

Prairie Keepers

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.

Midewin means healing. Openlands and other organizations are healing this land. Whose land is it? First, the Native Americans lived here. They did not believe in ownership of land. Then in 1850 settlers came, homesteaders who set up farms. A Native American wrote the following statement about the changes that followed.

Once, only Indians lived in this land. Then came strangers from across the Great Water. No land had they; we gave them of our land. No food had they; we gave them of our corn. The strangers are become many and they fill all the country. They dig gold—from my mountains; they build houses—of the trees of my forest; they rear cities—of my stones and rocks; they make fine garments—from the hides and wood of animals that eat my grass. None of the things that make their riches did they bring with them from beyond the Great Water; all comes from my land; the land the Great Mystery gave unto the Indian.

In 1939, just when the rest of this prairie might have been turned into farmland, the army came and protected this land. The army did not mean to save the prairie. The army used about 25,000 acres of prairie land to protect the nation, not the prairie. The army built a plant to make explosives for use in World War II. They built railroad tracks to carry the explosives away from the plant. They built thick-walled buildings called bunkers to store the explosives. They needed many acres of land around the explosives to protect the people who lived in the area.

Because of the army, the land was safe from a lot of settlement and farming. Long after the war ended, the area was kept by the army. Then in 1982, naturalists pointed out that this prairie could be restored. It had not been broken up as other prairies had. It could be turned back into the natural environment. By 1992, a plan was made for that change. Then, in 1993, the plan began to happen. The government declared the land “excess.” That means extra. It really wasn’t extra. Every acre was important to re-making the prairie.

In 1997, the army turned 15,000 acres over to the Department of Agriculture for use in the prairie restoration. By 1998, 19,000 acres had been set aside for native prairie. The restoration of the prairie had begun. Today, United State Department of Agriculture is working with volunteers from Openlands and other organizations to restore the prairie.

The restoration includes education. Each year, students visit Midewin to see what was and imagine what will be. If you have 20-20 vision you can see what Midewin will look like in the future. By the year 2020, it will look a lot like the Tallgrass prairie that the bison roamed. In fact, bison will live here again, too. That will just be the beginning, though. We will need more decades to bring back this natural system.

Prairie Keepers 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 these words is closest to the original meaning of Midewin?</p> <p>a. medicine b. recovering c. Midway d. Middle</p>	<p>2. What does this mean: Then came strangers.</p> <p>a. Trees moved into the prairie. b. Farmers set up homesteads. c. Foreigners moved into the area. d. Natives lost their land.</p>
<p>3. Why did the army save Midewin?</p> <p>a. To protect the plants? b. To protect the people? c. To protect the animals. d. To protect the prairie.</p>	<p>4. Which year was most important to saving the prairie?</p> <p>a. 1939 b. 1982 c. 1997 d. 1998</p>
<p>5. How long will it take to restore Midewin?</p> <p>a. 20 years b. a millennium c. much more than 20 years d. 2020</p>	<p>6. Why did the army have so much land set aside at Midewin?</p> <p>a. because birds need acres to nest b. because explosives are dangerous c. because they built railroads d. because the prairie is so large</p>
<p>7. What is the most important thing people can learn at Midewin?</p> <p>a. About farming with nature b. About the army's protection c. About a natural environment d. About plants and animals</p>	<p>8. Which of these will you see at Midewin in spring of 2020?</p> <p>a. a fully restored prairie b. animals that used to live here c. corn fields d. farmers plowing and planting seeds</p>

Word Pictures

Poems are like pictures. A poet uses words to draw a kind of picture.

Write a prairie poem.

In your poem, tell why Midewin is so special.