



## AMAZING ANIMAL ARCHITECTURE: PRAIRIE DOG TOWNS

Learn how prairie dog burrows create a thriving ecosystem.

### Materials

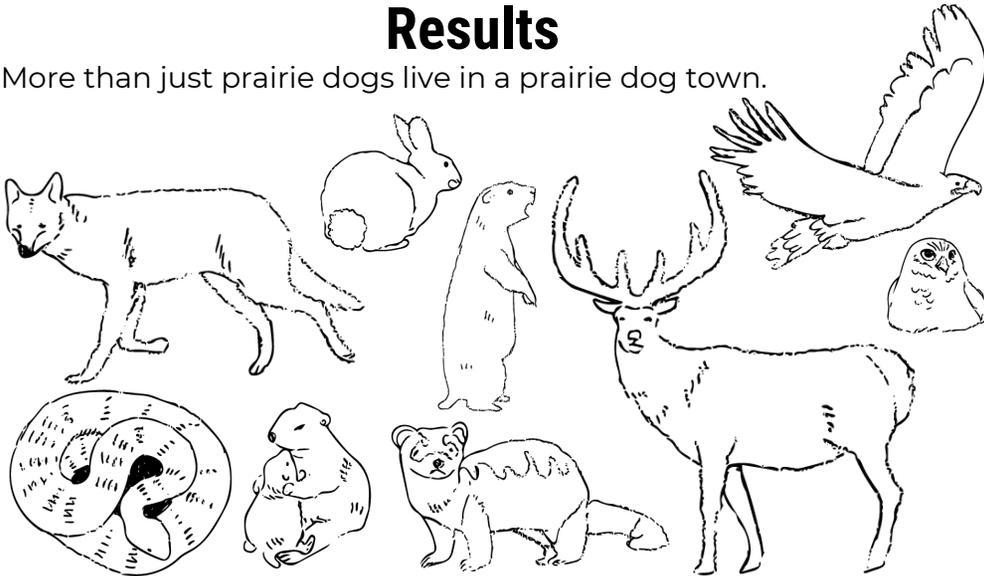
- Construction paper (*preferably in blue and brown*)
- White copy paper
- Crayons, markers, or colored pencils
- Tape or glue
- Scissors

### Procedure

- Place the brown paper over the blue paper, leaving a few inches of blue on top for the "sky", and tape/glue these pieces together to make your Great Plains environment.
- On the "sky" part of your environment, draw a sun and some clouds. On top of the "ground" part of your environment, draw short grass and a medium-sized mound of dirt. Under the "ground," draw 7 circles to be your underground chambers (you may connect them with tunnels if you'd like).
- On this activity worksheet, there are some plains animal images that you may color and cut out. If you do not have a printer to print out the worksheet, you can use these images as a reference and try to draw them on your own.
- Tape or glue these animals where they belong in your Great Plains environment:

### Results

More than just prairie dogs live in a prairie dog town.



Sky: golden eagle

Above Ground: barking prairie dog (place on top of the mound), coyote, and elk

Underground: prairie rattlesnake, burrowing owl, black-footed ferret, cottontail rabbit, and baby prairie dogs

### Why?

Prairie dogs are social animals that live in colonies or "towns," that can cover up to 1000 acres of land. Prairie dogs nibble down tall grass, which allows a variety of flowering plants to grow and attract grazing animals like musk deer and elk. Prairie dogs also attract many surface predators to the area, such as coyotes, badgers, bobcats, golden eagles, and hawks. Underground, each family of prairie dogs creates an elaborate system of tunnels and burrows to live in. Abandoned prairie dog burrows are home to several species of animals like deer mice, burrowing owls, prairie rattlesnakes, black-footed ferrets, and cottontail rabbits. All of these animals are supported by the habitat created by the immense underground tunnel systems and lawn maintenance of prairie dogs and their towns.

To learn more about life science, check out the Pink Palace Museum's *Natural History* Exhibits.