

**Lesson Title:** The Causes and Effects of Desertification in China

**Class and Grade level(s):** 7<sup>th</sup> Grade Social Studies

**Goals and Objectives –**

The students will be able to:

1. Identify the following places on a map of China:
  - a.) Beijing
  - b.) Inner Mongolia
  - c.) Gobi Desert
  - d.) Taklamakan Desert
  - e.) Kumtag Desert
2. Identify China, North Korea, South Korea, and Japan on a map.
3. Explain the causes of desertification, particularly in China.
4. Explain the effects of desertification on the following:
  - a.) Farmers
  - b.) The Chinese government
  - c.) The citizens of China
  - d.) The world population
5. Compare the current situation in China with the 1930's U.S. Dust Bowl.

**Time required/class periods needed:** 5-7 class period

**Primary source bibliography:**

- “Beijing’s Desert Storm” by Ron Gluckman, 2000.  
<http://www.gluckman.com/ChinaDesert.html>
- “China Losing War with Advancing Deserts” by Lester Brown, 2003.  
[http://www.earth-policy.org/plan\\_b\\_updates/2003/update26](http://www.earth-policy.org/plan_b_updates/2003/update26)

**Other resources used:**

1. A physical map of China: available in social studies textbooks
2. A political map of China: <http://www.maps-of-china.com/china-continent.shtml>

**Required materials/supplies:**

1. Copies of the readings from the websites (these readings may need to be condensed depending on time.)
2. List of vocabulary from readings (some words below: add to list as needed)
3. Physical and political maps of China
4. Internet resources

**Vocabulary:**

precarious	cultivating	Manchurians	besieged
encroaching	relentless	sedimentation	state-run media
lambasted	compost	initiatives	moratorium

## **Procedure:**

### **Day 1:**

#### **1. Sponge Activity:**

To the best of their ability, have students list the following on a blank sheet of paper:

- a) The political and physical features of China.
  - b) The countries surrounding China.
2. Have students compare and evaluate their lists with the student sitting next to them and make changes as needed.
  3. Check lists as a class against a political map and a physical map of China.
  4. Discuss with students what they thought, why they thought it and what was right or wrong about their impressions.
  5. Hand out physical and political maps of China for students to label. Provide list of locations above. Allow students to fill out in class or as homework as time allows.
  6. Tell students that they are going to learn about desertification in China. Ask them to examine the word desertification to determine what the general topic is. Discuss the meaning of desertification briefly.
  7. Ask students to find the meaning of the vocabulary words listed above.
  8. In the last few minutes of class, have students, from memory, describe three features from the map (for example, Japan is east of China). This can be done in pairs. When finished, have them use two vocabulary words in a sentence. Partners will evaluate the correctness of usage. Sentences will be turned in to assess comprehension.

### **Day 2:**

#### **Plan:**

1. **Sponge Activity:** When students enter, have them write a three-line poem using at least one geographic feature and one vocabulary word from the previous day. Collect to check for understanding.
2. Review the meaning of desertification.
3. Hand out the reading.
4. Tell students that, as they read, they are to find the causes and effects of desertification in China and write them down on a sheet of paper. In addition, when they come across anything they find interesting, they should write that down too.
5. At the end of class, quickly brainstorm causes and effects.

### **Day 3:**

#### **1. Sponge Activity:**

- a. Have students brainstorm three ways they have contributed to changing the environment in the last day (examples: using paper, riding on a concrete road, etc.)
  - b. Discuss with students if there are any similarities between their list and the causes of desertification.
2. Finish the reading and have students continue their notetaking.
  3. Discuss as a class how desertification affects Chinese farmers, the Chinese government, the countries surrounding China, the citizens of China, the plants and wildlife of China and the world.
  4. Rank in order from most affected to least affected.

**Procedure (cont.):**

5. Have students brainstorm the positives that come from cutting down trees, growing crops, and raising livestock.
6. Have students search the internet for ads that show products dependent on these activities (paper, food, etc.)
7. Share findings with class.
8. **Homework:** Have students take a stance: Deforestation, growing crops and raising livestock should continue even if it is causing desertification and the degradation of our environment or deforestation, growing crops and raising livestock should stop or be greatly modified to preserve the health of our only home planet. Students will write 2 paragraphs supporting their position for presentation at a Socratic Seminar the following day.

**Day 5:**

1. **Sponge Activity:**
  - a. Have students reread and polish their opinion papers.
  - b. Have students write one argument someone on the other side might make and why that argument is flawed.
2. Socratic Seminar: Debate the question: Is it acceptable for people to alter the environment in ways that are dangerous to the survival of the planet and future generations in order to reap benefits now? Discuss ways our approach might be modified to preserve the environment and provide us with things we need. Discuss ways humans might modify what they mean by “need.”

**Assessment/evaluation:**

Students will write a letter to a Chinese official or an American official describing the affects of desertification in China, its impact on the health of the planet and their suggestions for modifying the effects and changing the way we live. The writing will be graded on proper use of grammar and usage conventions, persuasive ideas, factual content, and passion.