

TEACHERS ACTIVITIES

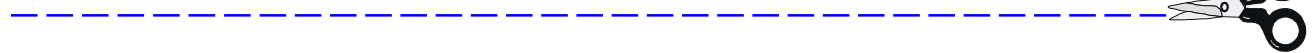


Theme:

The best way to dispel fears about the unknown is to find the truth about someone or something.

Topics For Discussion:

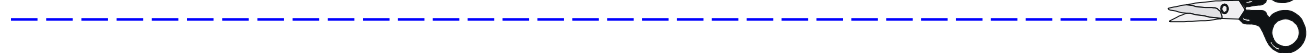
Invite students to share their experiences with moving. Talk about the mixed feelings of being sad and excited at the same time. What are the best, and worst, things about moving?



Both boys in the story had misconceptions about where they were moving. Ask students how they think the boys got those misconceptions. Talk about any inaccurate ideas the students might have had about something and then learned what was actually true.



The biologist in the program explains how plants and animals adapt to desert life. Discuss with students what it means to “adapt.” Will the two boys in the story adapt to their new communities? Why or why not? Discuss how people often need to figure out ways to adapt to their surroundings just as animals and plants do.



Invite students to share any experiences they have had with traveling in an airplane. What can a person *really* find at an airport?

Curriculum Extension Activities:

Have students research plants and animals of the American southwestern desert to make a desert alphabet book. With the help of the school library media specialist, make available nonfiction books about the desert. Write the alphabet on the board and as the students find plants and animals for the letters, write the words next to each letter. Decide who will be responsible for each page and allow students to choose what they will put on the pages. They will need to include information and draw pictures. Bind the pages into a book for the classroom library.

On a large map of the United States, depending on your geographical location, find “Out West” and “Back East.” Also, locate “Down South” and “Up North.” Discuss how these names probably originated.



Set up a chart for both of the boys in the story. Title the charts “Home Sweet Home.” Divide the charts into two columns. On the chart for the boy moving west, head one column “Out West” and the other column “Home in New York.” On the other boy’s chart, head one column “Back East” and the other column “Home in the West.” Ask students to recall details from the story to complete both charts.



Divide the class into four groups and give each group a directional name—North, South, East, and West. Have each group brainstorm a list of characteristics of their respective locations, such as what people do there, the types of homes they have, animals, the climate, etc. Display the lists and then take the students to the library media center to find information about states within their directional area. Have the groups modify their lists as needed when they return to the classroom and prepare a travel poster inviting visitors to their area (e.g., “Welcome to the West”).



Have students work in small groups to role play how to welcome a new student to the classroom and to the neighborhood. After the groups have had a chance to plan and practice their scenes, allow them to present their dramatizations to the whole class. Discuss what the scenes have in common, i.e., what is important to remember when someone new moves in?



Send home a map of the United States with the states outlined and labeled. Have students work with their families to color states that correspond to these two items: States Where I’ve Lived and States I Have Visited. Instruct them to use two colors—one for each item. Have students return the maps to school. Place a large map of the United States on a bulletin board and choose a color for marking states visited and one for states lived in. Have students use the two colors to make small nametags that can be fastened to straight pins. Using their own U.S. maps as guides, have them place the pins in the appropriate states.

Set up keypals with a classroom in a geographical location that is very different from your own. Exchange information about the school and school activities, the community (its size, what it's known for, famous landmarks, etc.), the weather, plants and animals in the area, and other information that distinguishes the two areas. Take the class on a walking tour or field trip to photograph places in the community and the surrounding area. Scan the photographs into the computer or take the pictures with a digital camera and load them directly, and then e-mail them to your keypals.



Watch the **Reading Rainbow** program, *Raccoons and Ripe Corn*, in which naturalist and author/illustrator Jim Arnosky shows how to determine that different animals have been in wooded areas and near lakes and streams. Compare and contrast the types of animals with those found in a desert habitat. Also compare his tips for wildlife watching with those given by the biologist in *Gila Monsters Meet You at the Airport*.

SUPPLEMENTARY BOOKLIST:

WE ARE BEST FRIENDS
by Aiki (Greenwillow)

GOOD-BYE, HOUSE
by Robin Ballard (Greenwillow)

DESERTS
by Gail Gibbons (Holiday House)

GOOD-BYE/HELLO
by Barbara Shook Hazen, illus. by Michael Bryant (Atheneum)

MOVING MOLLY
by Shirley Hughes (Lothrop, Lee & Shepard)

A DESERT SCRAPBOOK
by Virginia Wright-Frierson (Simon & Schuster)

DESERT TRIP

by Barbara A. Steiner, illus. by Ronald Himler (Sierra Club Books for Children)

NO FRIENDS

by James Stevenson (Greenwillow)

ALEXANDER, WHO'S NOT (DO YOU HEAR ME? I MEAN IT!) GOING TO MOVE

by Judith Viorst, illus. by Robin Preiss-Glasser (Atheneum)

IRA SAYS GOODBYE

by Bernard Waber (Houghton Mifflin)

Distributed by:



P.O. Box 80669
Lincoln, NE 68501-0669
Phone: 800-228-4630
Fax: 800-306-2330
Email: gpn@unl.edu
Web site: gpn.unl.edu

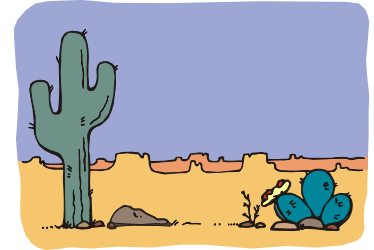
Trying Drying



Key Words: desert, evaporation

Concept: Deserts have a high rate of evaporation.

Not only are deserts places that get very little water, they are also places where the rate of evaporation is high, so whatever rain might fall doesn't stay around very long. Explore conditions that increase evaporation.



Materials: Water, paper towels, student desks or tables, thin soft-cover books, two similar wide-mouth jars, rubber bands, area with direct sunlight, area away from sunlight.

1. Ask students to use a wet paper towel to dampen two spots on opposite corners of their desk.

2. Have them fan one corner of their desk with a book and compare the rate of drying on that side with the other. What happened? (*The side that was fanned dried faster, because the moving air carried away the water, which is what happens in evaporation. The other side of the desk dried slower because the air above it was still, so the moisture wasn't carried away as quickly.*)

Explain that wind, which is moving air, is a condition that increases evaporation in the desert.

3. Next have students fill two similar jars with the same amount of water. Use rubber bands to mark the water level on each jar. Have them place one jar in direct sunlight, such as near an east-facing window, and the other in a place away from direct sunlight. Check to make sure that both jars are away from a heat source such as a radiator. Ask students to predict what will happen to the water in each jar.

4. For the next several days, have them use additional rubber bands to mark the new water levels on each jar. Ask them to identify which jar is losing water faster. Ask them to explain why. (*The jar in the direct sunlight is losing water faster. Direct sunlight and heat are other*

conditions that increase water evaporation in the desert.)

No Loss

Key Words: reptiles, body coverings, skin, condensation

Concept: People, unlike reptiles, lose water through their skin.



Because water is so scarce in deserts, animals that live there have special adaptations to help them conserve body moisture. One characteristic that makes Gila monsters and other reptiles well adapted to desert life is their thick scaly skin. This skin holds in moisture and, as a result, less water is lost through their skin than that of people and other mammals.

Materials: Metal spoons, clear plastic bags (sandwich size or larger), tape.

1. Have students blow onto the back surface of a shiny, dry, metal spoon. What happens? (*The surface of the spoon becomes foggy because moisture or water from their breath has condensed on the spoon.*) Explain that each time we breathe out we lose some water from inside our bodies. Gila monsters and other reptiles also lose water when they breathe. Many animals do. However, as mentioned in this episode, reptiles do not lose water through their skin.

2. Have students place their non-writing hand in a plastic bag. Then wrap a piece of tape over the bag at the wrist to seal the bag closed. Be sure that the bags are large enough so students can open their hands and that the tape is snug but not tight.

3. Tell students to look closely at the appearance of the inside of the bag. (*The bag should appear clear.*) Ask how the skin on their hand feels. (*The skin will likely feel dry and smooth.*) Have them go about their normal tasks.

4. After 15 minutes, ask them to look closely at the inside of the bags. (*They should see some moisture condensation similar to that on the spoon.*) Ask them to describe how the skin on their hands feel. (*They may say that it feels wet, sticky, or clammy.*) Why do they think this has happened? (*The moisture they see has come through their skin.*)

Science Note: People and other land mammals constantly lose water from their bodies in this way. Wearing long pants and long-sleeved shirts, as LeVar mentioned in this episode, not only helps protect a person from sunburn, it also helps conserve body moisture. The clothes keep the air above the skin still, and this decreases the rate of skin moisture evaporation. Reptiles lose less water because of their dry, scaly skin.

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