



Desert Explorations Through Poetry

DESERT INDOORS®

Environmental Education Activities for Students at Home

(This activity was created in accordance with shelter-in-place. Remember to practice social distancing and stay local.)

Module: *I Can Protect: Desert Poetry for Grades 9-12*

Topic: English Language Arts and the desert

Objective/Learning Goal: Students will be able to research desert conservation measures and then create a one-page poem, organizing their writing by stanza. They will write about the desert with a voice of agency in desert conservation advocacy.

Glossary:

- **Alliteration** – The occurrence of the same letter or sound at the beginning or adjacent of closely connected words, rhyming words.
- **Ecosystem** – The surroundings (both living and non-living) of a geographical area in which species live.
- **Habitat** – The natural home or environment of an animal, plant, or other organism.
- **National Public Land** – Area of land that are open to the public and managed by the federal government. Examples of federal land management agencies include the Bureau of Land Management, Bureau of Water Reclamation, National Park Service, etc.
- **Persuasive Argument** – Making a claim and supporting that claim with feeling, emotions, and logic; stating your position and trying to change your readers positions.
- **Sonnet** – A poem of fourteen lines using any of a number of formal rhyme schemes, typically having 10 syllables per line.
- **Stanza** – A stanza is a group of lines in a poem, also can be called a verse.
- **Transitions** – The words or phrases that connect elements of a story in time, place, or emphasizes important details.

Materials: *Graphic organizer, poem, paper, pencil, access to the internet.*

Indoor Activity:

Build Background Knowledge - Ask your students what they already know about poetry? Have they ever read a poem that utilizes *alliteration*? What about a *sonnet*?

How about a limerick? What do they already know about the Mojave Desert, its' vistas, open *plains*, the *habitat*, *ecosystem*? Have they ever participated on a Citizen Science project? What does the term "*National Public Land*" mean to them? Who protects that land and who has a stake in protecting it?

Have your kids use the poem written below as a mentor text. What did they notice about the poem? If they have never been able to visit the desert in person, they can look up more information about the Mojave Desert through a simple web search or on **mdlt.org**. Students can then use the graphic organizer to write down more information about what they learned.

After they have done research, students can create their own poem in sonnet form using arguments or persuasion to demonstrate why the desert is a fragile habitat worth protecting and conserving.

Follow-up/ Discussion - *What did you learn? How do you feel about using your creativity to sensory poems about the desert? Do you feel like it would have been easier to write a personal narrative or perhaps an informational one? What was the most interesting thing you learned about the desert?*

Students can then take time to draw or illustrate their poem, using any medium of their choosing.

We would love to hear how your creative writing project went and to have you share your own poems with mary@mdlt.org. We invite students to share their voice and creativity through poetry which we will display at MDLT's Fall Desert Discovery Field Studies and Desert Indoors Showcase.

Your work may also be selected to appear in Cholla Needles magazine. If your work is selected, you will receive a free contributor's copy of the magazine.

Springtime in the Mojave

I went to visit the desert.

In the spring it was warm,

And smelled of spring blooms.



The valleys and hills were a mix of greens and yellows.

The cactus flowers were covered in fuchsia flowers,

Which the insects were pollinating in a fevered pace.

The touch of creosote left that feeling and smell,

Of desert on my hands and in my nose.

I love the Mojave in the spring.

It is my secret happy place to be.



