

Lesson 8

The Desert

All the words in this lesson may be associated with the desert.

absorb V. to soak up or take in (A cactus will *absorb* water from the ground or the air and store it in its thick stem.)

destruction N. great damage or ruin (Heavy rains filled the river beds and caused the *destruction* of many bridges.)

drought N. a long period of no rain; very dry weather (By August, the long *drought* had made the meadow look brown and dry.)

cacti N. plural form of cactus, a desert plant with sharp spines or thorns. (Many *cacti* bloomed in the desert after the spring rains.)

cluster N. items of the same kind that are grouped or that grow together (There were five blossoms in each *cluster* of cactus flowers.)

erode V. to wear away gradually (When there is no moisture in the ground, the wind can *erode* the soil by blowing away the dusty top layer of dirt.)

evaporate V. to change from a liquid or a solid into a gas (A puddle of rain water in the desert will *evaporate* quickly and leave the ground dry and hard.)

extract V. to take out or pull out (The doctor had to use tweezers to *extract* the cactus thorn from the boy's finger.)

frugal ADJ. using things wisely; not wasteful (He was *frugal* with his water on the hike and only drank small amounts when he was thirsty.)

precipitation N. moisture in the form of rain or snow (Because there is very little *precipitation* in the desert, only plants that will grow in dry soil can survive.)

prey N. an animal hunted by another animal for food (Catching the rabbit in its jaws, the desert fox began to eat its *prey*.)

prickly ADJ. having many sharp points or thorns (People who touch a *prickly* cactus are often scratched by thorns.)

protect V. guard from harm or danger (We must *protect* the beauty of our deserts for future generations to enjoy.)

pulpy ADJ. spongy and moist (He chewed the *pulpy* inside of the cactus stem to squeeze out the liquid that it held.)

spines N. sharp, pointed growth on a plant or animal (Most animals will not eat a cactus because of the sharp *spines* that cover the plant.)

swoop V. to sweep down upon in a sudden attack (The great horned owl will *swoop* down from the sky to catch small mice on the ground.)

topsoil N. the top or upper part of the soil (Many small plants grow in the sandy *topsoil* of the desert.)

unusual ADJ. uncommon; not ordinary (Desert plants and wildlife may seem *unusual* to people who live in the Midwest.)

variety N. a number of different kinds (The desert supports many types of plants along with a large *variety* of wildlife.)

vegetation N. plant life (The desert has very little *vegetation* because few plants will grow where it is so dry.)

Exercise 1

Write the letter of the word that best completes the sentence.

1. The hungry coyote chased its _____ through the hot desert.

A. cacti B. prey C. destruction D. spines

2. Heavy rains caused the river banks to _____ and wash away.

A. absorb B. evaporate C. swoop D. erode

Name _____

Date _____

3. Because of the _____, water was scarce and the animals became thirsty.
A. spines B. drought C. topsoil D. vegetation _____
4. Hikers watched the hawk _____ down and snatch the jackrabbit in its claws.
A. swoop B. evaporate C. protect D. absorb _____
5. In spring, you see many different colors in the desert because of the great _____ of wild flowers.
A. topsoil B. cacti C. variety D. destruction _____
6. Because we were _____ during the winter, we were able to save enough money for our desert trip.
A. prickly B. unusual C. pulpy D. frugal _____
7. Water will not _____ if it is stored in a canteen.
A. evaporate B. absorb C. erode D. extract _____
8. Some plants can _____ water in the air through their leaves.
A. swoop B. protect C. absorb D. erode _____
9. The scientists examined the desert _____ looking for signs of plant life.
A. cacti B. topsoil C. drought D. variety _____
10. When the _____ are all in bloom, the desert is a colorful place.
A. prey B. topsoil C. spines D. cacti _____

Exercise 2

Write the letter of the word that most nearly has the *same* meaning as the italicized word.

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| 11. <i>prickly</i> | A. sharp | B. smooth | C. dull | D. loud | _____ |
| 12. <i>precipitation</i> | A. wind | B. growth | C. rain | D. noise | _____ |
| 13. <i>destruction</i> | A. heat | B. solution | C. filling | D. wreck | _____ |
| 14. <i>vegetation</i> | A. weather | B. plants | C. soil | D. animals | _____ |
| 15. <i>pulpy</i> | A. thin | B. long | C. sharp | D. soft | _____ |
| 16. <i>unusual</i> | A. common | B. small | C. bare | D. rare | _____ |
| 17. <i>cluster</i> | A. group | B. fence | C. flower | D. weed | _____ |
| 18. <i>spines</i> | A. stems | B. thorns | C. twigs | D. trees | _____ |
| 19. <i>extract</i> | A. add | B. bite | C. remove | D. improve | _____ |
| 20. <i>protect</i> | A. guard | B. bite | C. run | D. waste | _____ |