

NATURAL RESOURCES IN THE DESERT AND COASTAL REGIONS OF CALIFORNIA*

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Abstract

By participating in this detailed lesson, students will use literature (Island of the Blue Dolphins) to better understand the different land regions in California and the natural resources that are available in these regions. This lesson particularly focuses on the desert and coastal regions. It challenges students to be creative and imagine they have nothing but the land to live on in the region that they live. The lesson meets 4th grade social studies standards.

Lesson: Natural Resources in the Desert and Coastal Geographic Regions

Content Standards:Grade: 4 Standards: 4.1 Students demonstrate an understanding of the physical and human geographic features that define places and regions in California. **Benchmark:** 4.1.3 Identify the state capital and describe the various regions of California, including how their characteristics and physical environments (e.g., water, landforms, vegetation, climate) affect human activity.

Objective: Students will be able to state resources and characteristics of both the coastal and desert regions of California and explain how their environments influenced the daily life of the people living there.

Key Vocabulary/Concepts: region, coastal, resources, island, desert

I. Exploratory Introduction

Materials: Island of the Blue Dolphin by Scott O'Dell, paper, pencil

Objective: Students will understand what it is like to have nothing but what the land offers you to survive and live day to day.

Procedures:

- Tell the students to close their eyes and imagine the following situation.
- “You wake up in the morning and it is freezing! You feel around for the blankets on your bed to pull them over you, but you can’t find them. Then, you realize your back feels a little sore and achy, like you are sleeping on something hard. You open your eyes to realize you are in a strange place you have never seen before, you are lying on dirt surrounded by some large rocks. You can hear some waves crashing nearby. You go to find where the sound is coming from. You walk forever it seems like. Finally, you reach a beach with sand and you can see that you are on an island and there is no other land in sight. All of a sudden you are really hungry.”
- Ask the students what their initial feeling is? Get a few responses.
- Next, ask what is the first thing they think they will do? Get a few responses.
- Tell students to remember Karana in the book they have read and what she did to survive on the island all alone.

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- Explain to the students that many years ago people had to use whatever they could find in their environment in order to survive. There were no stores to go and buy your food and entertainment from. There were no drinking fountains or bottled water. There were also no doctors or medications to get from the pharmacy if you were sick. Depending on what region the people lived in determined what they got to eat, what type of shelter/homes they had, and what they did each day.
- Have students write a paragraph on what they think they might do if they were stuck on this island. Tell them to think about what would be there for them to use. What would they do for food, shelter, water, exercise, for fun, etc?
- Choose a few students to share their responses with the class.
- Tell the students they will be learning about what different groups of people had to use in the coastal regions and how it influenced their daily lives.

Assessment: The paragraph the students write on what it is like having nothing but what the land offers you to survive on day to day.

II. Lesson Development:

Materials: Island of the Blue Dolphins by Scott O'Dell, paper, pencil, pictures, artifacts, written articles and facts on the Chumash and Cahuilla tribes, computers, chart paper

Objective: Students will understand how the environment of the coastal and desert regions influenced the daily lives of the people living there.

Procedures:

- Ask students to imagine they are a Native American a long time ago. Have students raise their hands if they think they would rather have lived in the coastal region. Then, have students raise their hand if they think they would have rather lived in the desert region.
- Have a few students volunteer to give an explanation for their answer.
- Next, put students into groups of six. Three groups will be looking at the Chumash Indians who lived in the coastal region and three groups will be looking at the Cahuilla Indians who lived in the desert region of California.
- Once students are in their group they need to pull a card to establish their role in the group. The roles will be leader, speaker, recorder, reader, and investigators. Roles may be traded if two people in the group agree on it.
- The reader will read a short article to give the group a background on the Native Americans they are looking at, there will be pictures and artifacts of what was available to the people in that region during that time, and also a list of their customs, traditions, what they ate, their daily rituals, etc. The investigators may use one of the classroom computers to try and find more information on the tribe and their way of life. The students will have 20 minutes to do this.
- The recorder needs to write down what resources were available to the people at this time and in this particular region, how they were used, and how they influenced the lives of the inhabitants.
- At the end, each group's speaker will share their information as the teacher records it on a chart paper. There will be a column for the desert region and a column for the coastal region. The students will be able to see from the chart how the two group's lives were different because of the environment they lived in.

Assessment: The summary of findings from each group on what the coastal and desert regions offered the people living there, along with how these resources influenced daily life of the inhabitants. Also, the final chart showing how the environment impacted people's lives will be part of the assessment.

III. Expansion:

Materials: Island of the Blue Dolphins by Scott O'Dell, paper, pencil

Objective: Students will show the environment with all of its surroundings that either the desert or coastal Native American tribes lived in.

Procedures:

- Students will work individually on a sketch of what the environment for one of the regions looked like during the time it was inhabited by Native Americans.
- Students can choose to either do the Chumash Indians and the coastal region or the Cahuilla Indians and the desert region.
- In one drawing, they will try and show as many characteristics of the environment as possible. The climate, animals, sea resources if any, food options, shelter options, plants and trees, etc.
- The drawing should show the people performing an activity they would normally be doing.

Assessment: The student's final drawings depicting the environments Native Americans experienced in either the coastal or desert regions.