

This classroom activity introduces students to the context of the performance task. This ensures that students are not disadvantaged in completing the skills the task intends to assess. Contextual elements include understanding the situation of the task, potentially unfamiliar concepts associated with the situation or setting, and key terms or vocabulary students will need to understand in order to engage with the performance task. This classroom activity is also intended to interest the students in the task they are to complete. This activity should be easy to implement, and contains clear instructions.

Please read through the entire classroom activity before beginning the activity with students. This will ensure that all classroom preparation is completed before the activity begins.

Resources Needed:

- Chart paper, whiteboard, or chalkboard
- Markers or chalk
- One piece of paper and pencil per group (If needed accommodations may be made for a different writing tool)
- A method of displaying the figures such as a projector

Learning Goal:

- Students will understand the importance of the Grand Canyon and be able to give specific examples of things that make the Grand Canyon special
- Students will understand the key terms:
 - **Erosion:** the gradual destruction or diminution of something or the way that material such as sand and rock is worn away from the Earth's surface.
 - **Arid:** having little or no rain; too dry or barren to support vegetation.
 - **Ancestral Puebloans:** also known as the Anasazi, were a hunter-gathering society that lived in the Northern Rim of the canyon where they farmed from 500 AD to 1150 AD when they left due to drought

Definitions are provided here for the convenience of facilitators. Students are expected to understand these key terms as they arise in the context of the task, not to be able to recite the definitions.

[**Purpose:** The facilitator's goal is to introduce students to the importance of the Grand Canyon and why the Grand Canyon is considered special.]

[Divide students into groups. Depending on classroom size or preference make groups of two to four students. Give each group a piece of paper and a pencil.]

Facilitator says: "Today we will be learning about the Grand Canyon and its importance. Can anyone tell me in what state the Grand Canyon is located?"

[Pick a student volunteer.]

Facilitator says: "The Grand Canyon is located in Arizona. It is 277 miles long and it is divided into the North and South Rim. The Colorado River created the Grand Canyon through erosion."

[Write "erosion" on the board.]

Facilitator says: "Can anyone tell me what erosion is?"

[Pick a student volunteer.]

[Write the definition on the board underneath the word. The definition can be the one provided above, the student's or a definition the facilitator believes to provide better information.]

Facilitator says: "Erosion is a slow process, so the Grand Canyon took millions of years to reach the depth it has now. Even to this day the Grand Canyon is becoming deeper because of erosion from the Colorado River since it continues to flow through it. Although the changes are not clearly visible, they occur every day and will continue to shape the Grand Canyon."

[Display **Figure 1**]

Facilitator says: "The Grand Canyon has all four seasons. The climate depends on what part of the Grand Canyon you are; the South Rim, the North Rim, or the Inner Canyon. The inner canyon is the hottest part of the canyon. It is arid."

[Write "arid" on the board.]

Facilitator says: "Can anyone tell me what arid means?"

[Pick a student volunteer.]

[Write the definition on the board underneath the word. The definition can be the one provided above, the student's or a definition the facilitator believes to provide better information.]

Facilitator says: "What are some other places that are arid?"

[Choose a couple of student volunteers.]

Facilitator says: "The North Rim is higher than the South Rim and is the coldest part of the Canyon. It can receive snow most of the year. The South Rim's climate is the most stable. It has mild summers and nights and receives less snow than the North Rim. Do you think there is more life in the North Rim, South Rim or the Inner Canyon? Why? Take some time to talk with your group."

[Allow students to discuss with their groups for two minutes. After three minutes ask each group to present an answer. This discussion should take four minutes.]

Facilitator says: "The most amount of wildlife can be found in the South Rim, but the Ancestral Puebloans lived in the Northern Rim. The Ancestral Puebloans, also known as the Anazasi, carved their villages into the Northern Rim. Why do you think they carved their villages into the side of the North Rim? Take some time to talk with your group."

[Allow students to discuss for two minutes. After three minutes ask each group for their answers. The discussion should last about three minutes.]

Facilitator says: "The Ancestral Puebloans lived in caves because they could protect themselves against many things, such as the climate, and their rivals which include the Navajo and the wildlife. This is also why they chose to live in the North Rim since most of the wildlife and other tribes lived in the South Rim. The South Rim contains the Ponderosa Forest which allows many of animals to live in the South Rim. One of the animals is called the Abert's squirrel, which looks similar to the squirrels in the North Rim. Their tail and ears are different, and they became different though the separation of the squirrels by the Grand Canyon."

[Display **Figure 2**]

Facilitator says: "The Abert's squirrel is on the left while the Kaibab, the squirrels that live in the North Rim, is on the right. Why do you think the squirrels living on different sides of the Canyon made them different? Take some time to talk with your group."

[Allow students to discuss with their groups for five minutes. Choose a couple of student volunteers. This discussion should take five minutes.]

Note: The list below is only for the facilitator's reference and does not have to be used. Items already addressed by students should not be repeated.

- They needed to find different places to live
- They needed to defend themselves from different animals
- They had to live in different climates
- They had different food.

Facilitator says: "In your performance task, you will learn more about the Grand Canyon. The work you did today should help you prepare for the research and writing you will be doing in the performance task."

[Collect all notes from students and remind them that they cannot be used during the performance task.]

Resource Documents

Figure 1. Picture of the Grand Canyon



[Picture Description: "The picture shows the Grand Canyon to give students a visual of the impact erosion has in the creation of the Grand Canyon."]

Figure 2. Abert's and Kaibab squirrels



[Picture Description: "The picture shows Abert's and Kaibab squirrels to show the differences in appearance of squirrels found in different parts of the Grand Canyon."**]**