

Nonfiction: Plants and Places

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Plants live in many different environments. Some live in the ocean, some live in the desert. Plants are very important to everyone on the planet. Every environment needs plants. Animals need them, and so do people. Many **herbivores** consume plants. Many animals use them to make homes, such as animals that make nests in plants or that create holes in trees to create a secure place to live. If there were no plants in those environments, the animals would be homeless.

When you see a plant you can **discern** a lot about its environment. If the plant has extensive leaves and flowers, that tells you where it lives. It lives in a warm environment. That plant needs warm sunny days to grow, and it needs water, too. So that environment will be wet and warm. Those are part of the climate. Climate is what the weather is all year, how warm or cold the place is in winter, spring, summer, and fall. Wind is part of climate, too. There are constant changes in the wind, it seems, but actually there are patterns. For example, the wind in the United States usually tends to move towards the east from Chicago, so if you are traveling by plane from Chicago to the east your plane's journey will be faster than when you return because you'll be traveling against the wind.

Each state has a state flower. That state flower is a clue to the climate of that state. The state flower of Illinois is the violet, which is a small plant that has little flowers. What is the climate of Illinois? We have hot summers and long cold winters, and there is frequent rainfall and often deep snowfall, so there is substantial precipitation. Plants start to grow here in spring, and the growing season continues through summer, so most Illinois plants grow big—you can see that if you visit a cornfield or a forest preserve. Then in fall they lose their leaves and flowers. Illinois is a Midwestern state. The magnolia could not live in a Midwestern state. It needs a different climate. If you look at the state flowers of Midwestern states you will see they have small flowers. The violet also is the state flower of Wisconsin.

Some states have really **unique** state flowers. You won't find their flowers in other states. The cactus is the state flower of Arizona, a state in the southwestern United States. The Saguaro Cactus lives in the desert. A desert is a climate that has less than 10 inches of rain or snow all year. Arizona has a dry, hot climate. The cactus is the most prominent plant there. It has adapted to that hot, dry climate. Birds live there, too. Some birds live in the Saguaro cactus. They make holes in the side of the cactus. The Saguaro cactus cannot live in Illinois or Florida. It has adapted to the hot dry desert climate. Desert plants and animals **exemplify** how to adapt to a hot dry climate. They do not just survive. They **thrive**.

The magnolia is a plant that grows in a warm rainy climate. It has very big flowers. The artist Martin Heade painted pictures of magnolias when he lived in Florida. He thought they were beautiful flowers. People think his paintings are beautiful. You will find magnolias in Florida and other states of the southeast United States. You will see them in Mississippi. In fact, the magnolia is the state flower of Mississippi and also the state flower of Louisiana.

Directions: Choose the best answer for each question

1. Which words tell you what **herbivores** means in this passage?

- a. eat them
- b. needs plants
- c. different environments
- d. make homes

2. What does **unique** mean in this passage?

- a. a kind of plant
- b. very different from others
- c. with big leaves
- d. live in desert

3. What does **exemplify** mean in the passage?

- a. example
- b. show
- c. survive
- d. experiment

4. What does **thrive** mean in the passage?

- a. succeed
- b. adapt
- c. change
- d. thorough

5. *Write your own answer to this question.*

What does **discern** mean in the passage?

Questions developed for Chicago Public Schools by CUE, 2009.

TEACHER NOTES: Develop Students' Skills: Exercise Thinking

These questions have not been validated, so decisions about student's achievement should not be made based on their responses. They are intended to exercise skills. Recommended activities include: students work in pairs to choose the best response; give students the questions without the responses so they generate their own answers; students make up additional questions; students make up questions like these for another passage.

Answers: *You can remove this answer key and then give it to students and ask them to figure out the basis for the correct response.*

Item	1	2	3	4
Answer	a	b	b	a

Question 5 is open-ended. Here is a suggested response.

5. Figure out.