

Prairie Summer

INTRODUCE THE STORY

Brainstorm ideas with the class about the city and about the country. Make a list of the students' images of each locale. Remind them about experiencing a place using all five of the senses – sight, hearing, taste, touch, smell. Discuss what some of the differences (between city and country) are. Which do they prefer? Why? Then introduce the idea that this story is about a special country place called the prairie. Discuss what this means, and what it means to them. Add more images to the list, if they have more.

EXAMINE THE STORY

1. Which colors are mainly used in this story? Why do you think this is so?
2. Which months are the “cooling, cold and warming months”? Make a list for each.
3. The second page tells about the blue and green triangles of one place, and the patchwork of rectangles in another. What are the triangles? What are the rectangles?
4. Why does it seem as if the noise of a tractor or the bellow of a cow echoes around the world?

In your own words, tell what this means:

”So much treasure so little pocket.

Have you ever had a time when you felt this way? Tell about it.

5. What noise does the wind make in the trees on the prairie? What noise does it make where the cousins live?
6. Make a chart like this one:

Seeing	Hearing	Smelling	Touching	Tasting
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Now place each of these expressions from the story into the correct category, depending on which sense is used to experience it.

Click-click of pick-ups roaming	Cool board floor too smoothed to sliver
Dung-tinged perfume	Cow lips suck greedily at the water
Barefoot through the dust	Flagpole line flaps, clinks
Headlights rush together	Flat prairie country
Burnt hay	Leaves whispering, singing

7. On the page about the school, why are the ants in such a hurry to build?

What do you think the dog in the picture is doing?

EXTEND THE STORY

1. Onomatopoeia is when the sound of the word imitates its meaning. Here are some examples from this story:

buzz of bugs, busy bugs, biting

leaves rustling, jostling, whispering, singing

click-click of pick-ups roaming

Make up three of your own examples. Choose your own topics.

2. The prairie family is “Amazed by what these city kids do know, and mostly by what they don’t.”

List three things that city kids DO know about.

Now list three things (about life in the country) that they might not know.

3. Verbs are action words. In the story, the bugs are “lunging, wheeling, landing”. The kids go “field-roaming, treasure combing”. These verbs are expressive – they show very well what action is taking place. Now read the sentences below, and see if you can substitute more interesting and expressive verbs for the underlined words.

. The dog ran down the street after the giant hot dog.

. I was so scared that I said “HELP!”

. We walked all over the grassy hills.

4. These lines are from the story: “slow, patient food of country fairs, not city rush and gobble.”

Give some examples of the first kind of food, and of the second.

Which is your favorite?

Why?

5. The children bike to the cemetery, and “weave between the stones and the stories they tell.” Write your own idea of one of these stories. Include the person’s name, when they were born and died, a brief story of their life, the best thing about them, and any special words written on their grave stone.

LINKS TO OTHER SUBJECTS

ART:

Carefully examine Brian Deines' illustrations. Study the colors of the prairie, the type of plants there, the animals and insects. Now draw your own picture, using the information you learned from the book.

Look carefully at how Brian uses paint. When he paints the sky, is it smooth and all one color?

Why do you think he does this?

Paint your own picture, using Brian's technique. It looks like fun to dab the paint on like that.

Is it?

SOCIAL STUDIES

Research the prairies.

Find out where they are.

What types of animals live there?

What types of plants grow there?

Using a map, see if you can find the towns of Botha and Veteran, the two towns Nancy visited when she was a child.

Which province are they in?

What is a grain elevator? Find out all you can about this.

SCIENCE

Research on any of these subjects:

gophers

tornadoes

mosquitoes (Careful - they bite!)

ants

RELATED BOOKS

About the prairie:

The Prairie Willow by Maxine Trottier (Stoddart Kids, 1998)

Prairie Fire by Marilyn Reynolds (Orca, 1999)

A Prairie Year by Jo Bannatyne-Cugnet (Tundra, 1994)

A Prairie Alphabet by Jo Bannatyne-Cugnet (Tundra, 1992)

If You're Not From the Prairie by David Bouchard (Raincoast/Summer Wild, 1993)

About summer:

I Heard My Mother Call My Name by Nancy Hundal (HarperCollins Canada, 1990)

Twilight Fairies by Nancy Hundal (Fitzhenry & Whiteside, 2002)

Back to the Cabin by Ann Blades (Orca, 1996)

About a general store:

General Store by Rachel Field (Little, Brown & Company, 1988)

About family and summers:

The Relatives Came by Cynthia Rylant (Bradbury Press, 1985)

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G A G E N E R E A L S T O R E
D R C T T S N D F M D F H S U
E B A R K I S V P O N I P U M
A I A S E T A L F S I E W M G
W I R V S F M V I Q W P E M B
N U I I Z H Y M U U Q G W E Y
C R O W A F O C H I F Y V R W
D O B Z O R E P V T Y R F Q I
L U W B B M P I P O Z T H G L
X U A B E S U P P E R N I O K
Y U V T O B V W T S R U N C H
H E E C C Y J W S O S O B R E
G R S N I S U O C H K C V C S
Y S W R F Q S G J U Q P D J T
Y X F L I C X Y J T A L O I E

CEMETERY	CITY	COUNTRY
COUSINS	COWBOY	DRIVEIN
FLAT	GENEREALSTORE	GRASSHOPPER
MOSQUITOES	PRAIRIE	SUMMER
SUPPER	TRAIN	WIND

Prairie Summer by Nancy Hundal

Puzzle Solutions

Word Search:

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G A G E N E R E A L S T O R E
D R C T T S N D F M D F H S U
E B A R K I S V P O N I P U M
A I A S E T A L E S I E W M G
W I R V S F M V I Q W P E M B
N U I I Z H Y M U U Q G W E Y
C R O W A F O C H I F Y V R W
D O B Z O R E P V T Y R F Q I
L U W B B M P I P O Z T H G L
X U A B E S U P P E R N I O K
Y U V T O B V W T S R U N C H
H E E C C Y J W S O S O B R E
G R S N I S U O C H K C V C S
Y S W R F Q S G J U Q P D J T
Y X F L I C X Y J T A L O I E