

Watermelons Quench the Great Thirst

Grades 5-6

Subject: Geography

Objective:

Students should be able to begin identifying different climate zones.

Materials:

Political maps of Africa, watermelon

Lesson:

Give maps to students and tell them you will be discussing the climate zones of the Kalahari Desert and Egypt, where watermelons originated and were first harvested.

Introduction:

(Place a watermelon in front of the class.)
Watermelon is a delicious and healthy food that many people in the U.S. enjoy. The origin of the watermelon, however, traces back to the southern part of Africa. In 1850, explorer David Livingston found wild watermelons growing in the Kalahari Desert. The Kalahari Desert is a semi-arid area that covers 70% of Botswana, parts of Zimbabwe, Namibia, and South Africa.

Kalahari is derived from the Tswana word “Kgalagadi”, meaning, “the great thirst”.

It is the ancestral land of the Bushmen, nomadic hunter-gatherers, who are thought to be the first inhabitants of southern Africa.

1. Ask students to locate Botswana, Zimbabwe, Namibia, South Africa, and the Kalahari Desert on their maps.
2. Explain the term climate and climate groups. (Climate means the average weather conditions of a specific area. The earth has many different climate zones. Climatologists organize similar types of climates into groups, based on a region's vegetation and weather.)
3. Ask students to try to describe the Kalahari Desert. What is the climate like? Write their descriptions on the board.
4. Describe the Kalahari Desert's **climate** and the term **semi-arid**. The Kalahari Desert is a **semi-arid** area. (Semi-arid and desert climates occur in regions that have little or no rainfall. The temperature changes drastically from morning to evening.) The Kalahari Desert has vast areas of red-brown sand and no permanent surface water. It is not really a desert though because it receives over 250 mm of rainfall annually and has vegetation in some parts.
5. Share the following with the students. The first recorded watermelon harvest occurred nearly 5,000 years ago in Egypt and was actually depicted in hieroglyphics.
6. Tell students to locate Egypt on their maps.
7. Ask students to try to describe Egypt. What is the climate like? Write their descriptions on the board.
8. Describe Egypt's climate. Egypt is a **desert** climate. (Semi-arid and desert climates are similar except desert climates are drier.)

Extension: Use reference books to identify the climate of where you live. Compare and contrast with the Kalahari Desert and Egypt. Discuss other climate zones of the world.