



Revised 4/16/20
Neal Smith National Wildlife Refuge

Let's Sketch on the Prairie

2nd Grade

60 Minutes

Spring

Summary

While listening to a description of the prairie in *The Little House on the Prairie* by Laura Ingalls Wilder, students draw a picture of what they are hearing. Afterwards, they go outside with a partner and visit two to three locations on the prairie to practice saying their own description of the prairie. They will then share their descriptions with a partner and have that partner draw the prairie as they describe and vice versa so the partner may have a turn. As a class, students discuss which aspects of describing and drawing were easy and which ones were challenging.

Next Generation Science and Iowa Core Standards

Next Generation Science

- **2-LS4-1**
 - Make observations of plants and animals to compare the diversity of life in different habitats.
- **2-PS1-2**
 - Analyze data obtained from testing different materials to determine which materials have the properties that are best suited for an intended purpose.
- **K-2-ETS1-3**
 - Analyze data from tests of two objects designed to solve the same problem to compare the strengths and weaknesses of how each performs.

Literacy

Reading Literature



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- **RL.2.IA.1**
 - Employ the full range of research-based comprehension strategies, including making connections, determining importance, questioning, visualizing, making inferences, summarizing, and monitoring for comprehension.

Speaking and Reading

- **SL.2.1**
 - Participate in collaborative conversations with diverse partners about grade 2 topics and texts with peers and adults in small and larger groups.
- **SL.2.4**
 - Tell a story or recount an experience with appropriate facts and relevant, descriptive details, speaking audibly in coherent sentences.
- **SL.2.6**
 - Produce complete sentences when appropriate to task and situation in order to provide requested detail or clarification.

Materials and Resources

- Paper or nature journals
- Pencils
- Colored pencils
- Clip boards
- Examples of mystery images for students to describe
- Pre-cut clippings of prairie items for each child

Presentation

Explain to students that today, they will be learning about Laura Ingalls Wilder. Ask students if they have ever heard of Laura or read any of the books she wrote in the *Little House on the Prairie* series. This author was particularly skillful in describing the prairie. Tell the kids, “today you have the opportunity to learn and practice this skill with a friend.”

Directions

1. Explain to the students that Laura Ingalls Wilder was an author who



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wrote about her childhood on the prairie. As a child, her family moved quite a bit around the Midwest and they lived in Kansas, Minnesota, Iowa, and eventually South Dakota. Laura had a wonderful ability to write about the daily life of a pioneer family and prairie in great detail. At the time that she wrote her book, she had no idea that she was writing a piece of history. But since so much of the prairie was destroyed, Laura's books provide amazing insights into what it must have been like at Neal Smith NWR and the rest of Iowa in the early 1800s.

2. Explain to students that today, just like Laura Ingalls Wilder, they are going to describe something in the prairie in such detail that it will paint a picture with words.
3. Ask students, "What words do we use to describe things?".
ADJECTIVES! Write down what categories we may use to describe the prairie on the board (color, shape, size, smell, texture...etc.). Ask for examples.
4. Have students take out their journals and fill them out using the provided example on the following page. Begin to read a passage from *By the Shores of Silver Lake* and instruct students to draw a picture of how they think Laura describes the prairie. Explain that Laura is talking to her sister, Mary, who is blind, and that Laura got so good at describing items because she was always trying to "see" for Mary and tell Mary all that was happening.
5. "*On every side now the prairie stretched away empty to a far, clear skyline. The wind never stopped blowing the tall grasses that had turned brown in the sun*". p62
6. Read the passage several times. Have students hold up their drawings. They will realize that they have all drawn similar pictures because Laura described it so well.
7. Next, students are going to practice describing things like Laura using adjectives. Divide students into pairs. Give each student a mystery picture but instruct them not to show it to anyone. Students will look at their picture and try to use adjectives to describe it to their partner. The



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partner will try to guess what the picture is without looking at it. One they have guessed, have the students switch roles.

8. Now that they have practiced using adjectives, students will now go outside and practice describing like Laura. Have students get ready to line up outside. Remind students that while they are outside you would like them to act like naturalists. Naturalists are calm, quiet, full of wonder, use their senses, prepared and responsible, etc.
9. Tell students now that they will be getting with a partner. Partners will be sitting on the ground back-to-back. In round one, all students acting as Partner 1 will have to explain a provided piece of the same prairie item, it could be a leaf, or flower, or stone. While they are describing the object, the Partner 2 will have to draw a picture of what they think their partner is describing. When Partner 1 is done drawing, they will not reveal their drawing their picture to Partner 1. The partners will then trade roles of describing/drawing a different item.
10. Once both students are finished drawing, bring all of the students back together. Have them open their notebooks and share them with their partners. Ask students if there was anything that surprised them about describing the prairie. Ask them to reflect on what it was like to try to draw something they had not seen. Ask them why they think it might be important to be able to describe and draw about the prairie? Why is it important to take notice?
11. Tell students that if they enjoyed the activity, then they should try it at home! Nature is all around us! We should be looking carefully and sharing our discoveries in great details with other friends. Perhaps one day our nature journals will help people know what life is like today, just like Laura Ingalls Wilder's book help us to know what life was like 200 years ago.



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Resources

Journal Prompt

Date Location Time
<p><u>Sketching the Prairie</u></p> <p><i>[Laura Drawing here]</i></p>
<p><i>[Partner Sketch here]</i></p>