

HISTORY & GEOGRAPHY

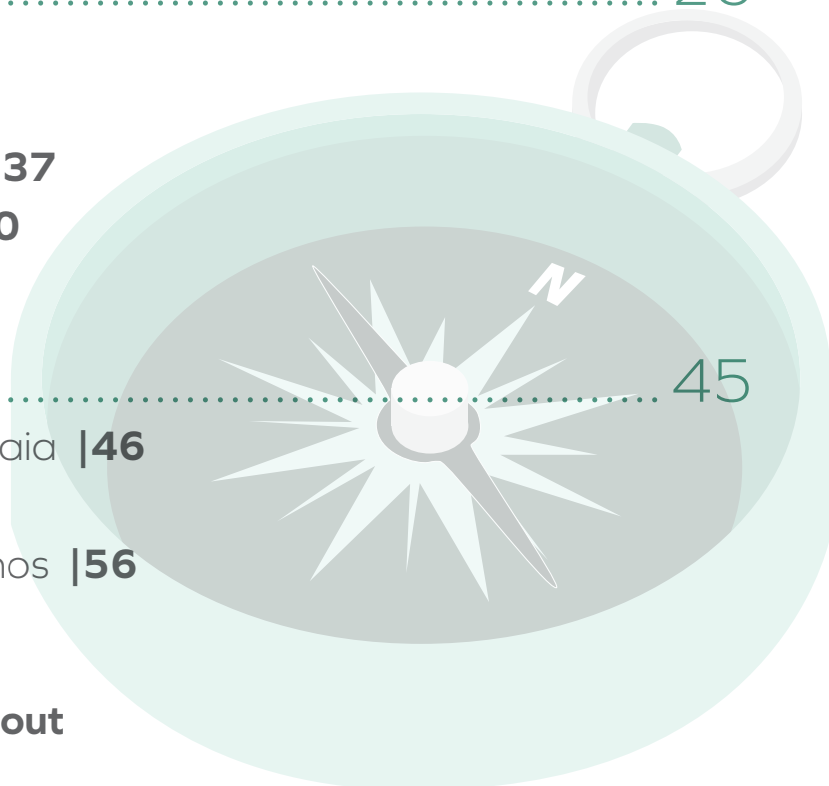
STUDENT BOOK

▶ **4th Grade** | Unit 4

HISTORY & GEOGRAPHY 404

GRASSLANDS

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GRASSLANDS

There are four important areas of plant life in the world. They are forests, tundras, deserts, and grasslands. The grasslands are drier than the forests, warmer than the tundras, and wetter than the deserts. They are an especially important region to people.

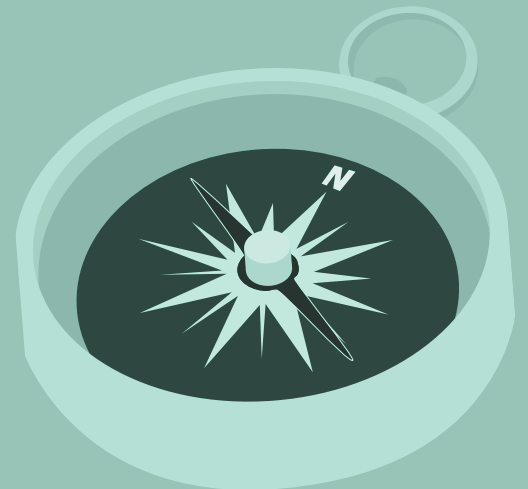
Of the four areas, the grasslands are the best for growing food, for several reasons. Grasslands are usually flat, or nearly flat, which makes them easy to farm. The soil is usually very good for crops. Moreover, quite a bit more than half of the food people grow to feed themselves is grass. Wheat, rice, corn, barley, millet, and sugar cane are all grasses. It makes sense that these crops grow well in areas where wild grasses grow. Thus, grasslands are very important to people.

In this LIFEPAC® you will study grasslands and three grassland countries. You will learn about the plants and animals of the grasslands. You will also study the Ukraine in Europe, Kenya in Africa, and Argentina in South America. You will learn about how the grasslands have been a part of those countries and their history.

Objectives

Read these objectives. The objectives tell you what you will be able to do when you have successfully completed this LIFEPAK. Each section will list according to the numbers below what objectives will be met in that section. When you have finished this LIFEPAK, you should be able to:

1. Name and identify the different grasslands.
2. Explain why grasslands are important and where they are located.
3. Explain the geography, history, people, and life today in the three grassland countries.
4. Explain how the grasslands affected the countries you study.
5. Tell some of the products of the grassland countries.



1. UKRAINE

This section of the LIFEPAC will teach you about the many grasslands all over the world. You will learn some of their names, the animals that live on them, and where they are. Then, you will study the country of Ukraine, which is located in eastern Europe on the grasslands of Eurasia. It is a new country that was created when the Soviet Union split apart in 1991. But the land is old, even if the country is new. You will learn about both.

Objectives

Review these objectives. When you have completed this section, you should be able to:

1. Name and identify the different grasslands.
2. Explain why grasslands are important and where they are located.
3. Explain the geography, history, people, and life today in the three grassland countries.
4. Explain how the grasslands affected the countries you study.
5. Tell some of the products of the grassland countries.

Vocabulary

Study these new words. Learning the meanings of these words is a good study habit and will improve your understanding of this LIFEPAC.

autocratic (ô tã krat' ik). Having absolute power, ruling without limits.

bauxite (bôk' sīt). A mineral from which aluminum is obtained.

communism (kom' yã niz' əm). A system in which most or all property is owned by the state and is shared by all.

dairy (dãr' ē). Having to do with milk and products made from milk.

embroidery (em broi' dər ē). Ornamental designs sewn in cloth or leather with a needle.

expose (ek spōz'). To lay open; uncover; leave without protection.

famine (fam' ən). A lack of food in a place; a time of starving.

fertile (fēr' təl). Able to produce much; producing crops easily.

flax (flaks). A slender, upright plant. Its seeds are used for linseed oil, and linen is made from its stems.

herbivore (hēr' bæ vōr). Plant-eating animal.

manganese (mang' gə nēz). A hard, brittle grayish-white metal used in making steel.

nuclear (nü' klē ə). Of or having to do with atomic energy or atomic weapons.

peasant (pez' ənt). A farmer of the working class in Europe.

persecution (pēr' sə kyü' shən). Being treated badly, especially because of one's beliefs.

serf (sérf). A slave who could not be sold off the land, but passed from one owner to another with the land.

titanium (tī tā' nē əm). A lightweight, strong metal that has many uses including airplanes, tools, and armor plate.

uranium (yü rā' nē əm). A heavy, white, radioactive metal used as a source of atomic energy.

Note: All vocabulary words in this LIFEPAK appear in **boldface** print the first time they are used. If you are unsure of the meaning when you are reading, study the definitions given.

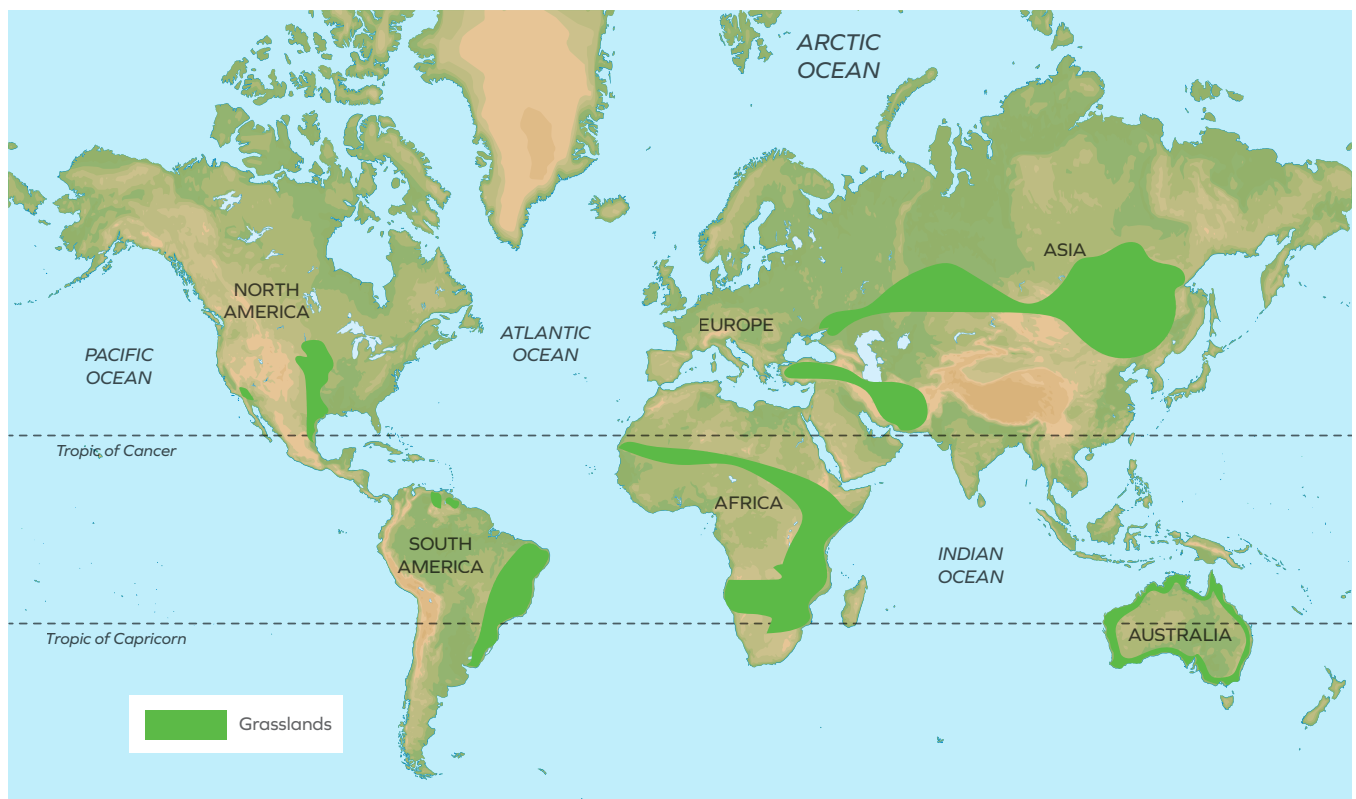
Pronunciation Key: hat, āge, cāre, fār; let, ēqual, tērm; it, īce; hot, ōpen, ôrder; oil; out; cup, pūt, rüle; child; long; thin; /FH/ for then; /zh/ for measure; /u/ or /ə/ represents /a/ in about, /e/ in taken, /i/ in pencil, /o/ in lemon, and /u/ in circus.

Grasslands of the World

Small areas of grass can be found in many places, including, perhaps, your back yard; but when geographers speak of *grasslands*, they are talking about large regions that were once covered with wild grass. These natural grasslands can be found on every continent except Antarctica.

In North America, the grasslands are called the Great Plains. They stretch from Canada to Texas in the center of the continent. In South America, the *llanos* (yá' nōs) are north and south of the Amazon rain forest, while the *pampas* are further south, in Argentina and Uruguay. In Africa, the savanna winds around the outside of the rain forests near the equator. In South Africa, the treeless grassland was named the *veld* by Dutch settlers. In Europe and Asia the grasslands are called the *steppes*, and stretch across the center of the two continents. In Australia, the grasslands circle the central desert.

Grasslands can be divided into three different types: prairie, steppes, and savanna. Prairie comes from the French word for meadow. It was used by the French explorers who first saw the tall grasses of the Great Plains. Prairie grass is often taller than a man's waist.



| Grasslands of the world

Steppes have shorter grass than prairies because they get less rain. Grass on the steppes may grow in little bunches instead of being spread out evenly like a lawn. Both steppes and prairies have hot summers and cold winters. The western side of the Great Plains, near the rain shadow of the Rocky Mountains, is steppes, not prairie.

Savanna is grassland in the tropics, the land between the Tropics of Cancer and Capricorn, around the equator. Savannas do not have much change in temperature during the year, but they do have a great change in rainfall. Savannas have a wet and a dry season. The plants must be able to live without water for months during the dry season and live through heavy rains in the wet season. Most of the savanna on earth is in Africa, but there is some in South America and Australia, too.

The names of the grasslands can be confusing. People often call the grasslands of Eurasia *the Steppes*, and those in North America, *the Prairie*. They are using the words as a name for the place, not as a way to describe the type of grass there. This LIFEPAK will use *prairie* and *steppes* to describe a type of grassland, not a specific place.



Name the continent where each is found.

- 1.1 veld _____
- 1.2 pampas _____
- 1.3 Great Plains _____



Write the correct word to complete each sentence.

- 1.4 _____ is a type of grassland in the tropics, which has a wet and a dry season.
- 1.5 _____ is a type of grassland that has tall grass, hot summers, and cold winters.
- 1.6 _____ is a type of grassland that has short grass because it gets little rain, but also has hot summers and cold winters.
- 1.7 More than half of all the crops people grow for food are _____.



| A lioness on a savanna in Africa

Grasslands often have rich, **fertile** soil. Less rain falls on grasslands than in the forests which can wash out the minerals that helps plants grow. Also, the grasses die and pile up quickly, then decompose to fertilize the soil. The grasslands often have a thick layer of very, very good black soil from the dead grass.

The dead grass and roots from the living grass make a thick mat on top of the ground called "sod." Sod is difficult to cut through and sticks together so well that people can build with it. Many of the early settlers on the Great Plains lived in sod houses. The thick sod blocks kept the house warm in the winter and cool in the summer.

There are usually very few trees on the grasslands, because they need more water than grass does. Savannas do have special trees scattered here and there. In other grasslands, trees are found along rivers or lakes or where people have planted them.

Grass grows well even in dry places because it grows so fast. It can quickly sprout up when there is rain and die when there isn't, leaving seeds for the next time. Trees need to grow for many years to produce seeds.

The savanna is unusual because it gets a great deal of rain during the wet season. Trees that can store up water or send down deep roots can live on the savanna. Savannas usually have trees spread out among the grass, looking as if somebody dropped them in the wrong place.

Surprisingly, fire is very helpful to grasslands. It burns off dead grass on top of the sod, which allows sunlight and rain to reach the ground so new grass can grow. The ash also fertilizes the soil. Fires bring new grass to the land for the animals that live there to eat.

Many kinds of large grass-eating animals live on the grasslands. Bison, called buffaloes, live on the Great Plains. Elephants, zebras, and wildebeests (wil' də bēsts) live on the African savannas. The grasslands that can feed these large animals can also feed their domestic cousins. Cattle are raised for food on all the great grasslands of the world.

Smaller plant-eaters like deer and antelope also live on the grasslands. The pronghorn antelope in North America, the saiga in Eurasia, and the impala of Africa are all swift-running creatures of the plains. They can run within minutes of when they are born. They use their speed over the flat land to escape predators.

The other major kind of grass-eater escapes in a different way, by going underground. Ground squirrels, gophers, mice, and rabbits live in burrows under the ground, where they flee for safety. These small rodents usually outnumber the bigger **herbivores**. They live together in large groups. Prairie dogs of the Great Plains are famous for their large group homes. They have underground towns that go for miles.

The meat-eaters of the grasslands must be swift, strong, or clever to catch prey on flat land, where they are easily seen. The wolves of North America hunt in groups to encircle, run down, and capture an animal. Lions in Africa do the same. Cheetahs rely on their speed to catch their prey. Foxes and owls eat the unwary rodents they catch outside their underground homes.



| A group of blue wildebeests grazing



Write *true* or *false* in the blank.

- 1.8** _____ Grasslands often have rich soil.
- 1.9** _____ Sod is the thin tops of the grass on a prairie.
- 1.10** _____ Savannas have more trees than most grasslands.
- 1.11** _____ Grasslands are too dry for most trees.
- 1.12** _____ Bison live on the steppes of Eurasia.
- 1.13** _____ There are many kinds of rodents in the grasslands.
- 1.14** _____ Rodents usually live alone to protect themselves.
- 1.15** _____ The saiga live on the steppes of Eurasia.
- 1.16** _____ Cattle are never raised on the grasslands.
- 1.17** _____ Fires help wild grasslands.

Breadbasket of Europe

Ukraine is the second largest country in Europe. It is called the “breadbasket of Europe” because of its rich farmland. It is located north of the Black Sea and the Sea of Azov in eastern Europe. Only Russia is bigger than Ukraine on the continent.

Most of Ukraine is a large flat plain called the steppes. The Carpathian (kär pā’ thē ən) Mountains do cross the southwest (down and left, on the map) corner of the country. A large peninsula, called the Crimea, sticks out into the Black Sea and the Sea of Azov in the south. The Crimean Mountains run across the bottom of this peninsula. But most of the rest of the country is plains that tilt down towards the Black Sea.

The Black Sea is part of an ocean, not a lake. It connects with the Mediterranean Sea through the Bosphorus Strait. This allows ocean ships to reach the southern ports of Ukraine.

Ukraine’s main seaport is the city of Odessa. Its name comes from *Odesos*, a Greek colony that was built there hundreds of years before the birth of Christ. The city is both a manufacturing and trade center.

SELF TEST 1

Choose the correct word from the list to complete each sentence (3 points each answer).

prairie	steppe	savanna	Pampas
icon	chernozem	serf	pysanky
communist	collective		

- 1.01** The rich, black soil of Ukraine is called _____ .
- 1.02** The _____ are the grasslands of Argentina and Uruguay.
- 1.03** Russia's government became _____ after a revolt in 1917.
- 1.04** An _____ is an Eastern Orthodox picture of Jesus or a faithful Christian.
- 1.05** A _____ is a dry grassland with short grass.
- 1.06** _____ are Ukrainian Easter eggs.
- 1.07** A _____ is a type of grassland with tall, thick grass.
- 1.08** A _____ is a slave who is owned by the person who owns the land the slave lives on.
- 1.09** A _____ is a tropical grassland with a wet and dry season.
- 1.010** A _____ is a large farm created with land that was taken from Ukrainian farmers.

Answer these questions (10 points each answer).

- 1.011** Why are grasslands important to people?

- 1.030** _____ A leader in the Orthodox Church is called a patriarch.
- 1.031** _____ It is difficult for Ukraine to change from a communist to a free nation.
- 1.032** _____ There are grasslands on all seven continents on earth.

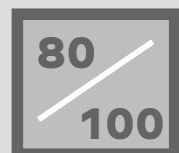


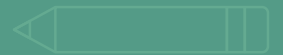
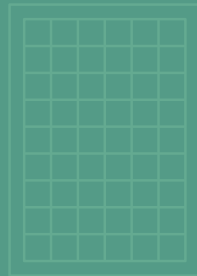
Teacher check:

Score _____

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