



Helen & Bill Thayer's *People of the Wind and Sand* Gobi Trek Classroom Guide

The suggested study material is suitable for grades 3 through 12 with the option of selecting appropriate sections to suit various age groups. The program can be used for classroom study of history, geography, science, zoology and humanities of the Gobi Desert.

Lifestyle Choices

1. Classroom discussion of the goals Helen and Bill Thayer set themselves as they set out on this challenging journey.

- (a) why are goals so important in our lives?
- (b) what is your next goal?

2. The plan: A classroom project of planning for such an adventure.

- (a) how would you plan to ensure success?
- (b) remember a goal is useless without a well thought out plan.

3. Focus on your goal and know you can reach it.

- (a) How would you face problems as you set out on the journey toward your goal?
- (b) would you be determined to solve problems or would you quit at the first problem?

4. Always be the very best you can be. Set goals, plan for success and persevere.

- (a) Is this the way you want to run your life?
- (b) Are you determined to persevere and do your very best to reach your goals?

5. Choices: There are times throughout our lives when we must make choices.

- (a) Our choices always have to be responsible and respectful of others.
- (b) What good choices have you made this week?

Classroom Project -- planning for an adventure such as a trek across the desert.

- (a) How would you plan to ensure success?
- (b) Remember a goal is useless without a well thought-out plan.
- (c) What would you eat? What special clothes would you take? What about water in the desert?
- (d) How would you find your way?
- (e) Is "being there" yourself better than watching someone else on TV, or in the movies, who is doing this kind of adventure?





Other Topics for Study

1. Where is Mongolia?
2. What is a "land-locked" country?
3. What is the capital of Mongolia?
4. What is the population of the country?
5. What are some of the animals that live in the Gobi desert?
6. What are some of the animals that live in the mountains of Mongolia?
7. Why are the people who live in the desert called "nomads?"
8. What is the name they call their houses.
9. What is it made of?
10. Can you draw their house?
11. What animal is Mongolia most famous for?
12. Who is Chingis Khan?
13. What are the winters in Mongolia like?
14. What are the summers in Mongolia like?
15. What is the country to the north of Mongolia?
16. What is the country to the south?
17. What is the name of the camel that lives in the Gobi Desert? How many humps does it have?
18. Why does a camel have a hump?



Mongolians love their animals

The Mongolian nomads are often called "Five-animal people" because the nomadic society is based on the five principal animals traditionally herded: horses, camels, cattle, sheep and goats. They also keep Tibetan yaks, used for producing milk and cheese. The horse is the most important of the five animals. In Mongolia, everyone mostly respects the horse. It is even part of Mongolia's national emblem. It is said that children are taught to ride before walking. To catch the horse, Mongols use a polo-lasso called "uurga" consisting of a rope loop at the end of a very long pole. Mares are milked and the fermented milk is the Mongolians' favorite drink.



A Mongolian woman with her two children. Where do you think the van came from?



A large family shares a small space in a Mongolian home. They must all get along very well.

Here are some words derived from Mongolian:

- Moscow ("mushgia"-twisted or spiral)
- Kremlin ("kherem"-fortification)
- Embassy ("amban saida"-high minister)
- Baikal ("baigal"-nature)
- Dalai Lama ("dalai"-ocean)



This is the stove where the food for the family is cooked. Do you know what is used for fuel in this stove?

Topics for Study

As Helen and Bill Thayer walked 1,450 miles across the desert, they asked themselves many questions; here are some of them. What answers would you give?

Would it be kinder to the animals and to the Gobi people if they would move north to the more lush areas of Mongolia where there would be better pasture and water? It appeared to us that there was barely sufficient food and water to support the hardy indigenous animals that roam the desert that they call home and not enough food to support both the people and the animals. Do you think the desert people would move? Why do you think they don't move?

The Gobi herdsman families follow the traditions of their ancestors and use the knowledge that is handed down to them concerning the land, its plants and water sources to feed their herds. They pass this knowledge onto their children. They resist moving because they only know how to live in the desert; new areas would be foreign to them and the learning would have to begin all over again. Can you understand how they feel?

Other people may already live in these better grazing areas with their herds and their traditions. What would happen if newcomers would arrive from the desert with their herds. Would they all share the available good land together or would clashes between the different groups arise?

There is no easy solution to the Gobi Desert problems of disappearing water and increased desertification. Mongolia is truly at a crossroads. increasing population, natural resource consumption, and the political, social, and economic changes now sweeping the nation threaten the future of Mongolia's remaining wild places.

Creative Writing

Write, using good descriptive words so that your reader knows exactly what you see and mean.
Write word pictures.

1. Describe what you think a ger looks like. Visit www.oneearthadventures to learn more about how a ger is built.
2. Describe the winter weather.
3. Describe the summer weather in the Gobi Desert.
4. Describe a Gobi camel
5. Describe your feelings if you were walking across the desert and you had to find water?
6. How would you feel when you finally reached the end of your long journey across the desert?



Adventure Classroom -- People of the Wind and Sand -- Questions and Answers

- 1) Where is Mongolia?** In Asia located between Russia to the north and China to the south.
- 2. What does a "land-locked" country mean?** It has no access to any body of water
- 3. What is the capital of Mongolia?** Ulaan Baatar (Red Hero)
- 4. What is the population of the country?** Estimates vary because no accurate census has been taken in many years but it is generally estimated at 2.5 million
- 5. What are some of the animals that live in the Gobi desert?** Gobi bear, the only desert bear in the world, gazelle, wild asses, geko lizards, bactrian camels, wolves
- 6. What are some of the animals that live in the mountains of Mongolia?** snow leopards, mountain sheep, ibex
- 7. Why are the people who live in the desert called "nomads?"** They move with their herds from place to place following water sources and food for their animals
- 8. What is the name they call their houses.** Ger
- 9. What is a ger made of?** The first inside layer is an accordion like wooded lattice work, next comes a thick layer of insulating felt, then the outside layer of white canvas
- 10. Can you draw their house?** Circular frame makes the wall with a dome for roof
- 11. What animal is Mongolia most famous for?** Horses
- 12. Who is Chingis Khan?** Chinggis Khaan (Universal King) was the Mongolian king who united warring clans and led fearless Mongolian warriors on their sturdy horses to defeat one army after another as they swept across Asia. At the time of his death in 1227 Mongolia controlled the largest continuous empire the world has ever known. The Empire extended all the way from Beiji in the south to the Caspian Sea in the north west.
- 13. What are the winters of Mongolia like?** Polar like weather with strong winds and snow sweeping across Mongolia from Siberia. Temperatures can dip to minus 50 degrees F.
- 14. What are the summers of Mongolia like?** Windy, moderately warm for northern and central Mongolia. The Gobi desert is hot, dry and windy with temperatures that can reach 126 degrees in the shade, but there generally is no shade in the Gobi.
- 15. What is the country to the north of Mongolia?** Russia, who controlled the region for 70 years until 1990 when Mongolia became an independent country
- 16. What is the country to the south?** China
- 17. What is the name of the camel that lives in the Gobi Desert and how many humps does it have?** Bactrian camels. It has two humps. There are two species closely related. The domestic and the wild camel. The latter is on the extremely endangered list and its future is uncertain. The domestic camel has slightly larger humps than its wild cousin and has wool that is a darker brown. The wild camel wool is a dark gray.
- 18. Why does a camel have a hump?** to store fat to be used in times of starvation