

Prairie Nature Journals

Materials Needed:

Bright colored paper, 1-2 sheets per student
white paper, 3-6 sheets per student
stapler and staples
markers, crayons, or colored pencils; plenty for each student
prairie plant cuttings, a mix of grasses and wildflowers

Time:

30 minutes to make journals, several sessions of 30-50 minutes for journaling.

Skills:

Language Arts (free writing)
Science (prairie ecosystems, prairie plants, adaptations)

Procedure:

Provide each student with one or two pieces of colored paper and 3-6 sheets of plain white paper (depending on journal style – ½ page or full page). Staple journals together. Allow students time to decorate their journals. Be sure each student places their name on the journal.

Provide students with time outside in a prairie or time with prairie plant cuttings to draw in their journal.

Be specific in your journaling directions to students. For example, “When we head outside, I would like you to find three prairie plants and draw them with as much detail as possible.” Or, “Please choose three of the prairie plant cuttings we have in the classroom and draw them in your journal with as much detail as possible.”

Remind students that these are *their* journals and will not be viewed by anyone but the teacher. Also remind students that they are being graded on their participation, not the skill of their drawings. They simply need to *try* drawing the prairie plants.

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Or, the second time you spend time journaling, you could instruct students to write a poem about the prairie. This would be especially good after a visit to the prairie.

Another journaling activity could be to imagine spending the night on the prairie out in the open. What would it be like? What sounds would they hear? What animals might they see that are different than animals they would see during the day?

Encourage students to write or draw in their journal each time they learn something new about the prairie... they could write a new poem, draw a new picture, or simply free write about what they are learning.

Note: If you plan to use the journals as evidence of learning, instruct students to place the date at the top of the page each time they add to their journal.

