



US Desert Wall Mural

Introduction

In *Around One Cactus: Owls, Bats and Leaping Rats* author Anthony Fredericks describes the ecosystem around the Saguaro Cactus in the Sonoran Desert. In this activity, students describe and map out the different desert regions of the United States. Differences and similarities of each of the deserts are researched and discussed.

Materials Needed

- ◆ Large pieces of paper
- ◆ Pens, Pencils, Crayons, Markers
- ◆ Other art supplies

Procedure

1. Divide the students into groups and assign each group one of the four major desert areas in the United States - Sonoran, Mojave, Chihuahuan and the Great Basin).
2. For each mural, invite students to create a large map showing the geographic boundaries.
3. For each desert, have students research the following and include their answers somewhere on the mural:

- ◆ Famous Geological Formations
- ◆ Common Types of Vegetation
- ◆ National Parks
- ◆ Average Temperatures
- ◆ Annual Rainfall

Nature Connections

- ◆ Invite students to imagine they are living in the desert and are writing to a friend to convince him or her to visit for several days. What features or attractions should be pointed out in the letter? Afterward, invite students to imagine they are in an urban environment and writing to friend who lives in the desert - inviting that person for a visit.
- ◆ Invite students to log onto www.desertusa.com and select one of the animals profiled on this site. Encourage students to work in teams of 2-3 to assemble and collect information about their designated animals for presentation to the class.

Key Concepts

- ◆ Environments are the space, conditions, and factors that affect an individual's and a population's ability to survive and their quality of life.
- ◆ Organisms' patterns of behavior relate directly to the environment (kinds and numbers of other organisms, the availability of food and resources, and physical characteristics of the environment.)

For standards correlation please see our website.

Additional Resources

Famous People of the US Deserts

- ◆ Kit Carson
- ◆ Pancho Villa
- ◆ Juan Bautista de Anza
- ◆ José Chavez y Chavez
- ◆ Stephanie Jowers
- ◆ William Edwin "Doc" Smith
- ◆ Nellie Cashman
- ◆ Geronimo
- ◆ Brigham Young
- ◆ Cochise

