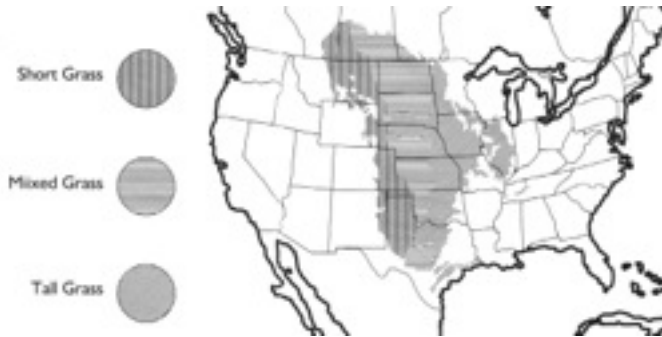


PRAIRIE TALES

Color-code the map using the key at the left. Choose colors that contrast and blend well to highlight the tall vs. short grass prairie. Put a star on the map where you live.

Retell a story you heard today as if you were there when the prairie was wild and free!

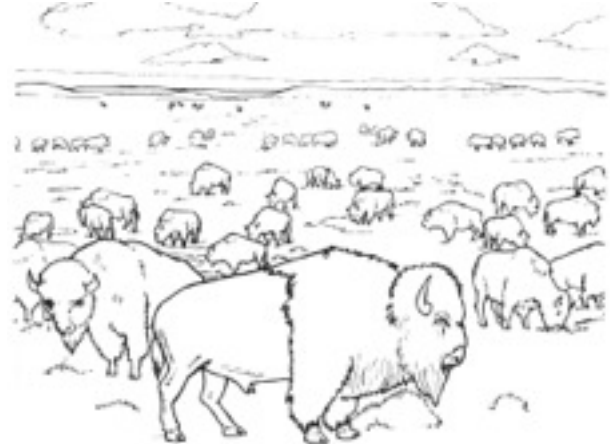


Imagine being one of the first pioneers to leave the forests of the east and see an ocean of waving grasses. Imagine seeing a herd of bison so large that it would take several days for it to walk past your camp. Imagine a field of flowers that blooms perpetually from early spring until late autumn, with more than 250 species that include every hue of color, as if a rainbow fell from heaven to grace the earth. And as you are admiring the flowers, you notice that they seem to be dancing. You rub your eyes in wonder as the flowers seem to flutter up and fly away. Then you see that the diversity of flowers is matched only by the variety of butterflies.

Better yet, imagine that you are a young American Indian whose family has lived on the prairie for hundreds of generations. You travel with the herds of bison as they make their seasonal migrations across the oceans of grass. You know the names of all the flowers, but more importantly you know which ones are food, which are medicine and which are poisonous. Your days are filled with adventure and your evenings are filled with stories: stories of White-Buffalo Calf Woman and Grandma Turtle, stories of Coyote the Trickster and the heroic deeds of your Great Grand Father. Research the stories of the Plains Indians. Learn a story to tell to your class.

If you could travel back in time what stories would you bring home? Imagine living in the prairie “a long time ago” and write a story about your adventures. Who would you like to be? Who else would be in your story? (Characters) Where would you live, sleep, work, and play? (Setting) How does your day begin? Then what happens? What problems would you face? How would you solve them? How would your story end? (Plot). Go to the library and research prairie ecology and history. Use this information to write an historical adventure.

Imagine you are an animal who calls the prairie home. You could be a wolf or a butterfly, elk or toad. What kind of adventures would you have? Your habitat is the setting and your behavior is the plot. Write a story from the animal’s point of view.



The prairie is not only long ago and far away, it could be here and now! All across America people are working to restore grasslands. Folks are planting prairie grasses and helping to reintroduce prairie wildlife to its former range. You, too, can help! Work with your class to research and plant a butterfly garden. Work with the Department of Natural Resources in your state to help monitor a stream, forest, or prairie near your home. Get involved with local ecology groups to help count migrating birds, build nest boxes, or put up bird feeders. You can make difference!

Excerpted from Exploring Prairie Wildlife by Brian “Fox” Ellis
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