

Prairie Dog Unit- Lesson Two
Life in a Prairie Dog Burrow

Grades: 3-5

Time Needed: Approximately 3 class periods

National Standards:

Social Studies-

NSS-G.K-12.2 Places and Regions

NSS-G.K-12.5 Environment and Society

Science-

NS.K-4.3 and NS.5-8.3 Life Science

NS.K-4.4 and NS.5-8.4 Earth and Space Science

Language Arts-

NL-ENG.K-12.1 Reading for Perspective

NL-ENG.K-12.5 Communication Strategies

NL-ENG.K-12.8 Developing Research Skills

NL-ENG.K-12.11 Participating in Society

Character Concepts: Understanding interdependence of species, building empathy, respect for our environment and those around us.

Materials Needed:

-Prairie Dog workbook- p. 2, 4, 11, 15, 25, 27 and optional word search

-brown paper bags or bulletin board paper

-brown or black yarn

-green and brown construction paper

-tape

-*Prairie Dog's Burrow* by Trish Kline

-*KIND News* February 2010 Senior Edition

-poster board (one piece for each group)

-various reference materials about prairie dog burrows [You may wish to include pages from the Prairie Dog workbook, encyclopedias, prairie dog books, and

http://www.humanesociety.org/news/news/2009/12/prairie_dog_coalition.html.]

-crayons, markers, and other art supplies

-(Optional) laminated pictures of animals who benefit from and live around the prairie dog burrow (The prairie animals can include, but are not limited to: American toad, badger, black-footed ferret, bison, black-tailed jack rabbit, burrowing owl, California condor, coyote, deer, eagles, eastern cottontail, elk, ferruginous hawk, fox snake, golden owl, gopher snake, grasshopper, gray wolf, ground squirrels, lady beetle, larks, northern grasshopper mouse, prairie chicken, prairie dog, prairie rattlesnake, antelope, red fox, red-tailed hawk, shrew, skunk, western meadowlark, white-tailed jack rabbit)

Objectives: Students will identify the importance of a prairie dog burrow and be able to identify the various parts of a burrow. Students will also be able to relate how the burrow helps numerous animals in the prairie.

Procedure:

Preparation:

1. Using the Classroom Prairie Dog Burrow PDF as a guide, create a large model prairie dog burrow in one corner of the room. Do not label any parts of the burrow. Turn the classroom lights off before students enter; to replicate the darkness underground. [If it is not possible to create a 3-D burrow as drawn, it can be replicated on a bulletin board.]
2. Prepare copies and materials.
3. Draw a simple prairie dog burrow on the board. [Similar to the burrow on page 15 of the workbook.]

Opening:

1. Meet students at the door to the classroom and provide each student with a copy of The Prairie Ecosystem worksheet. (page 15 of the workbook) Ask students to quickly scan the worksheet.
2. Set up the next activity by saying, "We have learned a great deal about prairie life above ground, but today we are going underground. As soon as we go through the door I want you to use the back of the worksheet to write down questions, observations, or comments about what you see. You are welcome to look at anything you like, but do not touch. When the lights come on stop writing and return to your seat." (Allow about 4 minutes for observations and writing and then turn the lights back on.)
3. Once students have returned to their seats ask them to share their questions, comments, and observations. Ask students what they believe they saw. Write all answers on the board. If no one guessed prairie dog burrow ask them to look at the front of the worksheet again and try to recall which animal is known a keystone species in the prairie. (This was learned in lesson one, answer: prairie dog.)

Lesson Body:

1. Introduce the book *Prairie Dog's Burrow* by showing the cover. Instruct students to make notes about the burrow or draw areas of the burrow that may be missing on the front of their worksheet (page 15) as they listen to the book.

2. After the story is over ask students to look at the example prairie dog burrow on the chalk board and tell if any rooms or tunnels are missing based on the information they learned from *Prairie Dog's Burrows*.
3. As a class work to fill in the missing tunnels and burrows so the example on the board replicates the burrow in the back of the room and on page 2 of the workbook. Label each section of the example burrow. Pass out copies of the complete burrow (page 2 of the workbook) to each student.
4. Ask the class to list the animals from the story who use the burrows either as homes or protection. Write the responses on a poster board and hang the poster near the model burrow.
5. Split students into their groups (formed in the last lesson by spelling P-R-A-I-R-I-E) and provide each group with a research topic, directions, and project expectations. (Research topics should include: Dry room, Toilet, Nursery, Bedroom, Food Cache, Abandoned Room, Entrances and Exits, all items can be seen on page 2 of the workbook.) The students will be expected to create a placard stating the name of their assigned section, a poster describing for what the item or section of the burrow is used, and pictures of what would be found in their section, plus any other interesting facts or 3-D models.
6. Each group will need a minimum of one day to research and create their poster.
7. Ask each group to share their findings by giving a short oral presentation. Each group member should participate in some way.

Closure:

1. After each group has presented their findings each placard and poster should be attached to the large prairie dog burrow model in the back of the room. Any 3-D models should also be attached to or placed in the model.
2. Pass out pages 18 and 27 of the workbook and ask students to work individually or in pairs to complete the worksheet. Allow students about 5-7 minutes to complete the activity. During this time permit them to explore the prairie dog burrows and posters while working to find the correct answers.
3. Review the answers with the class.

Extension:

1. Allow students to read up on prairie dogs and prairie dog towns. You may wish to pass out page 9 of the workbook and the *KIND News* February 2010 edition in which students can learn about Prairie Dog Day.

2. Place the laminated prairie animals in a folder or box near the model burrow. Allow students to place the animals where they feel they would belong (above or below ground.) [You may wish to have a way for students to self-check their answers.]