



First Crossing

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Flying the friendly skies, seeing with my own eyes
Deserts, mountains, and plains
Above the clouds the sunshine abounds
In the place where it never rains
Looking down at the blue and brown
Amber, green, and beige
I want to walk around with my feet on the ground
Not like a bird in a cage
There are snow-capped mountains
And dried-up riverbeds
Canyons winding and grand
Though it's just for a day
And there's a window in the way
I'm seeing the lay of the land
Like some giant relief map before my eyes
The mountains and valleys are reduced in size
Someday I will walk there
Not just see it from the sky
Though the sight of it is thrilling
The beauty of America calls to me
It calls and my spirit is willing
But to see it for the first time
It's thrilling

Classroom Listening, Discussion, and Activity Guide

Background

In 1993, I crossed the United States in an airplane for the first time. The skies were clear, and I could see in miniature famous geographical formations such as the Grand Canyon. This song was written during the flight.

Questions for Reflection and Discussion

1. What are some man-made threats to our national parks?
2. How can we protect natural areas from being spoiled by the people who visit them?
3. What are some beautiful nature sites you have visited? What makes them beautiful?
4. How would you feel seeing the earth in miniature from high up in an airplane?

Activities

Write your own poem, song, or short story about a national park or nature site you have visited or would like to visit.

Make your own painting or drawing of a national park or nature site that you have visited or would like to visit.

Speech-Language Objectives

Goal: Improve language processing and production skills.

Objective 1: The student will understand and express vocabulary related to synonyms.

Sample Task – Provide synonyms for the following words: *grand, reduced, thrilling, beauty.*

Objective 2: The student will understand and express vocabulary related to correct usage of new vocabulary words in sentence formation.

Sample Task – Define the following words and use each one in a sentence: *plains, canyons, abounds, spirit.*

Objective 3: The student will understand and express vocabulary related to figurative language.

Sample Task – Answer the following questions: How is the phrase *not like a bird in a cage* used figuratively? What does the cage symbolize?

Objective 4: The student will understand and express the structure of analogies.

Sample Task – Fill in the blank. In this song, an analogy is drawn between a person stuck in an airplane and a bird trapped in a ____ (cage).

Objective 5: The student will understand and express similarities and differences.

Sample Task – Answer the following questions: In what ways are valleys and canyons similar? In what ways are they different?

Objective 6: The student will complete written language activities chosen by the Speech-Language Pathologist such as creative writing activities.

Sample Task – Write a poem, song, or short story about a national park or other nature site that you have visited or would like to visit.

Goal: Improve auditory perceptual abilities.

Objective 1: The student will identify and supply rhyming words.

Sample Task – Answer the following questions: What words rhyme with *green*? Which of the following words rhymes with *rains*? *beige, cage, plains*

Objective 2: The student will name beginning sounds of words presented orally.

Sample Task – Answer the following questions: What is the beginning sound of *where*? What is the beginning sound of *though*?

Objective 3: The student will name middle sounds of words presented orally.

Sample Task – Name the middle sound in each of the following words: *place, brown, just, sight*.

Objective 4: The student will repeat sentences of increasing word length.

Sample Task – Repeat the following sentence: *Someday I will walk there, not just see it from the sky*.

Objective 5: The student will unscramble sentences presented orally.

Sample Task – Unscramble the following sentences: *snow-capped There mountains are. calls to The beauty me of America*.

Objective 6: The student will recall from memory a series of 3 or 4 unrelated words.

Sample Task – Repeat the following set of words: *never, window, mountain, willing*.