Living in the Desert

Past and present ways people adapt to a dry place

4.C.2.5.A "Explain how humans adapt to the physical environment (e.g., food, shelter, earning a living) by identifying historical and contemporary examples."

NAME _____ DATE _____

1 READ AND MARK

Read it twice

YOUR JOB Underline one desert condition and circle two ways people respond to it. Label one circled way P for past and the other T for today.

Making a Life in the Sonoran Desert

1. The Sonoran Desert in southern Arizona gets little rain, but summer storms can send water rushing through dry streambeds. Long ago, Tohono O'odham farmers used low banks of earth to guide this storm water onto fields. They grew tepary beans, a food crop that can survive with less water than many other beans. Guiding a brief flood helped them grow food in a dry place.

2. Hot days also shaped how people built homes. In the past, some families in the Sonoran Desert built homes with thick adobe walls made from earth. The walls slowed the heat from entering during the day. At night, cooler air helped the house lose heat. A home built this way offered shelter from the desert sun without needing an electric air conditioner.

3. Today, farmers in the Sonoran Desert may use drip irrigation. Tubes place water close to plant roots, so less water is lost to the hot air or dry ground between plants. Some farmers grow vegetables to sell at local markets. Their crops provide a way to earn a living, but farming still depends on careful use of water in this dry region.

2 ANSWER WITH EVIDENCE

Use the passage

1. How did farmers in the past use sudden summer storms to help grow food?

2. Why were tepary beans a useful food crop in this desert?

3. How did adobe walls help families live with hot days?

4. How can drip irrigation help farmers earn a living in the desert today?

3 YOUR TURN

Your own words

Imagine a mountain town with long, snowy winters. Write three sentences: describe one past way and one present-day way people could adapt to get food or find shelter, and explain how the snowy environment makes each useful.

ANSWER KEY

Living in the Desert

GRADE 4 · 4.C.2.5.A

PART 1 · READ AND MARK

Underline one desert condition and circle two ways people respond to it. Label one circled way P for past and the other T for today. Accept any marking that follows this job and points at the right text.

PART 2 · ANSWERS

#	QUESTION	ANSWER
1	How did farmers in the past use sudden summer storms to help grow food?	**They built low banks of earth to guide storm water onto their fields.**
2	Why were tepary beans a useful food crop in this desert?	**Tepary beans can survive with less water than many other beans.**
3	How did adobe walls help families live with hot days?	**Thick adobe walls slowed heat from entering homes during the day.**
4	How can drip irrigation help farmers earn a living in the desert today?	**It places water near plant roots, helping farmers grow crops they can sell while using water carefully.**

PART 3 · YOUR TURN (SAMPLE ANSWER)

In the past, families could dry berries in summer so they had food when deep winter snow made gathering difficult. Today, families could use insulated walls to keep their homes warm during long, cold winters. Both choices help people live in the mountain town's snowy environment.

For the marking job, accept any correctly identified desert condition and one past and one present-day response. For Your Turn, accept plausible past and present adaptations that clearly connect snowy conditions to food or shelter.