

Desert Survival Strategies

Compare how three animals meet their needs in one desert environment.

5.13.A “analyze the structures and functions of different species to identify how organisms survive in the same environment; and”

NAME _____

DATE _____

1 READ AND MARK _____ Read it twice

YOUR JOB Underline each animal body structure in the passage. Write 1 beside a kangaroo rat structure, 2 beside a cactus wren structure, or 3 beside a desert tortoise structure, then circle words that tell how each animal body structure helps it survive.

Three Neighbors in the Desert

- ① In the Sonoran Desert, kangaroo rats, cactus wrens, and desert tortoises share a hot, dry environment. All need water, food, shelter, and safe times to be active. They do not survive in exactly the same way. Each species has body structures and behaviors that help it meet its needs while using different resources or times of day.
- ② At night, a kangaroo rat searches for dry seeds. Its large hind legs help it hop quickly away from predators. During the hottest hours, it rests in an underground burrow, where the air is cooler. Its kidneys make very concentrated urine, so the animal loses little water. These features help it live in this desert with scarce surface water.
- ③ A cactus wren builds its nest among prickly cactus stems, where many predators avoid climbing. Its curved beak picks insects from cracks and plants. A desert tortoise uses strong front legs to dig a burrow. It spends much of the hot, dry season inside and eats grasses, flowers, and cactus pads when plants grow. Its hard shell helps protect it.

2 ANSWER WITH EVIDENCE _____ Use the passage

1 How does the kangaroo rat reduce its water loss and avoid the hottest part of the day?

2 What body structure helps the cactus wren get food, and what food does it get?

3 How do the kangaroo rat and desert tortoise use burrows in similar and different ways?

4 What evidence shows that the three animals use different food sources in the same desert?

3 YOUR TURN _____ Your own words

Write four sentences explaining how all three species can survive in the same desert. Include one accurate body structure or behavior for each species and explain its function, then include one way their foods or activity times differ.

PART 1 • READ AND MARK

Underline each animal body structure in the passage. Write 1 beside a kangaroo rat structure, 2 beside a cactus wren structure, or 3 beside a desert tortoise structure, then circle words that tell how each animal body structure helps it survive. Accept any marking that follows this job and points at the right text.

PART 2 • ANSWERS

#	QUESTION	ANSWER
1	How does the kangaroo rat reduce its water loss and avoid the hottest part of the day?	Its kidneys make very concentrated urine, so it loses little water. It rests in an underground burrow during the hottest hours.
2	What body structure helps the cactus wren get food, and what food does it get?	Its curved beak helps it pick insects from cracks and plants.
3	How do the kangaroo rat and desert tortoise use burrows in similar and different ways?	Both use burrows for shelter from heat. The kangaroo rat rests there during the hottest hours, while the tortoise spends much of the hot, dry season inside.
4	What evidence shows that the three animals use different food sources in the same desert?	The kangaroo rat eats dry seeds, the cactus wren eats insects, and the desert tortoise eats grasses, flowers, and cactus pads.

PART 3 • YOUR TURN (SAMPLE ANSWER)

Kangaroo rats use strong hind legs to escape predators and rest in burrows during the hottest hours. Cactus wrens use curved beaks to pick insects from plants and cracks. Desert tortoises use strong front legs to dig burrows and hard shells for protection. The rat eats seeds, while the wren eats insects and the tortoise eats plants, so they use different foods.

Accept accurate explanations that use passage evidence for all three species and connect each structure or behavior to survival. For the final sentence, accept a correct contrast in food sources or in when the animals use shelter.