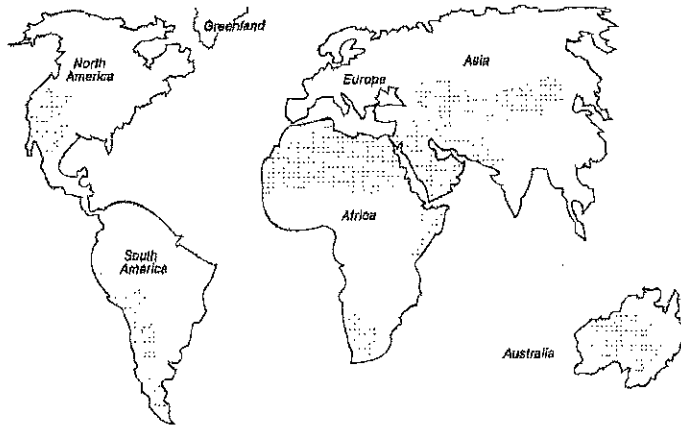


Discovering Deserts

NTI 3rd Grade
Reading-Day 8

Are all deserts vast and empty?

By Gary Miller



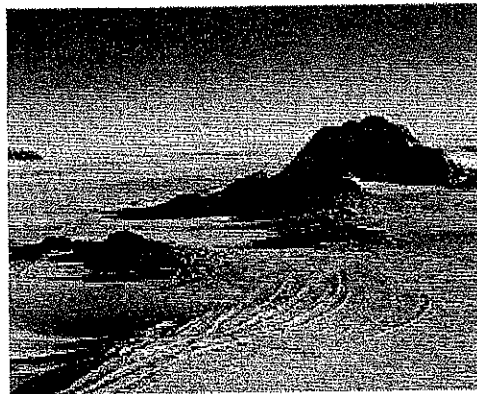
Deserts are located in many parts of the world.

Cold and Windy

The sun rises over Antarctica. The air is very cold and a freezing wind blows a curtain of snow. It's morning in one of the world's largest deserts.

That's right, Antarctica is a desert. Are you surprised? Well, not all deserts are hot and sandy; some are cold and snowy. Others are windy and rocky.

Deserts can be found all over the world. Some are on cold mountains while others are near oceans. Some are near the Equator. Each desert is different; yet all deserts are dry.



Antarctica is one of the driest deserts on Earth. Like most deserts, it has its own climate. Temperature, wind, and rain or snow makes up climate. Climate affects how a desert looks and what lives there.

Only a little snow falls over most of Antarctica. The climate is so cold, the snow doesn't melt. It just keeps piling up and forms thick sheets of ice.

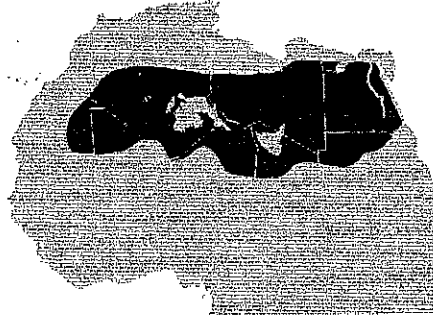
The biting wind always blows making Antarctica the windiest continent on the planet. Even if you wear layers of clothes, you're still cold.

Life in Antarctica can be difficult for plants and animals. Not many animals live on the land, even penguins spend much of their time in the water.

One tough animal that lives on the land is called a springtail. It looks like a tiny insect. The springtail's body makes a chemical that keeps it from freezing so the cold doesn't bother it.

Even plants have a hard time so only a few grow here. Small patches of moss cling to the thin soil. Moss can stand up to the cold wind, but people can't. Maybe it's time to explore a warmer desert.

Hot and Sandy



The Sahara desert is located in the northern part of Africa.

Hot winds, shifting sand, and scorching sun. This is the Sahara desert in Africa which is the largest hot desert on Earth.

Put on some light clothes because they'll keep you cool. Wrap a scarf over your head and your face to protect yourself from blowing sand.

Sand covers part of this desert and very little rain falls in the Sahara. Even then, the rain evaporates in the hot sun. Sometimes, it dries up before it hits the ground.

You can find water, though. Look for an oasis which is where water pools under the ground. The water rises to the surface and makes a small pond. Plants like palm trees grow here and camels and other animals come here to drink.

Camels aren't the only animals here. A tiny rodent called a jerboa lives here, too. It scampers about looking for plants to nibble on. To find out more about the desert food chain visit <http://digital-desert.com/wildlife/food-chains/>.

Nearby lives a fennec fox; it has a den in the sand. Its huge ears keep it cool because blood carries heat from inside its body to its ears. Then the ears release the heat and that cools the fox down. Your ears probably won't help you, so the Sahara may not be for you.

Windy and Rocky



Camels crossing the Gobi desert.

Let's move on to the Gobi Desert in northern China. It's the largest semiarid desert in the world. It gets more rainfall than the Sahara and it's cooler too.

Most of the Gobi sits high in the mountains. It doesn't rain much here, but it might snow. The snow covers small patches of grass and rock. Cold winds sweep the rocks clean.

The Gobi is big and it grows even bigger as it gets drier. Many things can cause a desert to get drier. Animals eating up the grass can cause it to happen. Too much farming can also cause the desert to grow.

Nearby, you see a rare and beautiful sight. It's a snow leopard. The snow leopard is an endangered animal. The snow leopard has smoky gray fur and large paws with sharp claws.

Now you've seen three deserts, yet each has a different climate. All are dry, yet none of them are empty. Each desert is full of life.

Word Wise

Climate: the usual weather that occurs in a place, including average temperature, wind, and rain

Desert: a place where less than 10 inches of rain or snow fall a year

Evaporate: to turn from liquid into vapor

Oasis: a green, fertile area surrounded by desert

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1. Based on details from the text, you can conclude that
 - a. All deserts are exactly the same.
 - b. There are many different types of deserts.
 - c. It is very hot in all deserts.
 - d. Deserts get no rainfall each year.

2. What is the purpose of the map on the first page (under the title)?
 - a. To show where the cold deserts are located.
 - b. To show where deserts are located in the world.
 - c. To show the world's largest desert.
 - d. To show where the Sahara desert is located.

3. If you visit the website link mentioned in the text, you will learn more about
 - a. The desert climate
 - b. The Gobi Desert
 - c. Animals in the Antarctic
 - d. Desert food chains

4. What is the purpose of the word box at the end of the text?
 - a. It gives extra interesting information about deserts.
 - b. It explains the meaning of important words in the text.
 - c. It helps the reader locate information about the desert in the text.
 - d. It shows where deserts are located in the world.

5. How is the springtail able to survive in the Antarctic desert?
 - a. It migrates to warmer climates in the coldest part of the year.
 - b. It hibernates to stay warm.
 - c. Its body makes a chemical that keeps it from freezing.
 - d. It makes a cocoon to keep it warm.

6. This desert is covered with sand, has very little rain, and has oasis in it.
Which desert is being described here?
 - a. Antarctic Desert
 - b. Sahara Desert
 - c. Gobi Desert
 - d. All deserts

7. Which animal would you find in the Sahara desert?
 - a. Penguins
 - b. Springtail
 - c. Fennec fox
 - d. Snow leopard

8. Which of these is a cause of the desert getting drier?
 - a. Wildfires
 - b. Too much farming
 - c. Too many plants live there
 - d. The oasis is drying up

9. Which text feature would be most helpful in finding the meaning of the word climate?
 - a. Caption
 - b. Hyperlink
 - c. Photograph
 - d. Word Wise Box

10. Which is NOT true of all deserts?
 - a. They are all very hot.
 - b. Plants and animals live there.
 - c. Living things have adaptations to help them survive there.
 - d. They are all dry.