

Dear Martha,

Today, I was plowing the new field, and I saw a meadowlark. I really like that kind of bird. I love its song. It's a good neighbor, too. It eats the insects, and you know we have too many of them. That bird kept flying back and forth. It seemed to be looking for something. I thought maybe it was looking for the pond. We had to fill that in to make more land to grow corn.

Maybe it was looking for its nest from last year. There's about ten acres of prairie that I've left near the road. So I thought the bird would go there. But it flew away. I'm not sure where it went. I saw lots of tractors, though. They were on their way to the farms. It's plowing time for everyone.

I met Mr. Thompson at the store. I told him about the meadowlark. He said, long ago there were so many that you could almost hear them sing like a choir. It was so pretty. But he had not seen any at all this year so far.

He said that the more we plow, the less we'll see animals, except for our cows and chickens, of course. He said we are going to pay the price for this one day. One day we will not have the birds to control the insects. Then those insects will be eating our crops.

I told him, I heard there's a kind of spray you can buy. It kills the insects. I said I was planning to buy some. I can't afford to lose our corn crop. I asked the store manager for some spray. I left with that and some clippers, that spray, and fertilizer.

Mr. Thompson just shook his head. "I wish we had not made all this progress," he said. Tractors are helping us grow more. Tractors are helping us get rid of nature. We have lost our prairies. You won't see them again."

I got the whole field plowed today. Tomorrow we'll put in the seed. This is going to be a great year. I hope you can come to visit this spring. Of course, we'll have some work for you to do, but it will be good to be together again.

Locate and classify information – Fiction

Questions developed by Center for Urban Education for use by Chicago Public Schools 2008-2009

Choose the best answer for each question.

1. What are two changes you read about in the passage?

- a. more birds and more people
- b. more tractors and less prairie
- c. more plants and animals
- d. more stores and farms

3. What are two things they saw less of that spring?

- a. natural land and animals
- b. tractors and insects
- c. insects and birds
- d. farmers and homes

2. What kinds of things does the farmer buy at the store?

- a. building tools
- b. gardening equipment
- c. farming supplies
- d. food and tools

4. What is a way to classify these things: birds, plants, rain?

- a. things that changed
- b. things people use
- c. parts of nature
- d. ways of living

5. *Write your own answer to this question. The place the farmer talks about used to be a different. What are three ways people were changing it?*

TEACHER NOTES: Develop Students' Skills: Exercise Thinking

These questions have not been validated, so decisions about student's achievement should not be made based on their responses. They are intended to exercise skills. Recommended activities include: students work in pairs to choose the best response; give students the questions without the responses so they generate their own answers; students make up additional questions; students make up questions like these for another passage.

Answers: *You can remove this answer key and then give it to students and ask them to figure out the basis for the correct response.*

Item	1	2	3	4
Answer	b	c	a	c

Question 5 is open-ended. Here is a suggested response.
Building more homes; farming more; filling in ponds.