

Draw Me a Prairie: part 1

Objective: Students will define a habitat. They will recognize that a habitat can be large or small. Students will identify what living things need to survive.

Background: A habitat is the place where a plant or animal gets all the things it needs to survive, such as food, water, shelter, and space for having and raising offspring. A habitat may be 100 square miles of area for a mountain lion or a single plant for an insect. The prairie and the forest are habitats, but so is a tree, so is the cave.

When people think of the prairie they think of an endless sea of swaying grasses that are hip deep and generally golden. While this may at first seem true it really overlooks the fact that there are bushes, flowers, cacti, trees, and many animals and other things that also can be found in the prairie. Animals and plants that live on the prairie have their homes there. They must find everything they need to survive there.

A tree may serve as part of an organism's habitat, or it may be the organism's entire habitat. For example, a tree may provide food for squirrels and a nest site for robins. But lichens and moss get everything they need from growing right on the tree. The tree itself needs a habitat to survive.

Materials: Enclosed poems about the prairie, pictures of the prairie and pictures of trees.

Procedure: Have the students stand while you read the poems. While you are reading have them act out what they are hearing and feeling. After reading the prairie poem, show students pictures of the prairie. Discuss how the poem prepared them for seeing the pictures. Have the students draw a picture of their idea of the prairie, including some plants and animals that live there. Discuss the drawings. Ask why the drawings look the way they do. Ask what the animals will find in this habitat to survive. Will there be food? Will they be able to raise their young there? Is there shelter for them? Will there be enough space for them? The poem is slightly adapted from David Bouchard's book *If you're not from the prairie...*

Have the students think of other poems about habitats that they know. Would a poem about a tree be about a habitat? Read the poem about the tree. Where does the tree live? Does the tree have a habitat? What lives in a tree? Is the tree a habitat? What is a forest? Have the students draw a picture of a tree and where it lives or what might use it as a habitat.

Prairie Poem:

If you're not from the prairie,
You've not heard the grass.
In strong summer winds, the grains and grass bend
And sway to a dance that seems never to end.

If you're not from the prairie,
You don't know the sun,
Diamonds that bounce off crisp winter snow,
Warm waters in lakes and ponds that we know.



If you're not from the prairie,
You don't know the wind,
Our cold winds of winter cut right to the core,
Hot summer wind devils can blow down the door.

If you're not from the prairie,
You don't know the sky.
The bold prairie sky is clear, bright, and blue
Bright, fluffy clouds can be many or few.

If you're not from the prairie,
You don't know our trees.
The trees that have taken so long, we watched as they grew
They're loved and they're treasured – the prairie has few.

If you're not from the prairie,
You don't know our home.
A place where grasses abound and flowers grow,
A home for the wildlife, birds and animals we know.

Tree poem: I dreamed
I was a tree
On a hillside
Playing with the wind.
A snow covered tree
Sparkling in the soft moonlight
With the wind rushing by.
Graceful, growing
Climbing among the clouds
Calmly awaiting the sunrise.

