

CONTENTS

Introductions	2
Meet the Grassland	3
Nature Notes	4
Chapter 1: The Dry Life	5
Small but Special	11
Prickly but Pretty	12
Nature Notes	13
Chapter 2: Underground World	14
Grass in the Grassland	19
Slug in the Grassland	20
Nature Notes	21
Chapter 3: Stem Forest	22
When Nighttime Comes	27
Animals Past	28
Nature Notes	29
Chapter 4: Fly Zone	30
Vultures on the Wing	34
Plants Past	35
Nature Notes	36
Chapter 5: Grassland Future	37
People and Ecosystems	38
Nature Notes	40
Glossary	43
Index	46

Introductions



From left to right, Lynn, Tim, Christie and Mike meet at Gibson Park

Meet three friends: Lynn, Mike and Christie.

They often get together at Gibson Park near their homes.

The friends like to **explore** outdoors. When they go beyond Gibson Park, Christie's brother, Tim, joins them. They have fun being nature detectives. Like all detectives, they keep notes about what they discover. Sometimes they make drawings, too.

One place the Gibson Gang loves to explore is the **grassland** near town. Many kinds of plants grow there. Animals from **badgers** to **bats** live on the grassland. On each visit, the Gang discovers something new.





MEET THE GRASSLAND



A grassland is a large area of dry land that grows many grasses and other small plants. It has few trees or **shrubs**. The grassland is an **ecosystem**, a place with living parts—plants and animals—and non-living parts, such as water, light and soil. Each of these parts affects other parts of the ecosystem. Each is important to a healthy grassland.

There are many grasslands in Canada, but they are not all alike. Some are flat; others are hilly. Some are drier than others. Different kinds of plants and animals live on different kinds of grasslands.

Nature Notes

WHAT TO WATCH FOR

1. *What kinds of plants live in the grassland?*
2. *How do plants live and grow in the grassland?*
3. *What kinds of animals live in the grassland?*
4. *How do animals live and find food in the grassland?*
5. *What are non-living parts of a grassland?*

THINGS TO CHECK LATER

1. *What grassland books does the library have?*
2. *Who can tell us about the grassland?*



The Dry Life



Early one summer morning, Tim and the Gibson Gang walked to the edge of town. From there, they took a trail that stretched far across a huge, grassy field. As they walked, their footsteps raised dust.

"The ground is really dry," said Christie.

"This wind will make it drier," said Mike as a strong breeze almost blew off his cap.

"It's too dry for a forest and too moist for a desert," said Tim. "But it's just right for a grassland. Plants that grow here are suited to dry soil. Whenever it rains, their roots can take in **moisture** fast."

"Even though these plants get very little water, they get a lot of light," said Lynn. "There's not much shade around here."

Tim agreed. "That's important. Plants use sunlight to make their own food—a kind of sugar. Their leaves make sugar from water and air. The dark soil of this grassland helps plants grow, too," he added. "It's rich in **nutrients**."

Christie stopped by a shrub that was as tall as she was. "**Sagebrush**," she said, pulling out her magnifying glass. "Up close, you can see a lot of silver hairs all over the leaves and twigs."

"That hair helps protect the shrub from hot and cold temperatures—and from the drying winds," said Tim. "Sagebrush keeps its hairy leaves even in winter!"



As Mike looked through Christie's magnifying glass, Lynn breathed deeply. "I love the smell of sagebrush," she said.