



# When is a Desert Not a Desert? The Varying Landscapes of Arizona

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**Grade Level** 3  
**Duration** 1-2 class periods

## National Standards

### **GEOGRAPHY Element One: The World in Spatial Terms**

1. How to use maps and other geographic representations, geospatial technologies, and spatial thinking to understand and communicate information

### **Element Two: Places and Regions**

4. The physical and human characteristics of places  
5. People create regions to interpret Earth's complexity

### **Element Three: Physical Systems:**

8. The characteristics and distribution of ecosystems and biomes on Earth's surface

## AZ Standards

### **ELA**

#### **Reading**

#### **Key Ideas and Details**

**3.RI.1** Ask and answer questions to demonstrate understanding of a text, referring explicitly to the text as the basis for the answers.

#### **Range of Reading and Level of Text Complexity**

**3.RI.10** By the end of the year, proficiently and independently read and comprehend informational texts, including history/social studies, science, and technical texts, in a text complexity range determined by qualitative and quantitative measures appropriate to grade 3.

## Arizona Social Science Standards

### **GEOGRAPHY**

**The use of geographic representations and tools helps individuals understand their world.**

**3.G1.1** Use and construct maps and graphs to represent changes in Arizona over time.

Key concepts include but are not limited to locating physical features including the Grand Canyon, Mogollon Rim, Colorado River, Salt River, Gila River Key concepts include but are not limited to locating human features including major cities, counties, Hoover Dam, Roosevelt Dam, and state capital Key concepts include but are not limited to distinct physical and cultural characteristics of Arizona including landforms, the 5C's, climate zones, elevations, plants, animals, Arizona's 22 Indian Nations, diverse ethnic, racial, and religious cultures

## Overview

Arizona has a variety of landscapes. Unfortunately, many people think Arizona is just one huge desert. In fact, Arizona has six different biomes, so one can explore woodlands, grasslands, deserts and even tundra.

## Purpose

In this lesson students will gain a better understanding of the varying landscapes of Arizona by creating a biomes map.

## Materials

- When Is A Desert Not A Desert? reading
- Biomes Summary of Arizona Chart
- Region Charts
  - Desert
  - Chaparral
  - Grassland
  - Woodland
  - Forest
  - Tundra
- Arizona Biomes Map Work

## When is a Desert Not a Desert? The Varying Landscapes of Arizona

- Arizona Biomes Assessment and Answer Key
- Landform Regions of Arizona map (labeled)
- Arizona Biomes map (labeled and unlabeled)
- Colored pencils
- Scoring Guide for Map Work

### Objectives

The students will be able to:

1. Identify the three landform regions of Arizona.
2. Identify the six biomes found in Arizona.
3. Analyze charts to gain geographic information.
4. Create a map that locates and identifies the six biomes found in Arizona.
5. Create a map that locates and identifies the 3 landform regions of Arizona.
6. Spell words correctly when copying them from other sources.

### Procedures

1. Distribute the Landform Regions of Arizona map <http://geoalliance.asu.edu/sites/default/files/maps/az-landfrm-blank.pdf> and colored pencils to students. Introduce the lesson by having students discuss their favorite part of Arizona with a partner. They should name the place and locate it on the map (if they can) and then state why they like this place. Have a few students share their responses with the whole class.
2. Project the When Is A Desert Not A Desert? Reading. Read as a class or individually.
3. Project the Landform Regions of Arizona map that has the three deserts located and labeled (in red). Distribute the Arizona Biomes Map Work worksheet. Instruct students to complete activity 1 by using a red colored pencil to write the three deserts on their copies of the Landform Regions of Arizona map. Allow students to see the projected version of the same map so they can locate the deserts and spell the names correctly.
4. Now project the Biomes Chart on Desert Region. Discuss the plants that would be found there, what the climate is like, and elevation for these three deserts.
5. Continue to project, read, and discuss the Biomes Charts for Chaparral, Grassland, and Woodland regions.
6. Project the map found at [https://www.fs.usda.gov/Internet/FSE\\_DOCUME](https://www.fs.usda.gov/Internet/FSE_DOCUME)

[NTS/stelprdb5382127.pdf](https://www.fs.usda.gov/Internet/FSE_DOCUMENTS/stelprdb5382127.pdf) Have students refer to their Arizona Biomes Map Work worksheet to see the list of national forests found in Arizona that they should locate and color. Tell the students to locate these national forests on their Landform Regions of Arizona map, color the areas green, and label the forests with their names spelled correctly. Then project the Biome Chart for Forest region. Read and discuss the forest chart.

7. Continue to project, read and discuss the last biome, Tundra.
8. Distribute the Arizona Biomes map to students. [http://geoalliance.asu.edu/sites/default/files/maps/AZ\\_biomes\\_only.pdf](http://geoalliance.asu.edu/sites/default/files/maps/AZ_biomes_only.pdf)
9. Project the color (labeled) copy of the map. [http://geoalliance.asu.edu/sites/default/files/maps/AZ\\_biomes\\_web.pdf](http://geoalliance.asu.edu/sites/default/files/maps/AZ_biomes_web.pdf)
10. Have students refer to the Arizona Biomes Map Work worksheet and color in the six biomes according to the map projected. Remind students to color in the corresponding Color Keys.
11. Now have students locate the requested plants by drawing a picture/symbol for the plant on the map where this plant will be found and then drawing the same picture/symbol in the Picture Keys.
12. Distribute the Arizona Biomes Assessment and the Biomes Summary of Arizona Chart. Allow students to use their maps and the summary chart to answer the questions.

### Assessment

#### Geography and ELA

The Arizona Biomes Assessment can be graded for reading comprehension, spelling, and geography knowledge. Mastery will be considered 80% or higher.

#### Geography

The Landform Regions of Arizona map and the Arizona Biomes map can be graded using the Scoring Guide for Map Work. A score of 40 points or higher will be seen as mastery.

### Sources

- Lowe, Charles H. *Arizona's Natural Environment*. Tucson, Arizona the University of Arizona Press. 1985.
- Palmquist, Robert. *Arizona*. New York. MacMillan Publishing Company 1990.
- Wagoner, Jay. *Arizona*. Salt Lake City. Peregrine Smith Book.