

Pondering the Prairie Pre-Trip Activities

To prepare your students for the investigations they will do on site, we recommend doing these activities prior to your visit.

Construct An Ecosystem

Purpose:

To discover what students know about the prairie ecosystem

Materials:

- Scissors
- Glue/Tape
- Crayons/Markers
- Paper, various types

Steps:

1. Share with the students that in order to get ready for the field trip to the prairie, they will create a mural of the prairie.
2. Ask: What do you think we will see, smell, touch, and hear in the prairie? Have some students share a few ideas.
3. Divide students into small groups and have each group create a mural of as many things they can think of they will see, smell, touch, and hear in the prairie.
4. Pass out the supplies and allow students time to make their mural. Encourage students to make their parts in 3-dimensional form.
5. When the groups are done, allow them to share their murals with each other.

Pondering Plants

Purpose:

To encourage the students to observe and creatively describe plants

Materials:

- Assorted plants
- Blindfold (optional)

Steps:

1. Pass the plants around the class and encourage the students to use all of their senses (but not taste) to observe the plants, paying great attention to detail.
2. Ask every student to share one observation with the class, without repeats. For example, The leaves have bumps on them. The flowers are sky-blue. Etc.
3. Then put up some open-ended sentences to encourage creativity: The plant smells like... The shape of the leaf reminds me of... It is as big as a... The color reminds me of...
4. (Optional) Have one student be blindfolded while the rest of the class creatively describes one plant. Then have the student remove the blindfold and guess which plant was described.

Literature Connections

Prairie Plants by T. Sievert, *If You're Not From the Prairie* by D. Bouchard & H. Ripplinger

Pondering the Prairie Post-Trip Activities

These activities will build upon the learning experiences from the field trip, we recommend doing these activities after your visit.

Ecosystem Mural Revisited

Purpose:

To assess what students learned about the prairie ecosystem

Materials:

- Colored pencils/markers

Steps:

1. Share with the students that they will get to show how much they now know about the prairie.
2. Review the sights, smells, sounds, and items touched during the field trip.
3. Have each student in the group draw two items to the mural that were not on the mural to begin with.
4. What types of factors were missing most? Were they biotic (living) or abiotic (non-living)? How many groups added soil? Air? Sun? Reinforce that an ecosystem is the biotic and abiotic factors interacting.
5. If time permits, discuss what might happen to the prairie plants if the amount of rain increased? Decreased? What about the air temperature?

Prairie Plant Garden

Purpose:

To assess what the students learned about prairie plants

Materials:

- Paper
- Pencil/Markers/Crayons
- (Optional) Additional resources

Steps:

1. Share with the students that they will get to show how much they now know about prairie plants.
2. Review their notes about their plant in their journals, and, if needed use additional resources.
3. Using the supplies, have students create a life-size replica of their prairie plant. They can also label the plant's adaptations.
4. The plants can be displayed in the class and/or shown to younger students in a different grade.

Literature Connections

Prairie Plants by T. Sievert, *If You're Not From the Prairie* by D. Bouchard & H. Ripplinger