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Desert Dwelling

CONNECTIONS

Literature Connection—*Holes* by Louis Sachar

Holes is a fiction book about a young man sent to a detention center in the middle of the desert. The story will appeal to students because it is a mystery and its theme focuses on children building relationships with others.

Content Connection—Desert Habitat

Desert Dwelling introduces students to the desert environment. Students have an opportunity to think about what it would be like to live in a desert, as a human or an animal.

OBJECTIVE

Students will organize information to find the main idea and supporting details.

VOCABULARY

1. Introduce the key vocabulary words from the script. Write each word on the board.
2. Describe the meaning of each word and point out its use in the script.
3. Help students understand how each vocabulary word is used. Read the first vocabulary word. Then use it in several sentences that show the meaning of the word, using examples that students will be able to connect to their background knowledge. Repeat this activity with the remaining vocabulary words.
 - **desert**—a region of land lacking water or moisture, receiving usually less than seven inches of precipitation per year
 - **adapted**—to become adjusted to a circumstance, situation, or environment
 - **environment**—the internal and external conditions that affect an organism’s growth, existence, and welfare
 - **habitat**—the region where a species lives; its natural environment

BEFORE THE READER’S THEATER

1. Read the title of the script. Ask students to make predictions about this script. Is it fiction or nonfiction? Why do they think so?
2. Read the script aloud, modeling appropriate reading strategies while you read. To help build fluency and comprehension, it is important for students to hear the script read aloud before practicing on their own.

Desert Dwelling *(cont.)*

DURING THE READER'S THEATER

1. Divide the class into groups of five to read and practice the script.
2. Students need to decide which character they will play and then highlight their parts in the script (Readers 1–5). They should also mark with a star any places where they need to pause while reading.
3. Give students a few minutes to practice reading with expression in their voices. Additionally, students may decide on a few props or materials to use during their reading. They need to use materials that can be easily acquired or assembled in the classroom.
4. After they have finished practicing, have each group perform the reader's theater for the rest of the class. You may also want them to perform for another class.

AFTER THE READER'S THEATER

1. Display the Main Idea and Supporting Details graphic organizer (page 76 or mainidea.pdf). Help students determine the main idea by offering three options to choose from, such as the following: How to enjoy living in the desert; The desert isn't as dry as you think it is; Both animals and people adapt to living in the desert.
2. Have students find details in the script to support the main ideas they choose and fill in the graphic organizer appropriately.
3. Either complete the organizer as a class or have each student complete his or her own copy independently.

RESPONSE QUESTIONS

Group Discussion Questions

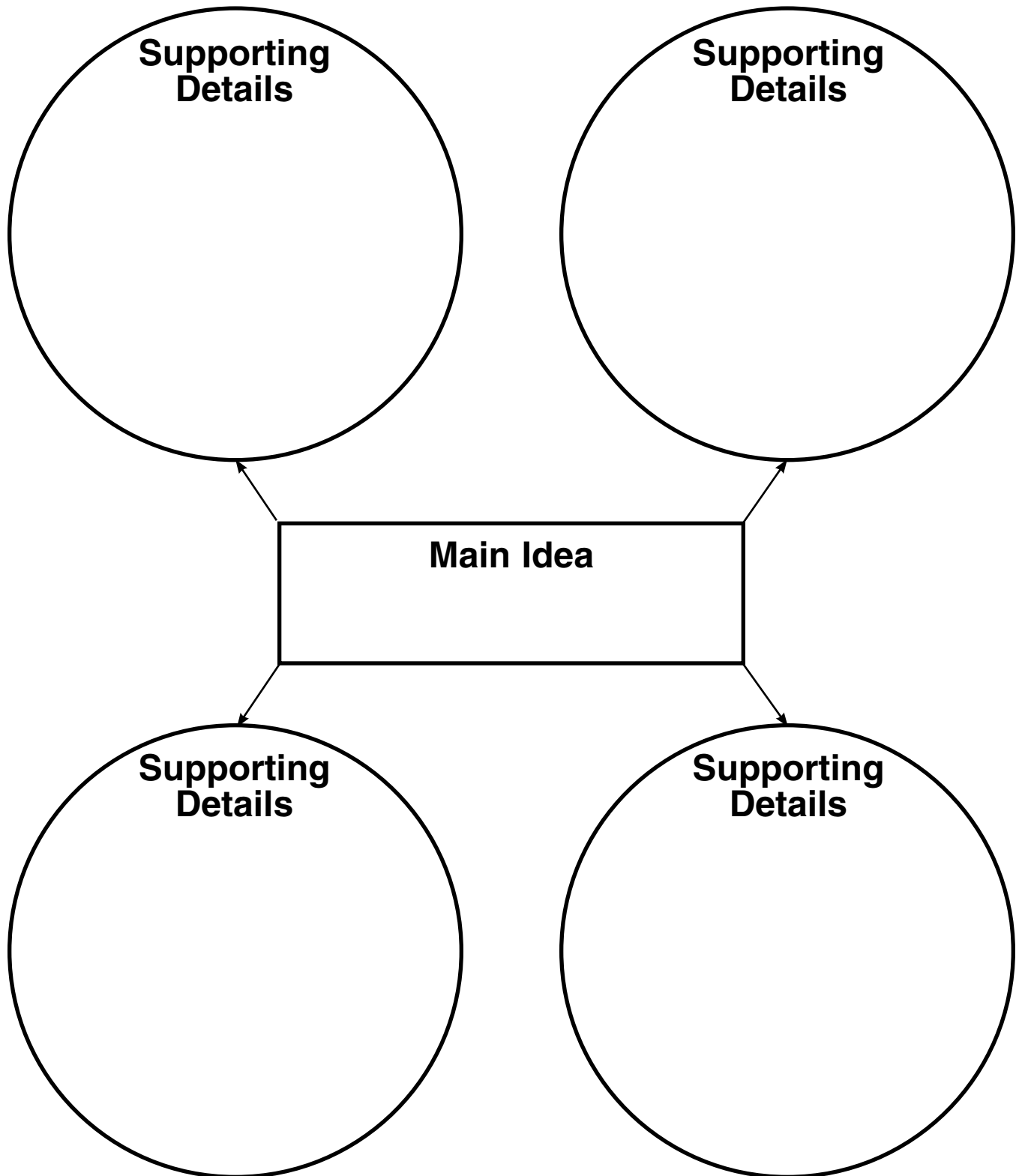
- Have you been to the desert before?
- What types of creatures would you expect to see in the desert?
- How can we find out what other creatures from the desert survive without much water?

Written Response Question

- Would you like to live in the desert? Use details to describe why or why not.

Name _____ Date _____

Main Idea and Supporting Details



Desert Dwelling

BY MELISSA A. SETTLE

A reader's theater with five parts



Reader 2: Has anyone ever been to the desert?

Reader 3: Yes. I've been to Phoenix, Arizona.

Reader 1: I've been to Grants, New Mexico.

Reader 4: No, I've never been to the desert. What is it like?

Reader 5: Deserts are dry.

Reader 1: That's true. The definition of a desert is it can only average seven or fewer inches of rain a year.

Reader 3: What about temperature?

Reader 4: A desert must be hot, right?

Reader 5: No, not always. Some deserts can be very cool, especially at night.

Reader 2: Many people who visit the desert are surprised by the weather. It can get very hot during the day and then very chilly at night.

Reader 4: I think that nighttime in the desert is scary.

Reader 5: Are you afraid of all the animals that come out at night?

Reader 2: Many desert animals like to hunt at night instead of during the heat of the day.

Desert Dwelling (cont.)

Reader 3: When I lived in the desert, I wanted to stay inside during the day also. It was too hot to go outside.

Reader 1: At night when it cooled off, that was the time to go outside.

Reader 5: Weren't you afraid of stepping on a rattlesnake or something?

Reader 1: Yes, my parents always warned me to slow down and look carefully at where I was stepping or putting my hands.

Reader 4: What other kinds of animals live in the desert?

Reader 2: All kinds of wildlife can live in a desert.

Reader 3: Most of the animals that live in the desert have adapted to their environment.

Reader 5: They have adapted because they either store water or they know how to find it in unusual places.

Reader 3: The gila monster stores water in its tail.

Reader 5: The tail grows big and fat when it is filled with water.

Reader 1: Then the gila monster absorbs the liquid stored in its tail and can last for a longer period of time without having to find water.

Reader 2: The desert tortoise stores water also.

Reader 5: All desert animals have adjusted in one way or another to their habitat.

Desert Dwelling (cont.)

Reader 3: Even the plants know how to store water. They usually grow either very small leaves or spines instead of leaves.

Reader 1: That way the plants prevent water from evaporating from their leaves.

Reader 4: I always wondered why so many desert plants have thorns and spines.

Reader 5: Well, now you know. But another reason plants have spines and thorns is for protection.

Reader 2: Because there are so few green plants for animals to eat, many plants have thorns and spines to help protect themselves.

Reader 3: Protect themselves from what?

Reader 1: From hungry, thirsty animals.

Reader 4: If it's so hot and dry in the desert, then why do people move there?

Reader 2: I think that people love the desert because it's beautiful in its own way.

Reader 1: The sunsets are beautiful.

Reader 3: The desert often has little bits of dust in the sky and that makes the sunset a very bright orange or red.

Reader 5: I think that people love the desert because it's a unique, beautiful environment.