

**MAIN IDEA AND DETAILS****36****Stage 3: Comprehension**

**Directions:** Read the passage. Then answer the questions on the next page.

## **In the Desert**

In a desert, less than ten inches of rain fall each year. Yet rain is still an important force in the desert. It helps to shape the land. It provides enough water for certain plants to live. It can even cause deadly floods from time to time.

Monument Valley is a desert on the border of Arizona and Utah. Long ago, the land was much higher than it is now. Over the centuries, heavy rains would suddenly pour down from time to time, beating against the dry soil. The rain fell so quickly that the ground could not absorb it. Instead, the water formed small streams that cut channels through the earth. Over time, the water washed away hundreds of feet of soil, leaving tall shapes called *mesas*. Mesas rise here and there throughout Monument Valley. They show how high the land used to be.

Sometimes rain collects in a low spot in the desert. For a short while, it forms a lake. The lake may be hundreds of acres wide but only a few inches deep. The water evaporates quickly, leaving behind a thin layer of salt. Salt makes it very hard for any plants to grow, so the land looks cracked and bare.

Although rain falls seldom and runs off quickly in the desert, plants make use of all the rain that does fall. The organ-pipe cactus, for example, can store huge amounts of water in its large stems. When rain falls, the cactus swells up with water. It can store this water and then live off it for many dry months.

Rains can actually be dangerous to desert plants and animals. Desert storms are usually very fierce. A year's rain may fall in just a few minutes. The water pours over the ground, pulling up small plants and flooding the burrows of animals. The flow of water can cause deadly mud slides. The storm stops quickly, and much of the water evaporates right away. But the rain has changed the shape of the desert forever.

**MAIN IDEA AND DETAILS 36****Stage 3: Comprehension (continued)**

**Directions:** Choose or write the answer to each question.

1. What is the subject of this passage?
  - Ⓐ mesas in Monument Valley
  - Ⓑ how rain affects a desert
  - Ⓒ salt lakes in the desert
  - Ⓓ how cacti survive in deserts
  
2. What is the main idea of this passage?
  - Ⓐ Rain is an important force in the desert.
  - Ⓑ Little rain falls in the desert.
  - Ⓒ Rain can be dangerous to plants and animals.
  - Ⓓ The earth looks different from the way it looked long ago.
  
3. Which additional detail would best support the main idea of the fourth paragraph?
  - Ⓐ Cacti have thorns that protect them from animals.
  - Ⓑ Some cacti have pretty yellow flowers.
  - Ⓒ The Sonoran Desert is home to many animals.
  - Ⓓ Cacti have waxy skins to keep the water inside.
  
4. What is the main idea of the last paragraph?

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5. What details in the last paragraph support the main idea?

Detail 1: \_\_\_\_\_

Detail 2: \_\_\_\_\_

Detail 3: \_\_\_\_\_

**MAIN IDEA AND DETAILS****50****Stage 4: Comprehension**

**Directions:** Read the passage below. Then fill in the chart on the next page.

## **Standing Up for Physical Fitness**

According to the experts, elementary school students in Europe and in the United States today are not physically fit. Statistics show that twenty years ago students of the same age were in better shape. But what has changed in the last twenty years? We can probably blame television and cars for this change in fitness. Twenty years ago many families owned televisions, but they spent less time watching TV than they do today. Now, the average fifth grader spends three to seven hours watching television each day. That time is spent sitting, not moving around. Modern home video games are another reason children spend lots of time sitting. In addition, students spend about six and a half hours in school. They are physically active only three percent—or about twelve minutes—of the school day. Clearly, students need to spend more time both in and out of school being physically active.

Even when students are not staying at home or sitting in school, they are not getting enough exercise. At one time, if a fifth grader wanted to visit a friend, he or she typically walked or rode a bicycle to the friend's house. Walking or riding a mile or two was not considered at all unusual. Today, students are more likely to get a ride on a bus or in a car. Parents drive their children to and from school and after-school activities, and students often have little time for just playing outside.

To become more physically fit, students will have to get out of their chairs and turn off their televisions. They must also get off the bus or out of their cars and onto their bicycles. Children who spend more time exercising and get into better shape will feel better, have more energy, and be more relaxed. Those kinds of results seem well worth the effort.

**MAIN IDEA AND DETAILS** **50**  
**Stage 4: Comprehension (continued)**

**Directions:** Complete the main idea chart below by writing the main idea and supporting details from each paragraph in the passage.

**Main Idea Chart****Subject:** \_\_\_\_\_**Detail 1:** \_\_\_\_\_**Detail 2:** \_\_\_\_\_**Detail 3:** \_\_\_\_\_**Main Idea:** \_\_\_\_\_**Detail 1:** \_\_\_\_\_**Detail 2:** \_\_\_\_\_**Detail 3:** \_\_\_\_\_**Main Idea:** \_\_\_\_\_**Detail 1:** \_\_\_\_\_**Detail 2:** \_\_\_\_\_**Detail 3:** \_\_\_\_\_**Main Idea:** \_\_\_\_\_