions (pages 8 – 10).

Some of the questions encourage higher level thinking and do not have one correct answer. If that is the case, it has been noted that “Answers Will Vary.” When grading these questions, make sure students defend their thinking in a logical way.

Name: _____

Date: _____

Grasslands: Reading Comprehension Questions

1. What are temperate grasslands usually called in the United States? Give two other names for grasslands.

In the United States, temperate grasslands are also called plains or prairies.

2. What effect does drought have on trees?

Droughts keep trees from being able to survive

3. How have badgers, owls, and prairie dogs adapted to the temperate grasslands?

Badgers, owls, and prairie dogs have adapted to temperate grasslands by finding hiding spaces by burrowing underground.

4. Of all of the adaptations included in the section "Plant and Animal Adaptations," which adaptation is the best? Why?

Answers will vary. Make sure students defend their reasoning. The section mentions grass, ferrets, prairie dogs, badgers, burrowing owls, and herbivores.

5. Look at the pictures of the animals in the reading passage. What would be a good title for that collection of pictures? Why?

Answers will vary. Make sure students defend their reasoning. The pictures are all animals that could be found on a temperate grassland.

Grasslands: Reading Comprehension Questions

6. What problems have prairie dogs had?

Prairie dogs are sometimes poisoned by farmers when they become an annoyance.

7. Reread the section “Threats to Temperate Grasslands.” Why did the author include this section?

The author probably included this section because the author wanted the readers to know how people are harming grasslands.

8. Use the information from the reading passage to fill in the chart below.

	Temperate Grassland	Tropical Grassland
Other Names	Prairie, steppes	savannah
Temperature	hot summer, cold winter	warm all year
Rainfall	Between 10 and 35 inches of rain a year	Between 20 and 50 inches of rain a year
Trees	Very few trees	Some trees

9. What problems would you face living in a temperate grassland? Give at least 1 example from the text.

Answers will vary. Make sure students defend their reasoning.

10. What is another title that would be appropriate for this reading passage?

Title: Answers will vary.
