

## **Desertification Student Work Sample**

In Africa, there are many regions, such as the Sahara, Sahel, rainforests, deserts and savannas. Our concern today is in the Sahel. The Sahel is located in Africa, south of the Sahara and north of the savanna. In Arabic, the word Sahel means, "border". The Sahel acts as a border for keeping the Sahara and the savanna separate.

The Sahel is in danger of a problem called "desertification", which means the desert is spreading into a once productive grassland area. The Sahel could disappear and become part of the Sahara. Thirty four percent of Africa's land is in danger of this overwhelming phenomenon.

The Sahel has lost thirty percent of its trees over the last 20 years due to desertification. Also in the past 20 years many villages in the Sahel have lost up to one-half of their farmland. Some of the damage of desertification is due to nomads bringing their herds through the Sahel, poor conservation, evaporation, drought, sandstorms, ergs, and trees and shrubs being cut down.

Overgrazing means "the process in which livestock herds feed excessively on grasslands to the point that the land is stripped bare". This is exactly the problem contributing to desertification in the Sahel. Overgrazing is a problem because the nomadic herders bring their herds and let them trample the grass and shrubs causing the topsoil to become loose and blow away causing erosion. One way that will make things grow again is irrigation, flooding farmland with water. Evaporation is a problem because the sun dries up the water that may be in the Sahel.

Some solutions include farmers confining grazing animals to fenced areas and bringing the animals their food and water. In Niger, there is 435 miles of windbreak to prevent sand from blowing in with the wind and to protect seedlings from blowing away. Mali, Niger and Burkina Faso have national campaigns to replace current cookware with clay and metal cookware in every home. People in Ethiopia are planting hundreds of trees and people in Kenya are terracing their farmland stop prevent erosion. These solutions eventually should help prevent desertification.