

GLOSSARY

ABDOMEN Part of an animal's body that contains its stomach.

ABORIGINAL PEOPLE People descended from the original people of a region or country.

ADAPTATION Ways in which animals and plants have evolved to better suit their surroundings.

ADOBE Sun-dried clay or mud brick.

BALANCE OF NATURE Natural state in which plants and animals live and interact with each other without seriously altering the makeup of the environment.

BARCHAN A crescent-shaped sand dune.

BUTTE A small mesa formed where a layer of hard rock at the top protects weaker rocks below.

CACTUS A succulent plant that stores water in its thick, fleshy stem. Most cacti have spines.

CANYON A deep valley.

CONDENSE/CONDENSATION When a gas (such as water vapor) turns to liquid (water), it condenses.

CURRENTS Distinctive flows of air in the atmosphere or water in the oceans.

DESALINATION The removal of salt from seawater or other salty water to make it suitable for human beings to consume or for farms.

DESERTIFICATION The natural or human processes involved when a dry or fertile region is turned into desert.

DEW Moisture formed on objects on the earth's surface when water vapor condenses into tiny water droplets.

DORMANT Inactive, as if asleep.

DROUGHT A long period with little or no rain.

DROUGHT EVADERS Plants or animals that are dormant during droughts, but spring into life when it rains.

DROUGHT RESISTERS Plants or animals that have special adaptations to conserve water during droughts.

DUNES Piles of sand created in deserts and along coasts by the wind.

EPHEMERALS Plants that live only for a short time.

EQUATOR An imaginary line around the earth's center.

ERG Sandy desert.

EROSION When weathering, running water, ice, and winds wear away the land.

EVAPORATE/EVAPORATION

When a liquid (such as water) turns into a gas (water vapor), it evaporates.

FAULT A break in a layer of rock.

FELT A fabric made from wool fibers and hairs.

GERMINATE To begin to grow.

GRAVEL Small rounded stones.

HAMMADA Areas of bare rock in deserts.

IMPERMEABLE ROCK A rock layer through which water cannot seep.

INFERTILE Unproductive.

IRRIGATION Watering the land by artificial means.

LARVA/LARVAE Immature animal or animals in a state quite different from that of the adult. Caterpillars are larvae.

LEEWARD Side of a mountain or other object that is sheltered from the wind.

MECHANICAL WEATHERING occurs when changes in temperature break up rocks.

MESA A flat-topped upland, bounded by steep sides.

MIRAGE Optical illusion often seen in deserts.

MIST Thin cloud at ground level.

NATURAL ARCH An arch or bridge of rock formed by natural processes.

NATURAL GAS A fuel, formed from the remains of once-living organisms, found in the earth's crust.

NOMAD A person who moves around with no permanent home.

OASIS Area of green in a desert where a spring, well, or river provides a permanent water supply.

OIL A fuel found in the rocks in the earth's crust, formed from the remains of once-living organisms; it is also called petroleum.

PASTURE Fields of grass on which sheep and cattle graze.

PLATEAU A high area where the land is generally level.

POLLINATION occurs when pollen from the male part of a flower combines with the female part of (usually) another flower and fertilizes it.

POROUS ROCK A rock, such as sandstone, that contains tiny pores that can absorb water.

REFRACTION The way rays of light appear to break when they travel through water, air, or glass.

REG Area of desert covered by loose gravel.

RENEWABLE RESOURCES Sources of energy—such as sun, wind, and water—that cannot be used up.

SAGUARO Giant branched cactus that grows in U.S. deserts.

SALT Substance dissolved in seawater, and in some desert lakes, that is used to preserve and flavor food.

SALT FLATS Areas of land where water evaporates and leaves a layer of salt.

SAN The people of the Kalahari Desert.

SAND Particles of rock that are finer than gravel, but coarser than dust.

SCREE Mass of weathered rocks of all sizes that pile up in heaps at the bottom of cliffs or mountain slopes.

SILT Sediment that is carried by a river and deposited over the land by floods or at the river's mouth.

SOLAR FURNACE Assembly of reflective panels that capture the heat of the sun and use it to make electricity.

SPRING A flow of water from the ground up to the surface.

STOMA/STOMATA A hole or holes through which a plant gives off water, usually in the leaves.

SUCCULENTS Large group of drought-resistant plants that have fleshy leaves and/or stems. Cacti are succulents.

TRANSPIRATION Occurs when the leaves of a plant give off water.

TRIBUTARIES Small rivers that flow into bigger ones.

TROPICS The region between the tropic of Cancer and the tropic of Capricorn, two imaginary lines north and south of the equator. It is the world's hottest zone.

VALLEY Low stretch of land, usually formed by a river.

WADI A valley in a desert that is usually dry and contains water only after a rare rainstorm.

WEATHERING Mechanical or chemical processes that break up rocks.

WELL A deep hole, or shaft, dug in the ground to reach oil or water.

WIND A current of air.

WINDWARD The side of a mountain, or other object, that faces into the wind.

YURT The traditional tents of the Mongol people of the Gobi Desert.