



The Desert is Theirs: Adapting to Our Environment

How the environment affects our lifestyles is the focus of this engaging lesson.

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Grade Level	4-5
Duration	3 class periods

National Geography Standards

ELEMENT TWO: PLACES AND REGIONS

4. The physical and human characteristics of places.

ELEMENT FOUR: HUMAN SYSTEMS

12. The processes, patterns, and functions of human settlement.

ELEMENT FIVE: ENVIRONMENT AND SOCIETY

14. How human actions modify the physical environment.

15. How physical systems affect human systems.

Arizona Social Studies Standard

Grade 4 Strand 4 Geography Concept 5 Environment and Society

PO 1 Describe human dependence on the physical environment and natural resources to satisfy basic needs.

PO 3 Describe the impact of human modifications on the physical environment and ecosystems (e.g., dams, mining, air conditioning, irrigation, agricultural).

Grade 5 Strand 4 Geography Concept 5 Environment and Society

PO 1 Describe the ways European colonists and Native Americans viewed, adapted, and used the environment.

Arizona Language Arts Standards

READING STANDARD:

Grade 4 and 5¹

Strand 1 Reading Process

Concept 6 Comprehension Strategies

PO 1. Predict text content using prior knowledge and text features (e.g., illustrations, titles, topic sentences, key words).

PO 5. Connect information and events in text to life experiences and to related text and sources.

PO 6. Use reading strategies (e.g., drawing conclusions, determining cause and effect, making inferences, sequencing) to comprehend text.

Strand 2: Comprehending Literary Text

Concept 2: Historical and Cultural Aspects of Literature

PO 1. Describe the historical and cultural aspects found in cross-cultural works of literature.

Strand 3: Comprehending Informational Text

Concept 1: Expository Text

PO 1. Identify the main idea and supporting details in expository text.

PO 3. Determine author's main purpose (e.g., to inform, to describe, to explain) for writing the expository text.

PO 8. Draw valid conclusions based on information gathered from expository text.

WRITING STANDARD:

Grade 4 and 5

Strand 1 Writing Process

Concept 1 Prewriting

PO 1 Generate ideas through a variety of activities (e.g. brainstorming, graphic organizer, drawing, writer's notebook, group discussion, printed material)

Strand 2 Writing Elements

Concept 4 Word Choice

PO 2. Use descriptive words and phrases that energize the writing.

Strand 3 Writing Applications

Concept 1 Expressive

PO 1. Write a narrative based on imagined or real events, observations, or memories that includes:

- characters
- setting
- plot
- sensory details
- clear language
- logical sequence of events

The Desert is Theirs: Adapting to Our Environment

Overview

Using the book *The Desert is Theirs* by Byrd Baylor, students will come to understand how humans and animals adapt to their environments. After reading the book and writing their own stories, students will understand how humans and animals, both present and ancient, have adapted to their environments.

Purpose

The purpose of this lesson is to introduce students to the concept of human adaptation to the environment, and enable them to gain an understanding of how the environment helped shape the lifestyles of both ancient and modern peoples. Students will be introduced to the concept that where we live influences how we live.

Materials

- The book *The Desert is Theirs* by Byrd Baylor
- Paper and pencil
- Crayons
- Story Checklist

Objectives

The student will be able to:

- Determine how geography affects the way people live.
- Understand how the environment in which ancient peoples lived shaped their lifestyles just like the environment shapes lifestyles today.

Procedures

Prerequisite Skills: Students should know that ancient people lived in cliff dwellings and caves. They should also be familiar with the irrigation systems of the Hohokam.

1. Prior to reading the story, brainstorm with the students how man adapts to his/her environment. Use examples of cliff dwellers who lived in the caves and pioneers who lived in sod houses on the prairie.

2. Read the story *The Desert is Theirs* by Byrd Baylor. Ask the students questions about the story, such as:

- Why do you think Byrd Baylor wrote this book?

- What words does the author use to describe the desert?
- Do you think people still make decisions about where they live because of what is around them?
- Can you tell what the author thinks about the desert by what she writes?
- Thinking back to what we have learned about the ancient people of Arizona, how did they use their environment to build houses?
- What kinds of things do you think are different between the way people live today from the way people lived in the past?"

3. Brainstorm some descriptive words that will enable students to form mental pictures of various Arizona landscapes. You can also give the students story starters such as:

- If I lived in the mountains, I would live in a ...
- I live in a cave because ...
- The very best place to live is ...
- I would live in a tree if ...

4. Students write a narrative using themselves in a story similar to *The Desert is Theirs*. They should describe the area where they live or a part of Arizona about which they have read or visited. They should check their work by using the student checklist to make sure this is their best effort.

5. Share or display students' stories.

Assessment

Students will be scored using the six-trait writing rubric for voice, conventions, and ideas/content. The voice and conventions traits will be used to assess the writing part of the lesson. The ideas/content trait will be used to assess the geography part of the lesson. Mastery will be considered a score of 4 or higher. Teacher can use the questions from the procedure section as an assessment of reading skills.

Extensions

Students can pretend to be a child from one of the ancient tribes and write a poem or story describing their environment or landscape around them.

Sources

Baylor, B. (1981). *The Desert is Theirs*. New York: Simon and Schuster. ISBN 06897110