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Activity One

INSECTS OF THE DESERT

The Higher Power of Lucky makes reference to a number of frightening insects that make their homes in hot desert regions. Most people are deathly afraid of insects and arachnids (i.e. spiders) and the mere mention of them will make their skin crawl. Lucky, however, seems not to mind the insects with whom she comes into contact.

A number of such creatures are mentioned in this novel including:

- tarantula hawk wasps
- tarantulas
- black widow spiders

These are just a few of the multitude of tiny creatures inhabiting deserts such as the Mojave.

Other *creepy crawlers* include:

- scorpionss
- yucca moths
- locusts
- darkling beetles
- harvester ants
- honeypot ants

Consider this...

A locust is a special type of grasshopper. They travel from place to place, eating all the plants they find. Locusts can destroy many crops in a single day.

Your task is to choose one of these insects (or arachnids). Create an **information card** (similar to a baseball or hockey card) with a description of the creature, a picture, any unusual characteristics (i.e. 'the darkling beetle has a hard, white, wing case that reflects the Sun's energy'), and other information you find interesting.



Activity Two

SNAKES

This activity can be done with students working in small groups.

Brigitte is not a lover of snakes, is she? When one crawls into her dryer, she almost *dies of fright*. Fortunately it is only a **red racer** and not the poisonous **rattlesnake** or **sidewinder** – also found in the Mojave Desert. However, even red racers should be handled with caution – especially the larger ones. They do bite!

There are a lot of dangerous creatures found in this area of the world. There are also lots of creatures (like the red racer snake) which might not be deadly – but are very scary.

Reptiles of the Mojave Desert are represented by two different orders:

- lizards and snakes
- turtles

Your task is to investigate one of the reptiles found in the Mojave Desert. You may choose a lizard, a snake, OR a turtle.

Examples of lizards found on the Mojave include: chuckwalla, desert iguana, collared lizard, whiptail lizard and the long-nosed leopard lizard. Some of the snakes include: Mojave rattlesnake, rosy boa, sidewinder, spotted leaf-nosed snake and the coachwhip. Varieties of turtles are not as abundant – varieties include the tortoise and the western pond turtle.

Prepare an information sheet on one of the above creatures or another species of reptile found in the Mojave Desert. Include a picture, a description, diet, particular habitat, life history, and any other important information you wish to include.

Consider this...

*Even if a **snake** is not poisonous, it should pretend to be venomous."*

~ Chanakya quotes

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Activity Three

HARD PAN CAFÉ

The last couple of chapters of ***The Higher Power of Lucky*** reveal Brigitte's plans to open a restaurant in Hard Pan – much to the relief of Lucky and all the other residents of the little town.

It would probably be a lot of fun to be a restaurant owner – and a lot of work! Much thought would have to go into the facility, layout of the restaurant, staff, hours of business, furnishings and supplies . . . Putting together a suitable **menu** would no doubt require a lot of creativity and knowledge of the tastes of potential customers.

Your task will be to give Brigitte some help in planning her menu for the ***Hard Pan Café***. A good starting point might be to take a look at a few sample menus of cafes in your area (or on the internet).

You should consider categories such as:

- drinks
- breakfast items
- lunch items
- entrees (for dinner)
- desserts

You should also give some thought to pricing for each item.

Make your menu as neat and presentable as possible. It should include an attractive cover and two pages inside. Doing it on a computer would be a good idea. You might consider including a suitable graphic or two.

“A well-run restaurant is like a winning baseball team. It makes the most of every crew member's talent and takes advantage of every split-second opportunity to speed up service.” ~ David Ogilvy

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Activity Four

TOURIST BROCHURE



Most areas of the world are always anxious to attract visitors and tourists to their locale. Whether it be a small Arctic village or a wildforest preserve in the Amazon jungle, tourist dollars can be a real boost to the local economy.

In ***The Higher Power of Lucky*** a number of unique locations are featured:

- California
- Mojave Desert
- Hard Pan
- France!

Each of these locations offers a wide assortment of unique attractions for travelers – even the little town of **Hard Pan** (population 43).

Your task is to create a **brochure** designed to attract tourists to the location of your choice. It is quite likely that different people might be attracted to Hard Pan than would be attracted to a visit to France. Who would be the best audience for your brochure?

A good starting point might be to study a few brochures and collect some ideas regarding layout, and what they typically include. Next, rough out some ideas (a picture or two, pertinent information, etc.).

Your final product should be professional-looking. Include at least one picture, a map, prices, and feature a number of attractions which should draw people to your location (these might include museums, accommodations, restaurants, etc.).

Remember, many businesses rely on the tourist trade for survival – it is up to you to create an appealing brochure that will draw people from all over the world to their place of business!

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Activity Five

AN ALTERNATE ENDING

This activity can be done individually or in small groups.

The conclusion of *The Higher Power of Lucky* is quite memorable and does an admirable job of piecing together a number of **loose ends**. What is quite effective as well is how it leaves the reader wondering about other issues (i.e. Will Lucky's dad ever be a part of her life?; Will Brigitte's restaurant succeed?; Will Lucky's friendship with Lincoln blossom?; How will Miles cope?).

What if Susan Patron had woken up on the wrong side of the bed on the day she wrote the novel's concluding chapters? What if the story didn't end the way it is described in these pages, but had taken another **turn in the road**? Although we will never know the answers to these questions, you will be given the opportunity to put your imagination to work in coming up with what might have happened if the author had decided to write a completely different ending.

If working with a group, brainstorm possible alternative endings to the novel. Remember to consider all of the principal characters. From your list of ideas choose one ending to present to the class. Write a detailed synopsis of your alternate conclusion including as much detail as possible. After presenting it to the class, you may wish to get their input as to additional changes that might be made to further improve your alternative ending.

Have fun!



Activity Six

SURVIVAL!

This activity can be done individually or in small groups.

Lucky seems almost obsessed with putting together the perfect survival kit, doesn't she? She seems to be always thinking of things to include or take away from a backpack that is already very full. Of course getting lost in a dust storm in the middle of the Mojave Desert is no laughing matter, and many of the items in Lucky's survival kit did come in very handy.

Your task will be to put together a survival kit.

First – choose a **habitat**. It can be the Mojave Desert, the woods of northern Canada, the Amazon Rainforest, the Rocky Mountains – or another location of your choosing. It must be a habitat far-removed from civilization.

Imagine now that you must survive alone in this environment for seven days and seven nights. You are to fill a backpack like Lucky's with items to help you survive. You may not include a cell phone or rescue device.

Consider your environment. What season is it? What is the weather usually like there? Will extra clothing be necessary? Netting to keep away insects? Food? Water? Shelter? Fire-making equipment?

Remember – you may take as many items as you wish – provided they all fit into a standard backpack.

Good luck!