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The Desert

SUMMARY OF THE LESSON

A desert is generally a place without water and vegetation. The popular belief is that it is an area of endless sand with no greenery, dry, hot and without shade. But this belief is not all correct. The desert can be a beautiful place, a home of many people, animals and plants. When it rains, desert flowers bloom.

A desert is not just a sandy wasteland. It may have mountains and even a greenland, called oasis. An oasis takes shape around a spring or well. A desert may be hot like the Thar or cold like Ladakh. Strong winds raise heaps of sand and deposit them as mounds. These are called sand dunes.

All living things including plants and animals, need water to survive. But desert creatures and plants require less water than green land plants. Camels can do without water for days together. The reason is that they sweat very little. Human beings sweat when it gets hot. The sweat cools the body. Camels can stand high body temperature.

The smaller desert plants, such as cactus store water in their thick stems. They quickly absorb moisture even from the light rains.

The major feature of all deserts is dryness and variations in temperature. Since there is no moisture in the air, the desert heats up rapidly during the day and also cools off rapidly at night.

Deserts have their own importance. They are part of nature's plan. One should not call them useless.

TEXTBOOK QUESTIONS SOLVED

COMPREHENSION CHECK

(Page 16)

1. From the first paragraph

- (i) pick out two phrases which describe the desert as most people believe it is;
- (ii) Pick out two phrases which describe the desert as specialists see it.

Which do you think is an apt description, and why?

- Ans.** (i) an endless stretch of sand; waterless and without shelter.
- (ii) a beautiful place; the home of a variety of people, animals and plants

Description (ii) is apt. Human experience tells us so.

2. The phrases on the left in the following box occur in the text. Match each of them with a phrase on the right.

(i) an endless stretch of land	• fertile place with water and plants in a desert
(ii) waterless and without shelter	• not visible because the grass is thick
(iii) an oasis	• nothing but sand as far as one can see
(iv) hidden by a cover of grass	• no water and no shade

- Ans.** (i) an endless stretch of land – nothing but sand as far as one can see.
- (ii) waterless and without shelter – not water and not shade
- (iii) an oasis – fertile place with water and plants in a desert
- (iv) hidden by a cover of grass – not visible because the grass is thick.

COMPREHENSION CHECK (Page 19)

1. A camel can do without water for days together. What is the reason given in the text?

Ans. The reason is that the camel sweats very little. It can therefore retain the water it drinks for long periods of time.

2. How do the smaller desert animals fulfil their need for water?

Ans. The smaller desert animals spend the day in the underground burrows to escape the heat. Some of them eat other animals and get the water they need from the moisture in the meat. Others eat plants and get the water they need from plant juices.

3. In a desert the temperature rises during the day and falls rapidly at night. Why?

Ans. In humid climates, the air has moisture that protects the earth's surface from the heat of the sun. Since deserts have no moisture cover, they heat up rapidly during the day and cool off rapidly at night.

EXERCISE**(Page 19)**

Do the following activities in group:

1. Describe a desert in your own way. Write a paragraph and read it aloud to your classmates.

Ans. A desert is usually a dry, hot and horrifying place. That is why only the nomads and camels in a small number live there. Of course, there are green patches also near the water spring. These places are called oases. The deserts occupy vast areas. In India the hot desert of Rajasthan can also be turned into fertile agricultural land provided we take water over there through canals.

2. Go to the library and collect information about the lifestyle of people in desert areas- their food, clothes, work, social customs, etc. Show this information with the group.

Ans. The nomads are homeless people in desert areas. They

keep shifting to places where they can get food and fodder. Their life is very hard. They use camels for transportation. They eat mainly meat and dates. They weave their clothes from the wool of camel or sheep. Their life style is very simple. They look to the sky for rain water. They have developed their own customs.

**SUMMARY OF THE LESSON**

Summary of the lesson: The desert is a very hot and dry place. The temperature rises during the day and falls rapidly at night. The animals in the desert have adapted to these conditions. Camels can go without water for days together. Smaller animals get water from the moisture in their food or from the ground. The nomads live a hard life, shifting from place to place in search of food and water. They use camels for transportation and have developed their own customs.

Exercise: Describe a desert in your own way. Write a paragraph and read it aloud to your classmates. The desert is usually a dry, hot and horrifying place. That is why only the nomads and camels in a small number live there. Of course, there are green patches also near the water spring. These places are called oases. The deserts occupy vast areas. In India the hot desert of Rajasthan can also be turned into fertile agricultural land provided we take water over there through canals.