

RAFT IDEAS

Topics: Environments,
Habitats, Adaptations

Materials List

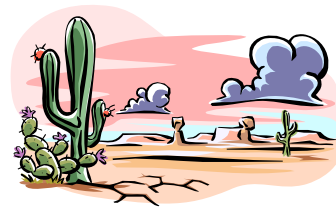
- ✓ Matte board—5 pieces
- ✓ Acrylic Paints & brushes (optional)
- ✓ Construction Paper
- ✓ Pictures of desert animals / plants
- ✓ Crayons
- ✓ Glue / Tape
- ✓ Tissue paper
- ✓ Chenille Stems
- ✓ Yarn / Thread

This activity can be used to teach:

- Varying Life forms from different environments (CA Science Standards: Grade 3, 3.b)
- Ecosystems / Plant and Animal Survival (CA Science Standards: Grade 4, 3.a & 3.b)
- Different types of animals inhabit the earth (CA Science Standards: Grade K, 2.0)

Some Like it Hot

Life in a Desert Habitat



In this activity, students create a desert diorama and populate it with plants and animals adapted to environments with little water.

To Do and Notice

1. Join together five pieces of matte board (preferably blue) using tape or glued paper strips to make an open front box.
2. Decorate the inside of box to get the desert look. Use blue acrylic paint for top and sides or line it with blue construction paper. Use sand colored paper for the bottom.
3. Choose pictures of birds, scorpions and other desert inhabitants or use construction paper to draw your own. Cut out the shapes, color, and decorate with crayons or markers.
4. For cacti – use green construction paper. Green and brown chenille stems also make nice plants. Use tissue paper or chenille stems for tumbleweeds.
5. Decorate the diorama using thread and glue or tape to dangle the birds from the top of the box.

The Science Behind the Activity

An environment is all the surrounding physical conditions that can affect the growth and survival of an organism. This includes temperature, humidity, rainfall, and the other organisms living in the environment. All organisms inhabiting a given environment create a community. Scientists refer to the largest scale communities as biomes and classify them into 5 categories: aquatic, desert, grassland, tundra, and forests. Animals better adapted to a given environment will have a better chance for survival and reproduction, and avoid natural selection for extinction.

Deserts comprise one of the Earth's most prevalent biomes, covering roughly 20% of the planet's surface. While low rainfall levels characterize all deserts, there is still great variety in the specific climate of each desert, depending on its geographic location. While we commonly picture deserts as looking like the African Sahara, there are 4 North American desert regions (the Great Basin, the Mojave, the Sonoran, and the Chihuahuan) with a different set of ecological attributes.

Taking it Further

Older students can create dioramas that have complete food chains for a more in depth study of ecosystems.

Web Resources For information on deserts, visit:

- www.ucmp.berkeley.edu/glossary/gloss5/biome/deserts.html
- www.enchantedlearning.com/biomes/desert/desert.shtml
- www.nps.gov/moja/mojadena.htm