

# DEATH VALLEY



## DIFFERENTIATED CLOSE READING UNIT

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# 2 Different Reading Levels

## High-Interest Passage!

The **easier** passage has a ■ in the bottom left corner.

The **more difficult** passage has a ▲ in the bottom left corner.

### Death Valley: An Extreme Environment

#### Margin Notes

One of the harshest environments in the world is found at Death Valley National Park. The valley's name was earned in the 1850s. Pioneers trying to cross the valley died in their search for gold. The name only tells part of the park's story. It is also known for its wildflowers, extreme heat, mountains, and salt flats. This Californian Valley is worth a visit.

Death Valley is a desert. It is found on the Nevada. During the summer months, temperatures in North America. The hottest temperatures in Fahrenheit in July of 1934. This was Experts believe extreme temperatures in the surrounded by mountains. This traps in hot,

The national park at Death Valley is a huge roads. It's the biggest national park outside different environments. The highest elevation stands at 11,049 feet. The lowest point is the level. This is the lowest point on the continent.

Badwater Basin is the low valley floor. basin receives water runoff from the surrounding about 2 inches of rain per year! This is a make that amount in just one rainstorm. mountains creates a temporary lake in the Bright, white salt deposits are left on the layer of salt has built up.

Even though Death Valley is a hot desert, winter and spring rains, wildflowers appear color and beauty. When they bloom, bright fields of wildflowers. Birds that live in the loggerhead shrikes, and more. Mammals be found in the area.

Death Valley is also home to some of the world's rarest fish. Surprisingly, Death Valley sits right on top of a large aquifer system. Experts are able to access a 60,000 year old hole in the earth known to the aquifer. Endangered species population of these fish has grown over the fish's eggs.

Despite its name, Death Valley shows how life survives even in extreme environments. It is a beautiful and unique valley.

### Death Valley: An Extreme Environment

#### Margin Notes

One of the harshest environments in the world is found at Death Valley National Park. The valley's name, which it earned after pioneers trying to cross the valley died in their search for gold in the 1850s, only tells part of the park's story. Known for its wildflowers, extreme heat, mountains, and salt flats, this Californian Valley is worth a visit.

Death Valley is a desert located on the southern border of California and Nevada. During the summer months, temperatures soar. In fact, it is home to the hottest temperatures in North America. The hottest temperature ever recorded was 134 degrees Fahrenheit in July of 1934 at a location known as Furnace Creek. Experts believe extreme temperatures in the valley are due to the fact that it is surrounded by mountains. This traps in hot, dry air.

The national park at Death Valley is an enormous region including over 1,000 miles of roads. It's the biggest national park outside of Alaska! The large park features a wide range of different environments. The highest elevation in the park is at Telescope Peak, which is at 11,049 feet. Conversely, the lowest point is the Badwater Basin which is 282 feet below sea level. This is the lowest point on the continent.

Badwater Basin is the low valley floor featuring 200 square miles of salt flats. This basin receives water runoff from the surrounding areas. In a whole year, the area receives an average of about 2 inches of rain. This is a tiny amount given that in many areas of the world just one rainstorm can produce that amount. The rain and snow melt creates a temporary lake in the basin. However, as the water inevitably evaporates, bright, white salt deposits are left on the ground. Over thousands of years, a significant layer of salt has built up.

Despite the fact that Death Valley is a hot desert, you'll still find lots of life in the park. After the winter and spring rains, wildflowers appear in some areas of the park in a show of color and beauty. When they bloom, butterflies, bees, and hummingbirds flock to the fields of wildflowers. Other species of birds that live in the park include the roadrunner, warblers, loggerhead shrikes, and more. In addition, mammals such as wild burros and bighorn sheep can be found in the area.

Death Valley is also home to some of the world's rarest fish. Surprisingly, Death Valley sits right on top of a large aquifer. The aquifer is housed within a limestone cave system where an endangered species known as the Devil's Hole Pupfish lives. Experts are able to access the underground water wonderland through a 60,000 year old hole in the earth known as Devil's Hole. It is one of the only entrances to the aquifer. Thanks to recent efforts, populations of these fish have grown considerably after scientists discovered a diving beetle that ate the fish's eggs.

Despite its name, Death Valley shows how life survives even in extreme environments. The beauty and unique geological and natural features in this valley are unmatched.





# Reference Chart, Annotating Guide, Close Reading Directions

## CLOSE READING STEPS

The following steps are a **suggested sequence** in which you could approach the contents of this packet. This approach will require 3 separate readings of the passage, requiring students to dig deeper with each reading. Each task of the packet is to be completed in one day/lesson. With 5 total tasks per passage, each should take one week to complete.



**1<sup>st</sup> Reading:** Student reads the passage. As they read, they use their annotation symbols to identify unfamiliar words, questions they have, and parts of the passage that they agree with. Complete **Task 1: Read & Annotate**. This task also includes some basic recall questions.



**2<sup>nd</sup> Reading:** Teacher (or partner) rereads the passage a second time while students follow along. Have students complete **Task 2: Vocabulary**. This allows students to demonstrate their understanding of unfamiliar words from the passage, leading to a deeper comprehension of the text.



**3<sup>rd</sup> Reading:** Students reread the passage then respond in writing, citing text evidence. Students complete **Task 3: Reread and Dig Deeper**. This page of questions requires students to cite text evidence when answering questions. Additionally, students complete **Task 4: Reread and Respond**. These final tasks use the text evidence to write a supported summary.

## Annotating Marks

As you read the passage, make the following marks:



**Circle** powerful words or phrases.



**Underline** words or phrases you do not understand.



**Place a question mark** next to something that makes you think of a question.



**Write an exclamation mark** next to something that surprises you.



**Draw an arrow** where you make a personal connection to certain words or ideas.



**Write your important thoughts** in the margins.

Wow, I never showed of course here...

## ABOUT THIS PACKET

The Close Reading passage included in this packet is provided at 2 different reading levels, so that you may more easily differentiate your instruction. The informational content of the 2 versions is the same, but the reading levels are different. All question sheets are the same. This makes it easy for you to provide an informational reading passage on each student's level, but use the same question and activity sheets for the entire class!

### NOTE:

The **easier** passage has a ■ in the bottom left corner.  
The **more difficult** passage has a ▲ in the bottom left corner.

Each passage with its activities is designed for a 5-day time frame, following this schedule:

Day	Title of Activity	Purpose
1	<b>Task 1: Read and Annotate</b>	Read passage for the first time. Use annotation symbols to annotate. Answer surface level questions.
2	<b>Task 2: Vocabulary</b>	Read passage for the second time. Students choose vocabulary words that are unknown to them and complete the vocabulary activity using those words.
3	<b>Task 3: Reread and Dig Deeper</b>	Read passage a third time. Students answer deeper level questions, citing text evidence to support answers.
4	<b>Task 4: Reread and Respond</b>	Students use the graphic organizer to identify the main idea and supporting details of the passage.
5	<b>Task 5: Summarize</b>	Using the completed graphic organizer from Day 4, students write a summary supporting details for the passage.

The reading levels for each differentiated passage are provided in this chart:

Passage Title	Symbol	Lexile Level
Death Valley: An Extreme Environment	■	750
	▲	950

# 5 Days of Close Reading Activities for GREATER Reading Comprehension

## Task 1 - Read & Annotate

Name: \_\_\_\_\_ Day: \_\_\_\_\_

As you read through Death Valley for the first time, use your annotating marks and write important notes in the margin. Then, answer these questions:

- Circle powerful words or phrases.
- Underline words or phrases you do not understand.
- Place a question mark near something that makes you think of a question.
- Write an exclamation mark near something that surprises you.
- Draw an arrow where you make a personal connection to certain words or ideas.
- Write your important thoughts in the margins.

### First Reading Questions:

1. What is this passage mostly about?  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_
2. When did Death Valley earn its name?  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_
3. How many miles of roads are in Death Valley National Park?  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_
4. What is the highest peak in the park and how tall is it?  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_
5. How much rain, on average, does Death Valley receive each year?  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

## Task 3 - Reread & Dig Deeper

Day: \_\_\_\_\_

Write four words which are unfamiliar to you below.

SENTENCE	WORD:	SYNONYM
	DEFINITION	
PICTURE		

SENTENCE	WORD:	SYNONYM
	DEFINITION	
PICTURE		

## Task 4 - Reread & Respond

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Complete the chart below, listing the main idea and details of the passage.

Detail 2

Detail 4

## Task 5 - Summarize

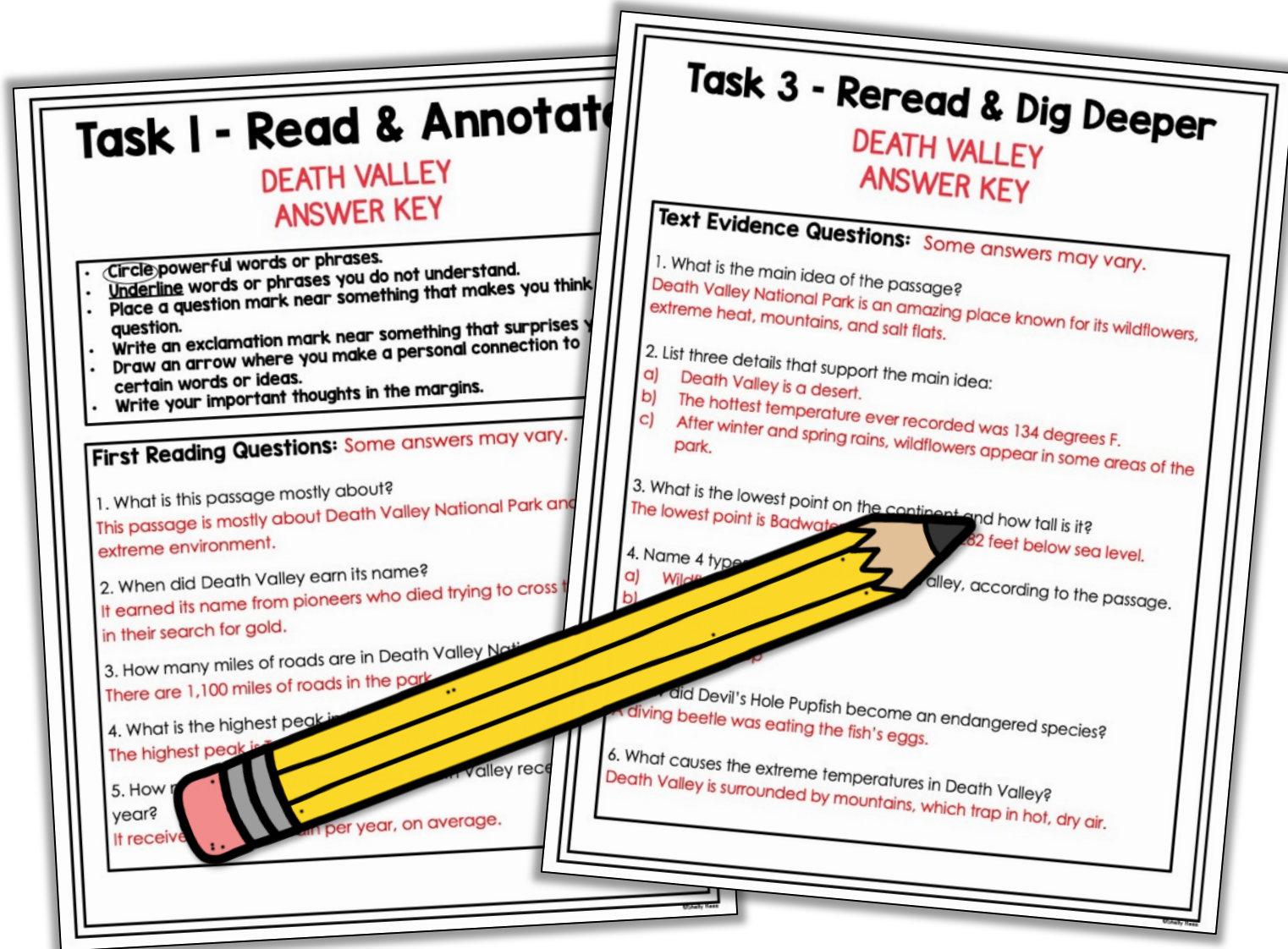
Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Write a summary of the passage. The main idea can be found in the first paragraph. Use the four details to write four sentences by restating the main idea.

### DEATH VALLEY

**NO PREP!**  
**Print and Go!**

# Answer Keys Provided



The image shows two overlapping worksheet pages for a reading activity about Death Valley. A large yellow pencil with a pink eraser and a sharpened lead tip is positioned diagonally across the bottom of the pages. The top page is titled 'Task 3 - Reread & Dig Deeper' and 'DEATH VALLEY ANSWER KEY'. It contains 'Text Evidence Questions' with six numbered questions and their corresponding answers. The bottom page is titled 'Task 1 - Read & Annotate' and 'DEATH VALLEY ANSWER KEY'. It includes a list of annotation instructions, 'First Reading Questions' with five numbered questions and their answers, and a list of 'Text Evidence Questions' with three numbered questions and their answers.

**Task 1 - Read & Annotate**  
**DEATH VALLEY ANSWER KEY**

- Circle powerful words or phrases.
- Underline words or phrases you do not understand.
- Place a question mark near something that makes you think a question.
- Write an exclamation mark near something that surprises you.
- Draw an arrow where you make a personal connection to certain words or ideas.
- Write your important thoughts in the margins.

**First Reading Questions:** Some answers may vary.

1. What is this passage mostly about?  
This passage is mostly about Death Valley National Park and its extreme environment.
2. When did Death Valley earn its name?  
It earned its name from pioneers who died trying to cross the valley in their search for gold.
3. How many miles of roads are in Death Valley National Park?  
There are 1,100 miles of roads in the park.
4. What is the highest peak in Death Valley?  
The highest peak is Mt. Whitney.
5. How much rain does Death Valley receive each year?  
It receives about 2 inches of rain per year, on average.

**Task 3 - Reread & Dig Deeper**  
**DEATH VALLEY ANSWER KEY**

**Text Evidence Questions:** Some answers may vary.

1. What is the main idea of the passage?  
Death Valley National Park is an amazing place known for its wildflowers, extreme heat, mountains, and salt flats.
2. List three details that support the main idea:  
a) Death Valley is a desert.  
b) The hottest temperature ever recorded was 134 degrees F.  
c) After winter and spring rains, wildflowers appear in some areas of the park.
3. What is the lowest point on the continent and how tall is it?  
The lowest point is Badwater, 282 feet below sea level.
4. Name 4 types of plants or animals found in Death Valley, according to the passage.  
a) Wildflowers  
b) Joshua trees  
c) Sagebrush  
d) Devil's Hole Pupfish
5. Why did Devil's Hole Pupfish become an endangered species?  
A diving beetle was eating the fish's eggs.
6. What causes the extreme temperatures in Death Valley?  
Death Valley is surrounded by mountains, which trap in hot, dry air.