

Name _____ Date _____

Grasslands

Learn more about this topic! Each section gives more detail on one of the lyrics from the song. Read each section, and then respond by answering the question or taking notes on key ideas.

1. b'

The grasslands are one of five biomes on Earth. The others are tundra, forest, desert, and aquatic. A biome is a region characterized by a certain climate and plant and animal life. One-fourth of the land on Earth is considered grassland. There are grasslands on every continent except Antarctica, but they go by different names. For example, they are called prairies in North America, savannas in Africa, pampas in South America, steppes in Asia and Europe, and rangelands in Australia. The most famous grassland on Earth is probably the Serengeti savanna in Africa.

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2. b'

Grasslands are usually found in the interior, or middle, of continents. These areas are often nestled between mountains and deserts. As you may guess from their name, grasses are the primary plant life in a grassland. Sometimes a small number of trees and large shrubs can also grow there. Grasslands get more rain than deserts, but not as much rain as forests. Trees require more water to grow than grasses do. That's why they are not plentiful on grasslands.

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3. b'

Savannas are a type of grassland that is usually found in tropical latitudes. They are warm or hot year-round, and the year is divided into a rainy season and dry season. Up to 50 inches of rain falls during the summer rainy season every year. That's a lot of rain in just six months! In fact, scientists think that many savannas would become tropical rainforests if the rain occurred steadily throughout the year instead of just half of the year. Much of the rainwater collects on the ground, forming watering holes that are vital to animals during the hot, dry winter. During the dry season, savanna grasses die and often burn up in wildfires. These fires explain why savannas don't have many trees; grass grows back quickly, but trees need more time to grow. Savanna soil is not very fertile. Usually only one or a few types of grasses grow in one area.

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4. b'

Temperate grasslands are found at mid-latitude. Their temperatures vary with the seasons, ranging from about -40°F in the winter to 100°F in the summer. Rainy periods, droughts, and fires do occur in temperate grasslands, but they are less dramatic in strength and effect than those in savannas. The soil in these grasslands is dark and fertile. Oak trees, willow trees, hundreds of species of flowers, and many kinds of grasses grow there.

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Plants and animal species in grasslands have developed adaptations that help them survive in their environment. Savanna plants are generally small because they burn during the dry season and have to regrow. Some, like acacia and baobab trees, can store water in their roots, bulbs, or trunks. Others flower only part of the year to save water. Savanna grass grows very quickly when the rains return. Some varieties can grow one inch or more in a single day!

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Savanna animals, including lions, elephants, zebras, giraffes, baboons, and rhinoceroses, have evolved to adapt to the long dry season. Many migrate long distances to find food and water. Other grassland animals, like antelope, gazelles, and prairie dogs, have tan coats that blend in with the plant life. Bison, which live on North American prairies, evolved to have flat teeth and a digestive system ideal for eating grass.

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