



Seasons on the Prairie

CCSSR1: Read closely to determine what the text says explicitly and to make logical inferences from it; cite specific textual evidence when writing or speaking to support conclusions drawn from the text.

CCSSR2: Determine **central ideas or themes** of a text and analyze their development; **summarize** the key supporting details and ideas.

Plants have lived for hundreds of years on the prairie. In different seasons, the plants look very different. You can see bright flowers and tall grasses at different times of year. In spring, you see shooting stars and violets. The spring grasses begin to grow. The prairie is very wet in the spring because the snow from the winter melts.

In summer, the grasses are so tall that you cannot even see flowers that grow low and close to the ground. There are tall flowers too. You can see a flower that is called the tall black-eyed Susan. Summer was the prairie's biggest season. In summer, there was so much tall grass that people called it a sea of grass. It sometimes even grew as tall as the people did. When pioneers were in the prairie, sometimes they got lost. They would use a very tall plant called the compass plant to find their way. The compass plant's leaves turned during the day to follow the sunlight. Thousands of animals also lived in this grassy area, including bison that ate the plants.

In autumn, more flowers bloom—the asters make the prairie look brighter. The leaves of many prairie plants turn gold in autumn and the grasses start to dry. In autumn, when the grasses are dry, natural fires take place. Those fires start when there is a lightning strike. Acres and acres of prairie can burn in one natural fire.

When the grasses burn, the native prairie plants do not die. In fact, the fires actually help the grasses to grow bigger. Most plants, especially trees, depend on their tips to grow. You can see that in the spring trees have new buds. Those buds are where the trees grow from. If a tree loses its branches, it will not grow anymore. Grasses are not like trees and they do not need their leaves to grow back. They grow from their roots. The fires do not burn the roots because the roots are underground. The lightning fires are a little bit like gardeners. They weed the prairie of plants that are not supposed to grow there.

Some prairie animals move in the winter to warmer places where they can find more food. Some stay in the prairie through winter. Some stay but they hibernate, or sleep, through the winter. For example, some frogs dig holes under the ground and sleep through the cold prairie winter. Thousands of bison and hundreds of birds and other animals that used to live in this area are gone now. They left the prairie because the places where they lived were destroyed. There is hope for the prairie to grow again. Maybe those animals will be able to live in this area again. People are restoring the prairie at Midewin National Tallgrass prairie. One day this area will look as it did when the bison lived here and the Potawatomi hunted here.

Support the Main Idea

What is the main idea of this passage?

Underline five sentences in the passage that support that idea.