



Dear Teacher,

Thank you for signing up for "Prairie Prowl" at the Lost Valley Visitor Center in Glacial Park. The visitor center is located in the center of Glacial Park. Follow the signs from the Harts Rd. entrance. If you need further instructions on how to get here please contact us at 815-678-4532. In the event of inclement weather on the day of your field trip, please call us to discuss the day's plans.

Please make sure that all teachers and chaperones attending the field trip are aware of the following information:

1. Your field trip will begin at the Lost Valley Visitor Center with a 45 minute indoor presentation that will include a felt board presentation of the cultural and natural history of the prairie. The group will then need to reboard the bus to be transported to a different area within Glacial Park. **Busses must be available to transport the students.** At the new location, we will split into our 2 classes. One class will play a game that teaches more about prairie survival and the other classes will take a hike to a remote prairie where they can assist the Conservation District's effort to preserve and restore prairies by collecting prairie plant seeds. This field trip also includes a picnic lunch.
2. Teachers, chaperones, and students should dress for the weather including appropriate footwear for hiking over hilly terrain. Fall weather is variable and while it may feel warm at school, Glacial Park tends to be windy and cooler because of the hills. **In addition, we highly recommend long pants for the seed collecting portion of the field trip.** Prairie grasses are tall and can scratch and irritate uncovered legs.
3. Encourage everyone to bring a waste-free lunch! Pack lunches in insulated containers and include items that can be eaten in their entirety, recycled or composted. Examples are whole fruits and vegetables, drinks in reusable bottles, snacks purchased in bulk and brought in a reusable container, cloth napkins, and reusable ice packs. For additional information on reducing waste visit www.epa.gov/epawaste/wycd/index.htm.
4. Background information as well as pre and post-trip activities are available for this and all McHenry County Conservation District school field trips in your choice of format. Completion of the activities ensures a more successful learning experience for your students.
 - Download information from our website at www.mccd.org; click on the Education tab.
 - Request that information be sent to your email or school address (call Kim Compton or Brian Carroll at 815-678-4532)

Again, we thank you for your interest in the McHenry County Conservation District. We are looking forward to a day of fun and learning with your class. Should you have any questions, please feel free to call us at 815-678-4532.

Sincerely,

Handwritten signatures of Kim Compton and Brian Carroll in black ink.

Kim Compton and Brian Carroll
Lost Valley Visitor Center Education Program Staff

PRAIRIE PROWL

Glacial Park

Pre-trip Activities

Understanding the history of the prairie in Illinois will be an important lesson of the "Prairie Prowl" field trip. Have the children complete the "Illinois -The Prairie State" timeline by photocopying the picture sheet and cutting out the pictures and pasting them in the correct chronological order. Each child should receive 1/4 of the picture page to complete the activity.

After the children have made the timeline, discuss how Illinois has changed over the last 150 years and how that has affected the amount of prairie in the state. This fundamental lesson will be built upon when you come for your trip.

Post-trip Activities

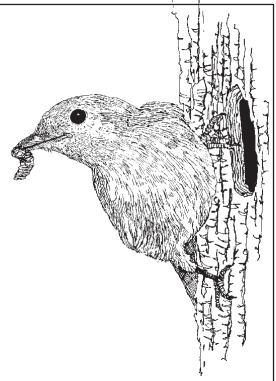
Do the "Prairie Life Web" worksheet as a class activity. Each student will have made their web differently but the message will be the same...**ALL THINGS IN THE PRAIRIE ARE CONNECTED TO AND DEPENDENT UPON EACH OTHER.** Make sure the children come up with the indirect connections too. (The bug depends on the fire because it regenerates the plants that the bug needs to live...)

To conclude this activity, talk about what happens when one element of a system is missing. What else is affected? Reinforce the idea that a prairie system needs to have all of its necessary elements to be considered healthy.



Prairie Prowl

Background Information



Prairie is an open expanse of grassland containing thousands of tall grasses and colorful flowers that are home to many birds, insects, mammals and even reptiles! Illinois is called the "Prairie State" because prairie use to cover 22 million acres of the landscape. There is now less than 1% of original high-quality prairie left.

European settlement in northern Illinois occurred in the 1840's. In order to "improve" the land and make it habitable for settlers, native prairie communities were plowed up and non-native species were introduced. Due to this rapid change in their environment, many prairie animals and plants perished or were pushed westward in search for good habitat.

In the 1970's, the people of McHenry County realized the value of open space and native communities. The McHenry County Conservation District was formed with the mission of preserving open space for generations to come and restoring the native communities that were here for thousands of years. By collecting and growing seeds from remnant prairies, removing non-native plants that choke out prairie, replanting native species, and doing periodic burns, the MCCD has begun restoring parts of McHenry County to the prairies that were once here. Already, endangered animals and plants are returning to their native home.

By collecting prairie seeds in Glacial Park, you and your class will be doing valuable native community restoration work. The seeds that your class collects will help to grow future prairies and boost the amount of prairie in Illinois. Thank you for your participation.

Illinois - The Prairie State

Paste the pictures in the right order and you will have a picture history of the people of the Prairie State. The dots on the map represent the amount of prairie in Illinois.

We are a Potawatomi family and our ancestors have lived on the prairie for thousands of years. We take from the prairie only what we can use and live in harmony with the land.

Paste picture here

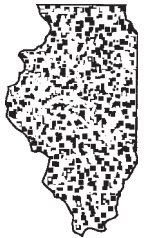
13,000-200 years ago



Paste picture here

My family and I are German immigrants. We have our own land that we farm with seeds and plants that we brought from our homeland in Germany.

1835



I am a railroad engineer that has seen much of the countryside. I have brought thousands of people out to Illinois to settle and find a better life for themselves with all the available land and growing cities.

Paste picture here

1850



Paste picture here

I am a farmer who can plow up my fields quickly and efficiently thanks to modern farm machinery. I can plant many acres of crops to sell for the fall harvest.

1900



Cities in Illinois are growing rapidly with many people, cars, highways and buildings. It's an exciting place to live with many jobs for people and fun things to do.

Paste picture here

1970



Paste picture here

I am a conservationist and I help to restore prairie habitat by planting plants, collecting seeds, doing controlled burns and removing aggressive non-native plants.

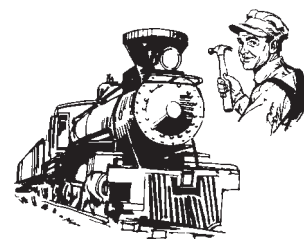
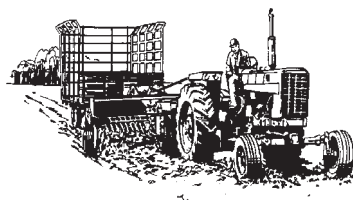
the future



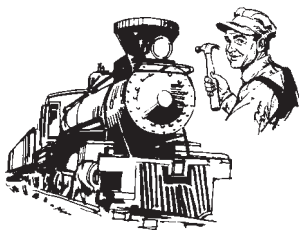
Paste these pictures onto the "Illinois - The Prairie State" timeline.



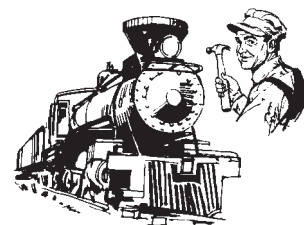
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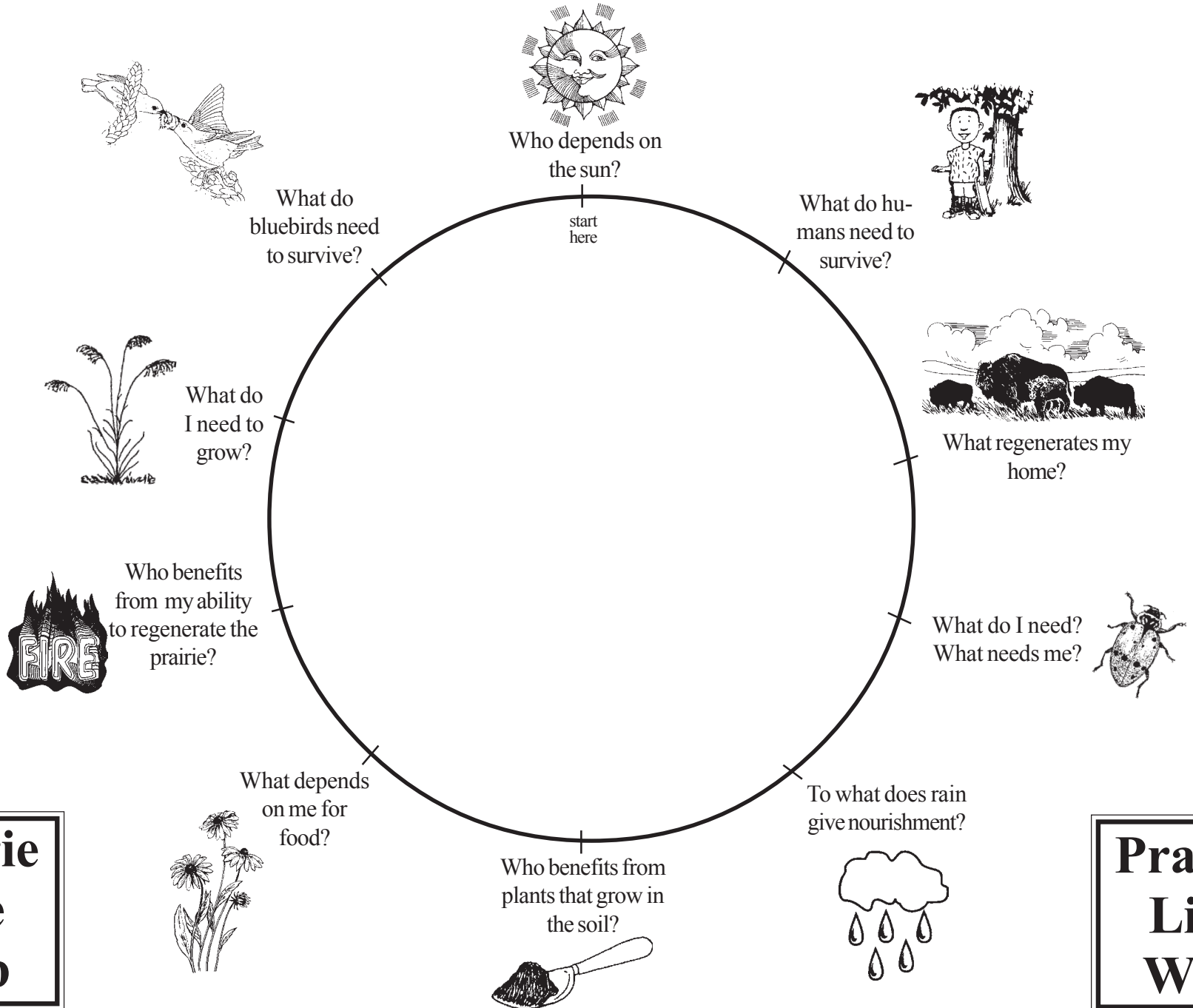
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Start with the sun and draw lines between things that need each other. When you come to a new element, answer the question to keep on going. How many connections can YOU make?



**Prairie
Life
Web**

**Prairie
Life
Web**