



The Desert is Theirs: Adapting to Our Environment

How the environment affects our lifestyle 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 FIVE: ENVIRONMENT AND SOCIETY

14. How human actions modify the physical environment.
15. How physical systems affect human systems.

Arizona Geography Strand

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 Other Standards

Strand 1 American History Grade 4

Concept 2 Early Civilizations

PO 2. Describe the cultures and contributions of the Mogollon, Anasazi (Ancestral Pueblos), and Hohokam (e.g., location, agriculture, housing, arts, trade networks; adaptation and alteration of the environment).

Grade 5

Concept 3: Exploration and Colonization

PO 1. Recognize that Native American tribes resided throughout North America before the period of European exploration and colonization.

ELA Common Core Standards

Reading

Informational Text

Key Ideas and Details

4.RI.1 Refer to details and examples in a text when explaining what the text says explicitly and when drawing inferences from the text.

5.RI.1 Quote accurately from a text when explaining what the text says explicitly and when drawing inferences from the text.

Writing

Text Types and Purposes

4.W.3 Write narratives to develop real or imagined experiences or events using effective technique, descriptive details, and clear event sequences.

- Orient the reader by establishing a situation and introducing a narrator and/or characters; organize an event sequence that unfolds naturally.
- Use dialogue and description to develop experiences and events or show the responses of characters to situations.
- Use a variety of transitional words and phrases to manage the sequence of events.

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- d. Use concrete words and phrases and sensory details to convey experiences and events precisely.
- e. Provide a conclusion that follows from the narrated experiences or events.

5.W.3 Write narratives to develop real or imagined experiences or events using effective technique, descriptive details, and clear event sequences.

- a. Orient the reader by establishing a situation and introducing a narrator and/or characters; organize an event sequence that unfolds naturally.
- b. Use narrative techniques, such as dialogue, description, and pacing, to develop experiences and events or show the responses of characters to situations.
- c. Use a variety of transitional words, phrases, and clauses to manage the sequence of events.
- d. Use concrete words and phrases and sensory details to convey experiences and events precisely.
- e. Use concrete words and phrases and sensory details to convey experiences and events precisely.

Language

Conventions of Standard English

4.L.2 Demonstrate command of the conventions of standard English capitalization, punctuation, and spelling when writing.

- a. Use correct capitalization.
- b. Use commas and quotation marks to mark direct speech and quotations from a text.
- c. Use a comma before a coordinating conjunction in a compound sentence.
- d. Spell grade-appropriate words correctly, consulting references as needed.

5.L.2 Demonstrate command of the conventions of standard English capitalization, punctuation, and spelling when writing.

- a. Use punctuation to separate items in a series.
- b. Use a comma to separate an introductory element from the rest of the sentence.
- c. Use a comma to set off the words yes and no (e.g., Yes, thank you), to set off a tag question from the rest of the sentence (e.g., It's true, isn't it?), and to indicate direct address (e.g., Is that you, Steve?).
- d. Use underlining, quotation marks, or italics to indicate titles of works.
- e. Spell grade-appropriate words correctly, consulting references as needed.

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, both ancient and modern, adapt to their environments.

Purpose

In this lesson, students will learn 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