

Skills Worksheet

Active Reading**Section: Grassland, Desert, and Tundra Biomes**

Read the passage below and answer the questions that follow.

All desert plants have adaptations for obtaining and conserving water, which allows the plants to live in dry, desert conditions. Plants called *succulents*, such as cactuses, have thick, fleshy stems and leaves that store water. Their leaves also have a waxy coating that prevents water loss. Sharp spines on cactuses keep thirsty animals from devouring the plant's juicy flesh. Rainfall rarely penetrates deeply into the soil, so many plants' roots spread out just under the surface of the soil to absorb as much rain as possible.

Instead of living in dry conditions, some desert plants are adapted to survive for long periods of time without water. When conditions are too dry, some plants die and drop seeds that stay dormant in the soil until the next rainfall. Then, new plants quickly germinate, grow, and bloom before the soil becomes dry again. Some desert plants have adapted so that they can survive even if their water content drops to as low as 30 percent of their mass. Water levels below 50 to 75 percent are fatal for most plants.

IDENTIFYING MAIN IDEAS

One reading skill is the ability to identify the main idea of a passage. The main idea is the main focus or key idea. Frequently, a main idea is accompanied by supporting information that offers detailed facts about main ideas.

In the space provided, write the letter of the term or phrase that best completes each statement or best answers each question.

- _____ 1. A waxy coating on a desert plant's leaves prevent it from
a. germinating too quickly. c. losing water.
b. being eaten by thirsty animals. d. Both (b) and (c)
- _____ 2. What types of adaptations help all desert plants survive?
a. adaptations that help the plants obtain and conserve water
b. adaptations that help the plants fend off snakes
c. adaptations that allow the plants to produce more carbohydrates
d. adaptations that allow the plants to quickly germinate
- _____ 3. An example of a succulent is a
a. seed. c. desert plant.
b. cactus. d. spine.

Active Reading *continued*

RECOGNIZING SIMILARITIES AND DIFFERENCES

One reading skill is the ability to recognize similarities and differences between two phrases, ideas, or things. This is sometimes known as comparing and contrasting.

Read each question and write the answer in the space provided.

4. When most plants lose water, what percentage of water content is low enough to be fatal?

5. When a desert plant loses water, what percentage of water content is low enough to be fatal?

RECOGNIZING CAUSE AND EFFECT

One reading skill is the ability to recognize cause and effect.

Read each question and write the answer in the space provided.

6. Explain how and why a desert plant's roots grow as they do.

7. What adaptations in a desert plant prevent water loss?

8. What adaptation helps desert plants keep animals away?

9. How can a desert plant's death cause more plants to grow?

