



Settlement

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.

Settlers came to this area to build farms. They found the land difficult to plant in. It was difficult to dig in because of the thick root system. Trees were not a problem because the area was mostly open grassland. When settlers came, they traded goods with the Potawatomi tribe to get food and animal skins. After a while, the Potawatomi were forced to move when homesteaders started taking over the land.

Here is what one woman wrote about her trip to live in Illinois.

I have walked for such a long time that I can only hope for the best. On Friday evening, after we got to Paris, Illinois, we started a fourteen-mile prairie trip. It was hot, even though the sun was setting. It was very good for part of the way—though we had a couple of bad slides. The doctor’s wagon was stuck and the oxen had to draw it out twice. The prairies look so beautiful. There are so many different kinds of flowers that grow on them and I love the prairie hens. One of the company shot one for us to eat yesterday. Eliza looks sick still but says she feels like helping me prepare dinner. Oh, dear, I think it’s a hard time. On Saturday, the 15th, we traveled through both prairie and forest and we got lost. We took the wrong road and were lost in the prairie grass awhile; sometimes it comes up as high as the horses’ backs. Night came, we pitched our tent after mowing the grass down, and we tried to make ourselves as comfortable as could be expected amongst the mosquitoes.

Here is what one woman’s life was like after settling.

The woman told me that they spin and weave all the cotton and woolen clothes for the family, and knit all the stockings. Her husband is not a shoe-maker by trade, but makes all the shoes. She makes the soap and the candles that they use. She also makes sugar from the sugar-trees on their farm. All she wants with money, is to buy coffee and tea, which she could “get enough of any day, by sending a batch of butter and chickens to market.” They don’t use any wheat, or sell any of their corn. It seemed like they had a lot of corn. But, she said it was not more than they needed to make some bread and cakes. They also use it to feed their animals in the winter.

Here are some of the problems these settlers faced each season.

Fall — There was a constant threat of fire. When the prairie grass became very dry, a spark could start a fire that would burn the prairie and sometimes their cabins.

Winter — The freezing cold and deep snow were problems. People got lost in the drifts or out on the prairie when the trails were covered.

Spring — The rains and the melted snow were problems. The prairie became swampy when the snow melted and the rains started and people would get stuck on the muddy tracks.

Summer — The heat was a problem. Some days were very hot and there was no shady forest to sit and cool down in. There were also so many insects that sometimes horses died from all the stings.

Support the Main Idea

What is the main idea of this passage?

Underline five sentences in the passage that support that idea.