

Grade 6 History & Geography

Unit 1: World Deserts

6 lessons and a unit quiz. Use this pack with the **World Deserts Student Reader** (print it, or download it once from the course) to teach the whole unit without the internet.

What is in this pack

- A lesson plan for each chapter: the Big Question, words to know, which pages to read, questions to talk over and the activity pages.
- The unit quiz, ready to print.
- Answers for the teacher at the back: every discussion question and the quiz key.

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Lesson schedule

Two or three lessons a week, about 30 minutes each. Tick each one off as you go.

	Lesson	Reader pages	Activity pages
☐	Chapter 1: What Is a Desert?	PDF pages 8-17	AP 1.1, AP 1.2, AP 1.3, AP 1.4
☐	Chapter 2: Deserts of Africa	PDF pages 18-23	AP 1.1, AP 2.1, AP 2.2
☐	Chapter 3: Australia, a Dry Continent	PDF pages 24-29	AP 1.1, AP 2.2
☐	Chapter 4: Deserts of Asia	PDF pages 30-35	AP 1.1, AP 4.1, AP 2.2
☐	Chapter 5: Deserts of North America	PDF pages 36-41	AP 1.1, AP 2.2, AP 5.1
☐	Chapter 6: Deserts of South America	PDF pages 42-49	AP 1.1, AP 2.2, AP 6.1, AP 6.3, AP 6.2
☐	Unit quiz	—	—

Page numbers are the PDF page numbers of the Student Reader file, so they match what your PDF reader shows.

Chapter 1: What Is a Desert?

THE BIG QUESTION

What features determine whether an area of land is a desert?

Words to know

- **polar** — relating to a geographic pole or the area around it *The polar area has cool to cold summers and cold to very cold winters.*
- **climatologist** — a scientist who studies weather patterns over time *The climatologist studied how the weather of the Sahara has changed over the last one hundred years.*
- **evaporation** — the process by which a liquid changes to a vapor or gas *Water turning into steam is an example of evaporation.*
- **precipitation** — water falling to Earth’s surface as rain, hail, snow, or sleet *The forecast called for precipitation, so Emma brought her umbrella.*
- **desertification** — natural or human processes that turn fertile land into a desert *Overgrazing land can cause desertification.*
- **semiarid** — describing locations with little precipitation, but with enough moisture to support the growth of grasses, shrubs, and a few scattered trees *Semiarid regions typically receive between ten and twenty inches of annual rainfall.*

Read

Read Chapter 1 in the Student Reader: PDF pages 8–17. Look at the pictures and maps together.

Talk it over

1. Where are the polar deserts?
2. How do most climatologists define the word desert?
3. Why do plants and animals use only a small percentage of rainwater in the desert?
4. What feature do “hot” and “cold” deserts share?
5. How have some animals adapted to the desert?
6. How have people learned to adapt to the desert?

Answers are at the back of this pack.

Check for understanding

- Answer the Big Question in a sentence or two: What features determine whether an area of land is a desert?
- Use one of today’s words in a sentence of your own.

Activity pages

- Activity Page 1.1: World Map — Teacher Guide PDF page 76

- Activity Page 1.2: Imaginary Lines — Teacher Guide PDF page 77
- Activity Page 1.3: Latitude as Climate Indicator — Teacher Guide PDF page 78
- Activity Page 1.4: Three Different Map Projections — Teacher Guide PDF page 79

Chapter 2: Deserts of Africa

THE BIG QUESTION

What are the similarities and differences between the Sahara and Kalahari deserts?

Words to know

- **oasis** — an area in the desert where there are plants and water *The caravan stopped at the oasis so the camels could get a drink of water.*
- **salt flat** — an area of land where evaporation has left a layer of salt *Most plants and animals cannot survive the landscape of a salt flat.*
- **radiate** — to send out *The sun radiates energy that becomes heat and light when striking Earth.*
- **game reserve** — an area set aside by the government where animals are protected from hunters *Visiting a game reserve is a great idea for people who want to see endangered animals in their natural habitat.*
- **basin** — an area of land that is lower than the land around it *Flooding often occurs in the drainage basin of the river.*

Read

Read Chapter 2 in the Student Reader: PDF pages 18–23. Look at the pictures and maps together.

Talk it over

1. How are camels suited for life in the Sahara?
2. In addition to camels, what other animals can be found in the Sahara?
3. How is the Kalahari different from the Sahara?
4. Who are the San? How did they adapt to life in the desert?
5. Why do you think the San decided to use ostrich eggs to store water?

Answers are at the back of this pack.

Check for understanding

- Answer the Big Question in a sentence or two: What are the similarities and differences between the Sahara and Kalahari deserts?
- Use one of today's words in a sentence of your own.

Activity pages

- Activity Page 1.1: World Map — Teacher Guide PDF page 76
- Activity Page 2.1: Map of Africa — Teacher Guide PDF page 80
- Activity Page 2.2: Hot and Cool Facts About World Deserts — Teacher Guide PDF pages 81–83

Chapter 3: Australia, a Dry Continent

THE BIG QUESTION

What strategies have the Aboriginal peoples adopted in order to survive the harsh conditions of desert life?

Words to know

- **scrub brush** — small or short bushes and trees *The dingoes could not see the rabbits hiding in the scrub brush.*
- **interior** — an area far from the coast in a country or continent *Kansas is located in the interior of the United States.*
- **riverbed** — the ground at the bottom of a river *The fish hid among the plants that grew in the riverbed.*
- **marsupial** — a type of mammal that carries its young in a pouch *The kangaroo is a well-known marsupial.*
- **nomadic** — moving around often in search of food; not settled in one place *The nomadic Plains peoples of North America followed the bison herds every summer.*

Read

Read Chapter 3 in the Student Reader: PDF pages 24–29. Look at the pictures and maps together.

Talk it over

1. What vegetation is most common in the Australian desert?
2. Who are the Aboriginal peoples?
3. How do frogs help the Aboriginal peoples survive in the desert?
4. What is the Outback? What kind of land is it?
5. What is a billabong?
6. How are kangaroos and other marsupials adapted for survival in the desert?
7. What is “dreamtime”?
8. What are songlines?

Answers are at the back of this pack.

Check for understanding

- Answer the Big Question in a sentence or two: What strategies have the Aboriginal peoples adopted in order to survive the harsh conditions of desert life?
- Use one of today’s words in a sentence of your own.

Activity pages

- Activity Page 1.1: World Map — Teacher Guide PDF page 76

- Activity Page 2.2: Hot and Cool Facts About World Deserts — Teacher Guide PDF pages 81-83

Chapter 4: Deserts of Asia

THE BIG QUESTION

How would you compare the Gobi Desert to the deserts of the Arabian Peninsula?

Words to know

- **salt marsh** — an area of coastal wet land, directly affected by the rise and fall of the tide *Crabs are one kind of animal you might find in a salt marsh.*
- **peninsula** — a piece of land sticking out into a body of water, so that it is almost surrounded by water *Much of the state of Florida is on a peninsula.*
- **Bedouin** — relating to the nomadic Arab tribes of Arabia and North Africa *Many Bedouin tribes in the Middle East raise camels, sheep, and goats.*
- **fossil fuel** — fuel, such as oil, natural gas, and coal, formed in the earth from the remains of living things *Oil is one type of fossil fuel formed in the ground over millions of years.*

Read

Read Chapter 4 in the Student Reader: PDF pages 30–35. Look at the pictures and maps together.

Talk it over

1. The Gobi Desert is found in what countries?
2. Where is the Arabian Peninsula?
3. What countries are located on the Arabian Peninsula?
4. What resources are available in the Arabian Peninsula?

Answers are at the back of this pack.

Check for understanding

- Answer the Big Question in a sentence or two: How would you compare the Gobi Desert to the deserts of the Arabian Peninsula?
- Use one of today's words in a sentence of your own.

Activity pages

- Activity Page 1.1: World Map — Teacher Guide PDF page 76
- Activity Page 4.1: Map of Asia — Teacher Guide PDF page 84
- Activity Page 2.2: Hot and Cool Facts About World Deserts — Teacher Guide PDF pages 81–83

Chapter 5: Deserts of North America

THE BIG QUESTION

If you had to survive in a desert for several days, what would you need?

Words to know

- **yucca** — a type of plant with pointed leaves, a long stem, and white flowers that grows in dry areas *The flower of the yucca is the state flower of New Mexico.*
- **fault line** — a crack or split in Earth's crust along which movement takes place *The San Andreas Fault is a major fault line in California.*
- **sea level** — land that is the same elevation as the surface of the sea or ocean *Land at sea level is often at risk of flooding during a hurricane.*
- **hemisphere** — either of two halves of Earth *The United States is in the Western Hemisphere.*
- **lava rock** — rock formed by magma, or melted rock, that has reached Earth's surface and cooled *Scientists study lava rocks to learn more about volcanoes.*

Read

Read Chapter 5 in the Student Reader: PDF pages 36–41. Look at the pictures and maps together.

Talk it over

1. Where is the Mojave Desert?
2. What plant is most associated with the Mojave?
3. What is Death Valley?
4. Where is the Sonoran Desert?
5. What is the Devil's Highway?
6. How is the western part of the Sonoran Desert different from the eastern part?
7. Where is the Chihuahuan Desert located?
8. What is one unique feature of the Chihuahuan Desert?

Answers are at the back of this pack.

Check for understanding

- Answer the Big Question in a sentence or two: If you had to survive in a desert for several days, what would you need?
- Use one of today's words in a sentence of your own.

Activity pages

- Activity Page 1.1: World Map — Teacher Guide PDF page 76

- Activity Page 2.2: Hot and Cool Facts About World Deserts — Teacher Guide PDF pages 81-83
- Activity Page 5.1: Map of North America — Teacher Guide PDF page 85

Chapter 6: Deserts of South America

THE BIG QUESTION

What are the key features of the Patagonia Desert and the Atacama Desert?

Words to know

- **tableland** — a wide, flat area of land, often higher than surrounding land; a plateau
The fort was built on the flat top of the tableland.
- **basalt** — dark gray or black volcanic rock that looks like glass
They found a bed of basalt at the base of the volcano.
- **terrain** — the landforms of a piece of land
The hikers had to turn around due to the steep terrain.
- **observatory** — a building from which scientists watch and study the sky
The class went on a field trip to the observatory to learn about the upcoming solar eclipse.

Read

Read Chapter 6 in the Student Reader: PDF pages 42–49. Look at the pictures and maps together.

Talk it over

1. Where is Patagonia located?
2. What landforms and waterways border Patagonia?
3. Who are the Tehuelche?
4. How did contact with European explorers change the life of the Tehuelche?
5. Where is the Atacama Desert located?
6. According to climatologists, what is special about the Atacama Desert?
7. What does NASA use the Atacama Desert for? Why?
8. What landforms and other features are found in the Atacama Desert?

Answers are at the back of this pack.

Check for understanding

- Answer the Big Question in a sentence or two: What are the key features of the Patagonia Desert and the Atacama Desert?
- Use one of today's words in a sentence of your own.

Activity pages

- Activity Page 1.1: World Map — Teacher Guide PDF page 76
- Activity Page 2.2: Hot and Cool Facts About World Deserts — Teacher Guide PDF pages 81–83

- Activity Page 6.1: Map of South America — Teacher Guide PDF page 86
- Activity Page 6.3: World Deserts Review: Where Am I? — Teacher Guide PDF pages 89–90
- Activity Page 6.2: Domain Vocabulary: Chapters 1–6 — Teacher Guide PDF pages 87–88

UNIT QUIZ

World Deserts

Name: _____ Date: _____

Circle the letter of the best answer.

1. What is a desert?
 - a) a place that is very hot
 - b) a place that is very sandy
 - c) a place that is very dry
 - d) a place that is very empty
2. What is one thing that both “hot” and “cold” deserts have in common?
 - a) All the land is made of sand.
 - b) Underground water filters impurities from the sand.
 - c) There is a dramatic change between day and night temperatures.
 - d) Both get regular, predictable periods of rainfall.
3. Which kind of plant is well adapted to living in the desert?
 - a) cactus
 - b) moss
 - c) elm tree
 - d) prairie grasses
4. An example of a nocturnal desert animal is a
 - a) lizard.
 - b) kangaroo.
 - c) llama.
 - d) camel.
5. When an animal or plant changes its behavior in reaction to its environment, it
 - a) dies.
 - b) adapts.
 - c) grows.
 - d) regulates.
6. A desert location with plentiful drinking water is called
 - a) an oasis.
 - b) a caravan.
 - c) an avalanche.
 - d) a dune.
7. Which river runs through the Sahara?
 - a) the Amazon
 - b) Rio Colorado
 - c) the Nile
 - d) Rio Grande

- 8.** The Sahara is known for
- a) the large dinosaur fossils that have been discovered there.
 - b) being the only place in the world that the Joshua tree is found.
 - c) having no permanent water sources.
 - d) its extensive salt mines and camel caravans.
- 9.** The Kalahari Desert
- a) has almost no plant or animal life.
 - b) is a game reserve with a variety of plants and wild animals.
 - c) is located in Asia.
 - d) is where Aboriginal peoples have lived for thousands of years.
- 10.** In what bird's eggshells do the San store water?
- a) owl
 - b) ostrich
 - c) chicken
 - d) penguin
- 11.** The Aboriginal peoples have survived in Australia because they
- a) adapted to their environment closely over thousands of years.
 - b) got help from the Europeans who arrived on their land.
 - c) abandoned their traditional ways for more modern ones.
 - d) hunted roadrunners and guanaco.
- 12.** What is the interior, mostly desert, part of Australia called?
- a) the Empty Quarter
 - b) a tableland
 - c) a billabong
 - d) the Outback
- 13.** An animal with a pouch, such as a kangaroo, is called a
- a) mammal.
 - b) marsupial.
 - c) rodent.
 - d) carnivore.
- 14.** What are songlines?
- a) the words to the Australian national anthem
 - b) the sounds that ostriches make to warn of danger
 - c) The Aboriginal peoples' maps of their world that they pass on by word of mouth
 - d) roads through the desert that wind whistles through
- 15.** According to myths of the Aboriginal peoples, what was "dreamtime?"
- a) a time to sleep
 - b) a time after time
 - c) a time to dream
 - d) a time before time

- 16.** On what continent is the Gobi Desert?
- a) Europe
 - b) Africa
 - c) South America
 - d) Asia
- 17.** The Gobi is famous for
- a) being so sandy.
 - b) being at a low elevation.
 - c) having so many fossils.
 - d) having so many different animals.
- 18.** The Gobi covers
- a) all of Mongolia.
 - b) most of Mongolia and part of northern China.
 - c) all of southern China.
 - d) Saudi Arabia.
- 19.** The Gobi is surrounded by
- a) mountains.
 - b) oases.
 - c) rivers.
 - d) cliffs.
- 20.** The northernmost end of the Arabian Peninsula connects
- a) North and South America.
 - b) Africa and Asia.
 - c) Asia and Europe.
 - d) Africa and Europe.
- 21.** Climatologists consider this desert the driest place on Earth.
- a) Atacama
 - b) Patagonia
 - c) Sonoran
 - d) Gobi
- 22.** What important resource lies beneath the desert of Saudi Arabia?
- a) gold
 - b) diamonds
 - c) oil
 - d) silver
- 23.** Where is the Mojave Desert?
- a) Argentina
 - b) Australia
 - c) Mexico
 - d) United States

- 24.** Death Valley is in which desert?
- a) Gobi
 - b) Sonoran
 - c) Chihuahuan
 - d) Mojave
- 25.** Which is not true of Death Valley?
- a) It was formed between two fault lines.
 - b) It has the lowest elevation in the Western Hemisphere.
 - c) It boasts the highest recorded temperature in the United States.
 - d) It has never been a busy area.
- 26.** Which desert extends from Mexico into Texas and New Mexico?
- a) Patagonia
 - b) Chihuahuan
 - c) Gobi
 - d) Kalahari
- 27.** Where is the Devil's Highway located?
- a) the Atacama Desert
 - b) the Mojave Desert
 - c) the Chihuahuan Desert
 - d) the Sonoran Desert
- 28.** Patagonia is in which country?
- a) Brazil
 - b) Argentina
 - c) Mexico
 - d) Cuba
- 29.** Why is winter in Patagonia from June through September?
- a) Patagonia is on the equator.
 - b) Patagonia is in the Southern Hemisphere.
 - c) Patagonia is east of the international date line.
 - d) The Tehuelche named the seasons this way.
- 30.** As Europeans arrived in Patagonia, they
- a) introduced horses to the region.
 - b) contracted many of the diseases of the Tehuelche.
 - c) were overwhelmed by the abundance of guanaco and rhea.
 - d) honored their agreements with the inhabitants not to take their land.

Answers

Chapter 1: What Is a Desert?

1. **Where are the polar deserts?**

The polar deserts are in the Arctic and Antarctic region.

2. **How do most climatologists define the word desert?**

They define desert as a place where evaporation exceeds precipitation. Page 3

3. **Why do plants and animals use only a small percentage of rainwater in the desert?**

Deserts near the equator can be very hot. Deserts farther from the equator don't get the same scorching temperatures and can get freezing cold in winter.

4. **What feature do “hot” and “cold” deserts share?**

Both “hot” and “cold” deserts experience big changes between daytime and nighttime temperatures.

5. **How have some animals adapted to the desert?**

Some animals, such as the kangaroo rat, get moisture from seeds and plant leaves or can go long periods of time without drinking water. Some animals are nocturnal and/or burrow into the ground to escape the desert heat.

6. **How have people learned to adapt to the desert?**

They have learned to use irrigation to water crops. People have also learned to use technology to transport water from other places, as well as to use dams to store water for future use.

Chapter 2: Deserts of Africa

1. **How are camels suited for life in the Sahara?**

Their long legs keep their bodies high above the hot sand. Their stomachs hold a lot of water. Their humps contain fat that can be used for energy when there's not enough food.

2. **In addition to camels, what other animals can be found in the Sahara?**

Antelopes, gazelles, sheep, and fennec foxes all live in the Sahara. Distribute AP 2.2, Hot and Cool Facts About World Deserts. Explain that students will use this chart to record important details about the deserts described in each chapter. Have students work with a partner to fill in details about the Sahara, using what they have read so far in Chapter 2.

3. **How is the Kalahari different from the Sahara?**

Possible responses: It gets more rainfall and has more vegetation and wildlife than the Sahara. It's smaller than the Sahara.

4. **Who are the San? How did they adapt to life in the desert?**

They are a group of people who live in the Kalahari. They are sometimes called “Bushmen.” They adapted to life in the desert by learning how to find and save water.

5. **Why do you think the San decided to use ostrich eggs to store water?**

Possible responses: They used ostrich eggs because ostriches are common in their area. The San tested the eggs out to see whether they could hold water and learned that they could. Ostrich eggs are also very large. Activity Page

Chapter 3: Australia, a Dry Continent

1. **What vegetation is most common in the Australian desert?**

Scrub brush is the most common type of plant.

2. **Who are the Aboriginal peoples?**

They are people who have lived on the Australian continent for at least forty thousand years.

3. **How do frogs help the Aboriginal peoples survive in the desert?**

The frogs are a source of water for the Aboriginal peoples.

4. **What is the Outback? What kind of land is it?**

The Outback is the interior of Australia. It is mostly desert. An emu and its young search for food in the Outback.

5. **What is a billabong?**

It is a dry streambed that fills with water when it rains. Page 21

6. **How are kangaroos and other marsupials adapted for survival in the desert?**

Marsupials require less food than most other mammals. Kangaroos, for example, hop only on their two back legs, which takes less energy than running on four legs.

7. **What is “dreamtime”?**

According to Aboriginal myths, “dreamtime” is when the world was created.

8. **What are songlines?**

Songlines are Aboriginal songs that are used as maps of the land.

Chapter 4: Deserts of Asia

1. **The Gobi Desert is found in what countries?**

Mongolia and China

2. **Where is the Arabian Peninsula?**

It is between the Red Sea and the Persian Gulf, between the continents of Africa and Asia.

3. **What countries are located on the Arabian Peninsula?**

The Arabian Peninsula includes Yemen, Oman, Qatar, Bahrain, Kuwait, Saudi Arabia, the United Arab Emirates, and parts of Jordan and Iraq.

4. **What resources are available in the Arabian Peninsula?**

The peninsula is home to resources such as date trees and oil. Activity Page

Chapter 5: Deserts of North America

1. **Where is the Mojave Desert?**

The Mojave Desert is mainly in southeastern California and southern Nevada.

2. **What plant is most associated with the Mojave?**

A type of yucca called a Joshua tree is most associated with this desert. 46

3. **What is Death Valley?**

It is a national park and the most famous region of the Mojave Desert. It has the lowest elevation in the Western Hemisphere and is the driest place in the United States. It is also where the all-time high temperature was recorded.

4. **Where is the Sonoran Desert?**

It is in parts of Arizona, California, and northwestern Mexico.

5. **What is the Devil's Highway?**

It is a two-hundred mile trail through the desert. It did not have dependable water, and many travelers died along the trail in the 1800s.

6. **How is the western part of the Sonoran Desert different from the eastern part?**

The eastern part gets more rain. Ask students to take out Hot and Cool Facts About World Deserts (AP 2.2) and record information about the Sonoran Desert.

7. **Where is the Chihuahuan Desert located?**

It is to the south and east of the Sonoran Desert, stretching into New Mexico, West Texas, and parts of Mexico.

8. **What is one unique feature of the Chihuahuan Desert?**

One unique feature is the white sand dunes in New Mexico.

Chapter 6: Deserts of South America

1. **Where is Patagonia located?**

It is in southern Argentina.

2. **What landforms and waterways border Patagonia?**

Patagonia is bordered by the Andes Mountains to the west, the Atlantic Ocean to the east, the Rio Colorado to the north, and Tierra del Fuego to the south.

3. **Who are the Tehuelche?**

They are the native people of Patagonia.

4. **How did contact with European explorers change the life of the Tehuelche?**

Contact with European explorers brought the horse into Tehuelche culture. The Tehuelche became hunters on horseback, like the Plains peoples of North America.

5. **Where is the Atacama Desert located?**

It is located on the western coast of South America, between the Pacific Ocean and the Andes Mountains, from southern Peru into northern Chile.

6. **According to climatologists, what is special about the Atacama Desert?**

It is the oldest and the driest desert on Earth.

7. **What does NASA use the Atacama Desert for? Why?**

NASA uses it to test equipment that could be sent to Mars because of the desert's unique terrain.

8. **What landforms and other features are found in the Atacama Desert?**

The desert has stony landscapes, salt lakes, canyons, lava rock, and dunes. It has some cacti and grasses, but otherwise not very much grows there. Activity Page

Unit quiz key

1. c 2. c 3. a 4. a 5. b 6. a 7. c 8. d 9. b 10. b 11. a 12. d 13. b 14. c 15. d 16. d 17. c 18. b
19. a 20. b 21. a 22. c 23. d 24. d 25. d 26. b 27. d 28. b 29. b 30. a