

## The Prairie Pattern

Common Core Anchor Reading Standard 1. 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.

There is a pattern in nature called succession. Success comes from a Latin word *succedaneus*, filling the place of another. In many environments, changes, called succession, take place over time. One kind of plant succeeds another. Weeds start to grow. Then woody plants come. The woody plants take over. The environment becomes a forest. But trees do not survive fires. The lightning and the bison protected the prairie from those changes. So millions of acres stayed prairie.

The animals that live in the prairie needed all that prairie to live. You can understand that when you look at one bird. The meadowlark is bird that nests in the prairie. It gets its food there, too. In summer, it eats insects. In winter, it eats seeds. To stay alive, the meadowlark needs at least 20 acres of prairie land. If 100 meadowlarks live in one prairie, they need a 2,000 acre prairie.

That's just one bird. The Henslow sparrow needs 80 acres to live. Some small farms are 80 acres. They produce a lot of food for the farm family. The family sells food to people in other places. What if the family buys another 80 acres of prairie to expand its farm. They will grow more food. At least one sparrow and four meadowlarks will lose their habitat.

After the invention of the steel plow, farmers turned more prairie into cornfields. People built more homes and roads. Over time, what was left of the natural prairies were small and widely scattered pieces of prairie. Birds could not nest there. The seeds that the wind blew from the prairie plants fell on highways, in backyards, and in cornfields. The prairie land that was left lost the bison, and weeds began to move in.

What was left of the prairie was in small patches, called remnants. People use the word remnant to talk about leftover pieces of cloth. When people make clothing, some cloth is left. People may use that cloth to patch clothing. Pioneers used remnant cloth to make quilts. But if a prairie remnant is only about ten acres, it has a limited future.

What would the rest of the century bring for prairies? Each year, there were fewer and fewer acres, and in time only remnants of prairie remained in Illinois, the prairie state. Today, less than 1% of the original Illinois prairie is left.

### READ CLOSELY

What do you think the main idea is of this passage? Underline or list five facts that support it.

### THINK MORE

Illustrate the passage. Draw pictures that show what each paragraph explains.

### THINK CLEARLY

The following page includes multiple choice questions based on this reading. Answer the questions. As you answer each one, put the number of that question with the evidence that supports your answer.

## The Prairie Pattern QUESTIONS

Read the questions. Re-read the text. Then think through the answers.

Choose the **best** answer for each item. After you answer the questions, check with another student to learn and why they chose their answers.

<p>1. Which of the following is the best definition of natural succession?</p> <p>a. What happens next. b. When someone succeeds. c. What changes naturally over time d. Which plant grows the most</p>	<p>2. What is a prairie remnant?</p> <p>a. Small area of the original environment b. Piece of a quilt made by pioneer c. What is left over in nature d. How much is in Illinois</p>
<p>3. How much of the original prairie has Illinois lost?</p> <p>a. 1% b. more than 99% c. 10% d. 99%</p>	<p>4. Why didn't trees move into the prairie environment?</p> <p>a. bison ate them b. birds nested in them c. people cut them down d. fires burned them</p>
<p>5. What does the meadowlark need most?</p> <p>a. insects b. seeds c. 20 acres of prairie d. prairie remnant</p>	<p>6. Why did the steel plow change the Henslow sparrow's life?</p> <p>a. People farmed more prairie. b. Farmers planted more plants. c. Plows dug up sparrow nests. d. Birds need 80 acres to live.</p>
<p>7. Which of the follow are you most likely to see in a prairie?</p> <p>a. a bison b. a meadowlark c. a sparrow d. an insect</p>	<p>8. Why is this reading called Prairie Pattern?</p> <p>a. It tells about cloth patterns. b. It explains how prairies stay the same. c. It is about changes. d. It is about farming systems.</p>

### Diagram Connections

Use the following diagram to show what a meadowlark needs to stay alive in a prairie. Use words or pictures to complete it. Then write a caption for your diagram.

