Name: Date: Score: / 6

Death Valley: Reading Comprehension

Nonfiction: Places · about 260 words

Read the passage. Then answer each question. Circle the best answer or write your answer on the lines.

Death Valley

Death Valley, in eastern California and part of Nevada, is the hottest, driest, and lowest national park in the United States. In July 1913, a temperature of 134 degrees Fahrenheit was recorded at Furnace Creek, often listed as the hottest air temperature ever recorded on Earth. Summer days regularly soar above 120 degrees.

The park's lowest point, Badwater Basin, sits 282 feet below sea level. It is the lowest point in North America. Ancient lakes once filled the valley. When they dried up, they left behind vast, glittering salt flats.

Death Valley gets only about two inches of rain in an average year. Mountains to the west block most storms coming from the Pacific Ocean, creating what scientists call a rain shadow. Air loses its moisture as it rises over the mountains, so it is dry by the time it reaches the valley.

Despite its name and harsh climate, Death Valley is full of life. Desert bighorn sheep climb its rocky slopes. Kangaroo rats survive without ever drinking water, getting all the moisture they need from seeds. Tiny pupfish live in salty pools left over from the ancient lakes. In rare years when enough rain falls, the desert floor explodes with wildflowers in an event called a "super bloom."

Visitors come to see colorful canyons, sand dunes, and the famous "sailing stones," rocks that leave long trails across a dry lakebed. For years, no one knew how they moved. In 2014, scientists discovered that thin sheets of ice, pushed by light winds, slowly shove the rocks across the mud.

1. **Main idea:** What is this passage mostly about?

   A. how to survive in the desert B. how rain forms C. Death Valley's extreme climate, wildlife, and features D. the history of California

2. **Detail:** What is Badwater Basin?

   A. a mountain peak B. the lowest point in North America C. a lake full of fish D. the hottest town in Nevada

3. **Vocabulary:** A rain shadow is...

   A. a wet valley B. a shadow made by clouds C. a kind of storm D. a dry area on the side of mountains away from storms

4. **Detail:** How do kangaroo rats get water?

   A. from cactus flowers only B. from rain puddles C. from the seeds they eat D. from rivers

5. **Detail:** What moves the sailing stones?

   A. strong earthquakes B. thin sheets of ice pushed by light winds C. animals D. people at night

6. **Inference:** Why is it surprising that Death Valley is "full of life"?

ANSWER KEY

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6. **Inference:** Why is it surprising that Death Valley is "full of life"?

   Its name and harsh, hot, dry climate make it seem like nothing could live there.