### BEFORE READING

#### BUILD BACKGROUND KNOWLEDGE (SL)

- Begin by showing an image of the Great Basin Desert or a short video clip that shows how hot, dry, and expansive it is. Ask students, “Have you ever been to a place like this or seen one in a book or video? What were some things you noticed?” Share responses. (SL.3.1b)

- Say, “Today, we will learn about the Great Basin Desert. Think about the name. Let’s infer how this desert got its name. Why great, and why basin? What makes a desert a desert?” Have students discuss their ideas with a partner. (SL.3.1b)

#### PREVIEW THE BOOK (RI, RF)

- Tell students, “The United States has four deserts. This book will tell us about the biggest one. We will learn where it is, what lives there, and what is unique about it. Look at the table of contents, and share with a partner some of the things we will learn in this book.” (RI.3.5) (RF.3.4a)

- Have students observe the attributes of pictures throughout the book. Say, “I never really thought about how incredible deserts are. It’s hard for me to visualize just how immense they are. If I close my eyes and think about standing in the middle of a desert versus standing in this classroom, I get an idea about how different and special deserts truly are.” (RF.3.4a)

#### SET THE PURPOSE (RI, RF)

- Tell students, “As we read, we will notice different text features. Let’s look through and see what text features are in this nonfiction book.” Make sure the following features are pointed out: table of contents, headings, real photos, captions, glossary, and index. (RI.3.5)

- Say to the class, “The author uses photos as scientific evidence to prove a point and captions to explain the photos and clarify important information. For example, on page 8, the caption talks about the specific species of tree and how it thrives in the desert.” (RI.3.5) (RF.3.4a)

- Say, “The author wants us to learn the names of plants and animals that live and survive in the Great Basin Desert. As we read, we will keep track of how these species have adapted to survive in this extreme environment.” (RF.3.4a)
READING THE BOOK (RF, SL)

- Say, “The book will be divided into sections for groups to read. Each group will have a reporter who will retell what their group’s section was about, citing one or two key facts and one or two supporting details.” Split the class into the following four groups:
  - Group 1: Plants in the Desert (pages 8–13)
  - Group 2: The Great Basin Rattlesnake (pages 14–15)
  - Group 3: Birds and Bugs (pages 16–19)
  - Group 4: Lots of Lizards (pages 20–21) (RF.3.4a) (SL.3.1b)

DISCUSS AND REFLECT (RF, SL)

- After group reporters retell key facts and details, ask:
  - “How do all the book’s sections connect to one another?”
  - “Why did the author choose to focus on these four topics?”
  - “What is one question you would like to have answered that would help you gain a better understanding of the Great Basin Desert?” (RF.3.4a) (SL.3.1b)

INTRODUCE LANGUAGE SKILL (L)

- Have students work in pairs to “Give One, Get One.” Each student should find two or more key words that describe a major theme or fact from the book and make sure they have a complete understanding of each word’s meaning in context. Then have them share one word with a partner and get one in return. Have students repeat with another partner. The activity can be repeated several times. (L.3.6)

READING INDEPENDENTLY (RF, SL)

- As students read independently, prompt them to think about the following questions, and tell them to be ready to share their ideas:
  - Is a desert a harsh, extreme environment? Why or why not?
  - What would you want to see and do while visiting the Great Basin? Which part would you want to visit and why? (RF.3.4a) (SL.3.1b)

READING EXTENSION IDEAS (W)

- Say, “Imagine you are travel agent and someone wants to go on vacation to the Great Basin Desert. What would you tell them they would need to adapt to the environment? What would they need in order to survive? What should they expect on this desert vacation?” After students answer these questions, have them exchange ideas with a partner.
- Have students create animal collecting cards. Ask each student to choose an animal that lives in the Great Basin Desert. Have them draw or print an image of the animal and attach it to one side of a 5x7 index card. They should then label the image, pointing to features used for survival. On the back, have them list the animal’s “stats,” such as: habitat, eating needs/habits, method of movement/travel, defenses/protection, size, body parts, etc. The cards can all be combined into a class set of “Great Basin Desert Cards” that could be used for a variety of games, activities, etc. (W.3.8)

COMMON CORE STANDARDS ASSESSED

After reading the book and completing the activities, students will be able to:
- use text features and search tools to locate information relevant to a given topic efficiently. (RI.3.5)
- acquire and use accurately grade-appropriate conversational, general academic, and domain-specific words and phrases, including those that signal spatial and temporal relationships. (L.3.6)
- read grade-level text with purpose and understanding. (RF.3.4a)
- follow agreed-upon rules for discussions. (SL.3.1b)
- recall information from experiences or gather information from print or digital sources; take brief notes on sources and sort evidence into provided categories. (W.3.8)