

Answer Key
Vocabulary Worksheet 5
ACROSS THE NAVAJO DESERT
Theodore Roosevelt

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Roosevelt, Theodore. A Book-Lover's Holidays in the Open. New York: Charles Scribner's sons, 1916; Bartleby.com, 1998. www.bartleby.com/57/. [October 1, 2014].

WE dropped down from Buckskin Mountain, from the land of the pine and spruce and of cold, clear springs, into the grim **desolation** of the desert. We drove the pack-animals and loose horses, usually one of us taking the lead to keep the trail. The foreman of the Bar Z had lent us two horses for our trip, in true cattleman's spirit; another Bar Z man, who with his wife lived at Lee's Ferry, showed us every hospitality, and gave us fruit from his garden, and chickens; and two of the Bar Z riders helped Archie and Nick shoe one of our horses. It was a land of wide spaces and few people, but those few we met were so friendly and helpful that we shall not soon forget them.

At noon of the first day we had come down the mountainside, from the tall northern forest trees at the summit, through the scattered, sprawling pinyons and cedars of the side slopes, to the barren, treeless plain of sand and sage-brush and greasewood. At the foot of the mountain we stopped for a few minutes at an outlying cow-ranch. There was not a tree, not a bush more than knee-high, on the whole plain round about. The bare little ranch-house, of stone and timber, lay in the full glare of the sun; through the open door we saw the cluttered cooking-utensils and the rolls of untidy bedding. The foreman, rough and kindly, greeted us from the door; spare and lean, his eyes bloodshot and his face like roughened oak from the pitiless sun, wind, and sand of the desert. After we had dismounted, our shabby ponies moped at the hitching-post as we stood talking. In the big corral a mob of half-broken horses were gathered, and two dust-grimed, hard-faced cow-punchers, **lithe** as panthers, were engaged in breaking a couple of wild ones. All around, dotted with stunted sage-brush and greasewood, the desert stretched, blinding white in the sunlight; across its surface the dust clouds moved in pillars, and in the distance the heat-waves danced and wavered.

During the afternoon we slogged steadily across the plain. At one place, far off to one side, we saw a band of buffalo, and between them and us a herd of wild donkeys. Otherwise the only living things were snakes and lizards. On the other side of the plain, two or three miles from a high wall of vermilion cliffs, we stopped for the night at a little stone rest-house, built as a station by a cow outfit. Here there were big corrals, and a pool of water piped down by the cow-men from a spring many miles distant. On the sand grew the usual desert plants, and on some of the ridges a sparse growth of grass, sufficient for the night feed of the hardy horses. The little stone house and the corrals stood bare and desolate on the empty plain. Soon after we reached them a sand-storm rose and blew so violently that we took refuge inside the house. Then the wind died down; and as the sun sank toward the horizon we sauntered off through the hot, still evening. There were many sidewinder rattlesnakes. We killed several of the gray, flat-headed, venomous things; as

we slept on the ground outside the house, under the open sky, we were glad to kill as many as possible, for they sometimes crawl into a sleeper's blankets. Except this **baleful** life, there was little save the sand and the harsh, scanty vegetation. Across the lonely wastes the sun went down. The sharply channeled cliffs turned crimson in the dying light; all the heavens flamed ruby red, and faded to a hundred dim hues of opal, beryl and amber, pale turquoise and delicate emerald; and then night fell and darkness **shrouded** the desert.

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Next morning the horse-wranglers, Nick and Quentin, were off before dawn to bring in the saddle and pack animals; the sun rose in burning glory, and through the breathless heat we drove the pack-train before us toward the crossing of the Colorado. Hour after hour we plodded ahead. The cliff line bent back at an angle, and we followed into the valley of the Colorado. The trail edged in toward the high cliffs as they gradually drew toward the river. At last it followed along the base of the frowning rock masses. Far off on our right lay the Colorado; on its opposite side the broad river valley was hemmed in by another line of cliffs, at whose foot we were to travel for two days after crossing the river.

The landscape had become one of incredible wildness, of tremendous and desolate majesty. No one could paint or describe it save one of the great masters of imaginative art or literature—a Turner or Browning or Poe. The sullen rock walls towered hundreds of feet aloft, with something about their grim savagery that suggested both the terrible and the grotesque. All life was absent, both from them and from the fantastic barrenness of the boulder-strewn land at their bases. The ground was burned out or washed bare. In one place a little stream trickled forth at the bottom of a ravine, but even here no grass grew—only little clusters of a coarse weed with flaring white flowers that looked as if it **throve** on poisoned soil. In the still heat "we saw the silences move by and beckon." The cliffs were channeled into myriad forms—battlements, spires, pillars, buttressed towers, flying arches; they looked like the ruined castles and temples of the monstrous devil-deities of some vanished race. All were ruins—ruins vaster than those of any structures ever reared by the hands of men—as if some magic city, built by warlocks and sorcerers, had been wrecked by the wrath of the elder gods. Evil dwelt in the silent places; from battlement to lonely battlement fiends' voices might have raved; in the utter desolation of each empty valley the squat blind tower might have stood, and giants lolled at length to see the death of a soul at bay.

Answers

Question 1

As it is used in paragraph 1, the word *desolation* most nearly means

- A. isolation
- B. misery
- C. evil
- D. imperfection

The best answer is A. You can eliminate a couple answers right off the bat with a simple replacement technique. Insert Choice C, for example, in place of the word "desolation" and you'll see right away it doesn't fit. Likewise, Choice D is slightly off – the paragraph does not mention anything broken or wrong, so the word "imperfection" doesn't work, either. Choice B is tempting, considering he mentions the word "grim" right before desolation, and it *is* an actual definition of the word. However, the best answer is Choice A – isolation – because of the context clues in the paragraph. Roosevelt mentions "wide spaces and few people," which should give you the clue that he meant the word to show how isolated they were in the vast desert.

Question 2

As it is used in paragraph 2, the word *lithe* most nearly means

- A. supple
- B. malleable
- C. nimble
- D. spirited

The best answer is C. Here, the word "lithe" is being used to describe two cowboys who are breaking in wild horses. They are described as "dust-grimed and hard-faced" which sets the tone of their description. They wouldn't be called "spirited" as Choice D suggests, even though it is an accurate synonym. Choices A and B refer more to the sense of touch, rather than one's ability. It's clear that Roosevelt was viewing these tough cowboys breaking in horses from a distance, and believed them to be as nimble as panthers while doing so.

Question 3

As it is used in paragraph 3, the word *baleful* most nearly means

- A. impervious
- B. advantageous
- C. wicked
- D. calamitous

The best answer is D. Roosevelt uses the word to describe the life they were currently leading after just explaining how ruinous it could be! Previously in the paragraph, he talked of venomous rattlesnakes that would try to creep in their blankets and sandstorms that would send them searching for shelter. Choices A and B are the opposite of what he was saying and Choice C goes a little too far. Yes, the life was calamitous, as Choice D indicates – fraught with danger or "baleful" – but wicked implies intent to do harm. Therefore, Choice D is the best answer.

Question 4

As it is used at the end of paragraph 3, the word *shrouded* most nearly means

- A. veiled
- B. stashed
- C. classified
- D. deepened

The best answer is A. A great way to figure this one out if you've never heard the word "shrouded" before, is to just replace the word with the answer choices to see if you can knock any out. Choices B and C can both be easily crossed off that way. Choice D, although associated with the word "darkness" and "shrouded" and thus might be tempting for someone who hasn't really read through the sentence, doesn't make sense in this context. Hence, Choice A is the best.

Question 5

As it is used in paragraph 5, the word *throve* most nearly means

- A. withered
- B. advanced
- C. declined
- D. flourished

The best answer is D. The word "throve" is the past tense of "thrive" or live with success or blossom. Choices A and C are opposites. Choice B changes the meaning of the sentence. The words were not encroaching on the poisoned soil; they were living well off of it. Hence, "flourished" Choice D, is the best.

The Canyon de Chelly Ultra on the Navajo reservation tests hearts, minds and legs on a treacherous, 34-mile path up 1,000 feet, to finish in beauty. "I want to do what Navajos love and that is to run," said one of the competitors. Outsiders are allowed to enter Canyon de Chelly only with a Navajo guide. Credit...Caitlin O'Hara for The New York Times. Running Through the Heart of Navajo. The Canyon de Chelly Ultra on the Navajo reservation tests hearts, minds and legs on a treacherous, 34-mile path up 1,000 feet, to finish in beauty. "I want to do what Navajos love and that is to run," said one of the competitors. Outsiders are allowed to enter Canyon de Chelly only with a Navajo guide. Credit...Caitlin O'Hara for The New York Times. The Navajo Nation is spread across the states of Utah, New Mexico and Arizona. The Navajo Nation is the largest American Indian tribe, with almost three hundred thousand members. Many of them live on reservations in New Mexico. The Navajo call themselves "Dine," which means "the People." The Navajo had conflicts with Mexico for many years. When the United States annexed much of the Southwest following the Mexican War, many Navajo hoped that their problems were over. Many Navajo had relatives who had been kidnapped and held as slaves by the Mexicans. Unfortunately, the US did nothing to free the Navajo slaves, and Mexico continued making slave-raids into Navajo territory. 1862 was a tragic year for the Navajo.