Springboard into Comprehension 6

Main Idea	Number 15 Orchard Street
	Piracy in the Modern Age
Compare and Contrast	**Two Dying Seas**
	Back from the Brink
Fact and Opinion	What's the Real Story?
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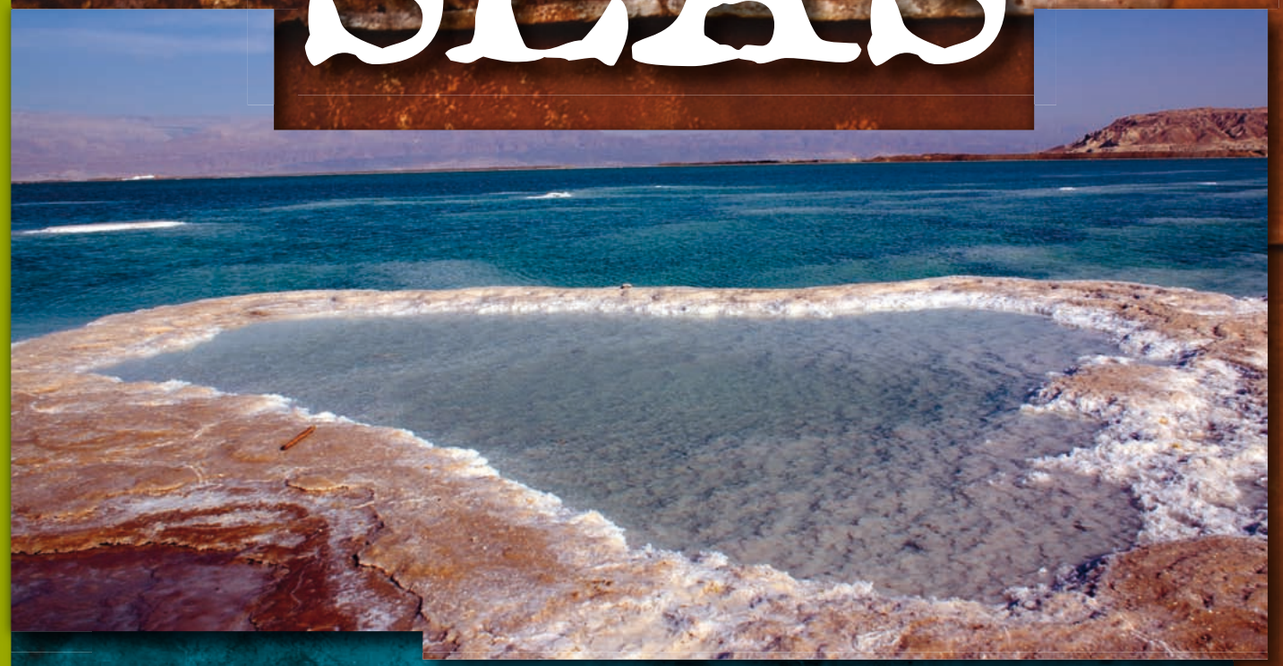
	Use It, Wear It
Bias and Prejudice	My Way or the Highway?
	Whaling
Figurative Language	The Book of Banjo Paterson
	Gold in the Hills

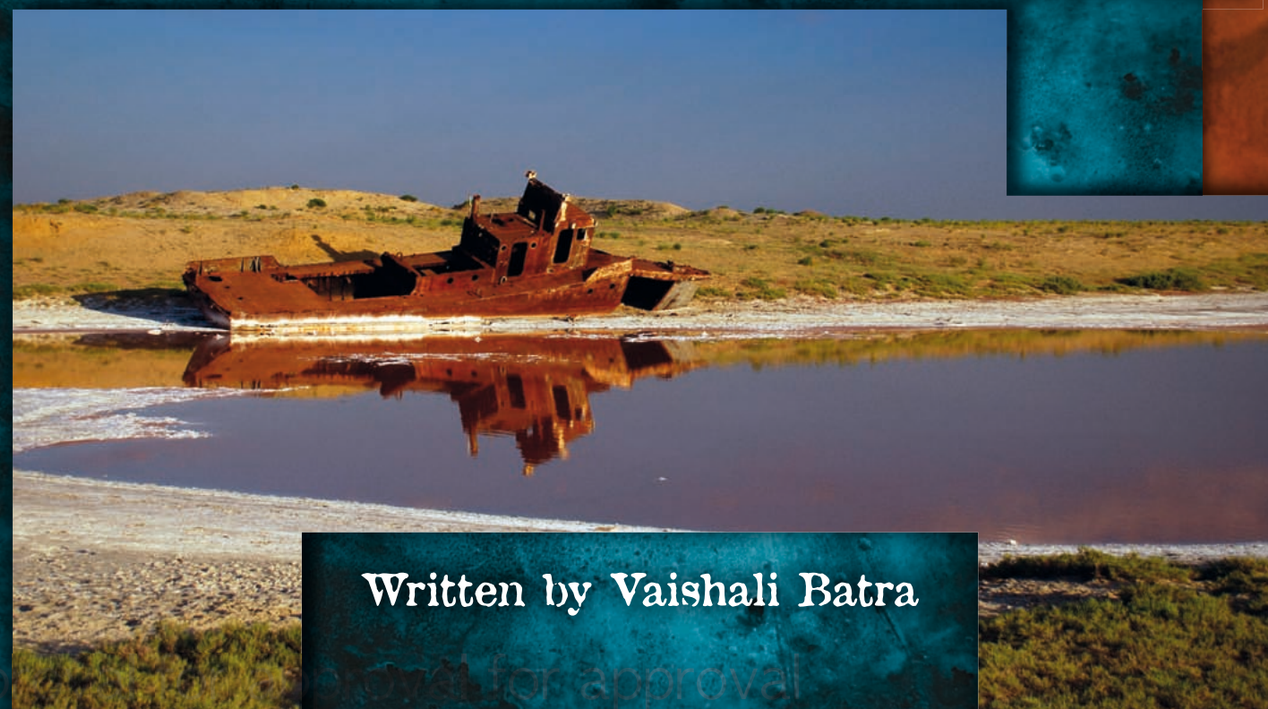
RA 11.5–12.5

Information Report

MACMILLAN

TWO DYING SEAS





Written by Vaishali Batra

TWO DYING SEAS

Contents

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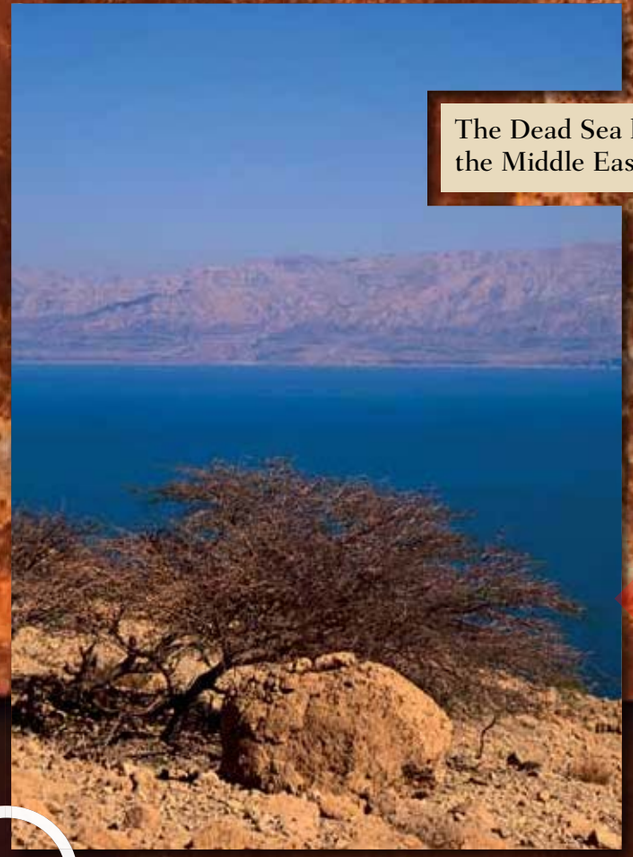
Introduction

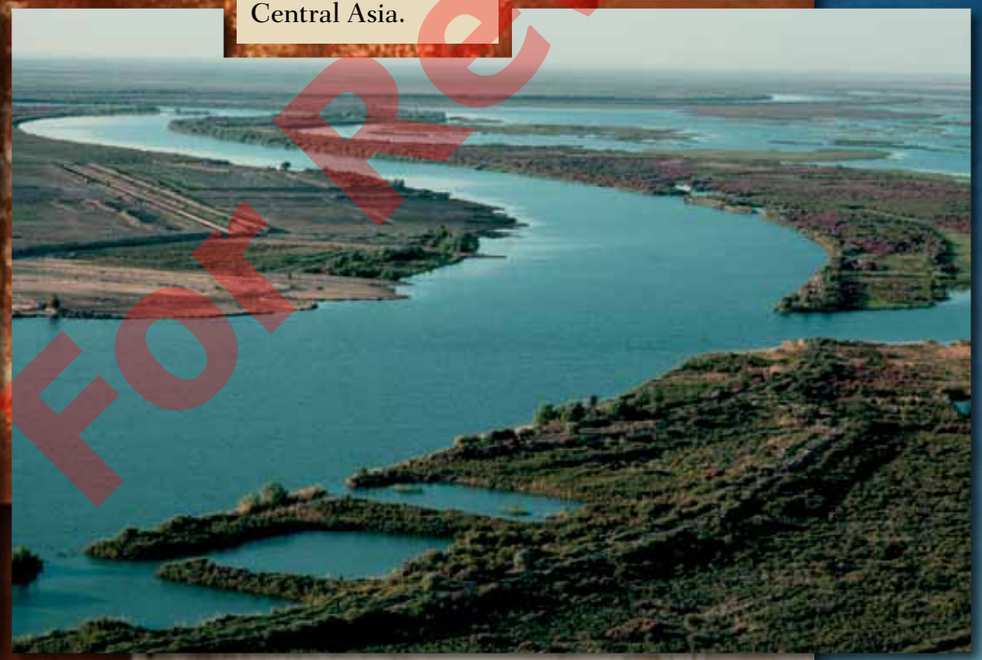
The Dead Sea and the Aral Sea are two important bodies of water. Over many centuries, they have played a large role in the lives of the people living and working on their shores.

Both the Dead Sea and the Aral Sea are surrounded by land on all sides. A sea like this is called a **landlocked sea**. This means that the Dead Sea and the Aral Sea are really huge, saltwater lakes. Both seas are located on the continent of Asia. While the Dead Sea lies between Israel and Jordan, the Aral Sea lies on the border of Kazakhstan and Uzbekistan.

Today, both the Dead Sea and the Aral Sea face the threat of drying up. They are both shrinking at a very fast rate. Their water levels are dropping. Their shorelines have receded a great deal. The Dead Sea has lost one-third of its water. The Aral Sea, on the other hand, has lost nine-tenths of its water. The shrinking of the seas has affected the environment around them. It has affected the people who live on their shores.



The Dead Sea lies in the Middle East.



The Aral Sea lies in Central Asia.

Location of the Dead Sea and the Aral Sea

The Dead Sea

A Famous Sea

The Dead Sea is famous because it is located at the lowest inland point on Earth. Its water surface is around 400 m below the average height of the world's oceans, or the **sea level**. Until 40 years ago, its water spread across an area of about 1,000 square km.

The Dead Sea lies in a valley with highlands on either side. It formed in a depression in Earth's outer crust. The region around the Dead Sea has a hot and dry climate with very little rainfall. The sea receives all its water from the Jordan River. The Dead Sea is a landlocked sea with no outlet. A body of water like this is called an **endorheic basin** (en-duh-REE-ik BAY-sin). The only way an endorheic basin loses water is through the process by which heat turns water into water vapour, **evaporation**. The hot climate of the Dead Sea region, especially in summer, causes a lot of evaporation. Through evaporation, the water is taken away, leaving the salt and minerals that were dissolved in the water behind.

Continuous evaporation has made the Dead Sea very salty. Over many centuries, its water has become about nine times as salty as ocean water. It is the saltiest body of water on Earth. It contains about 300 g of salt per litre of water. Earth's oceans have about 35 g of salt per litre of water.

The Dead Sea is surrounded by towering highlands.

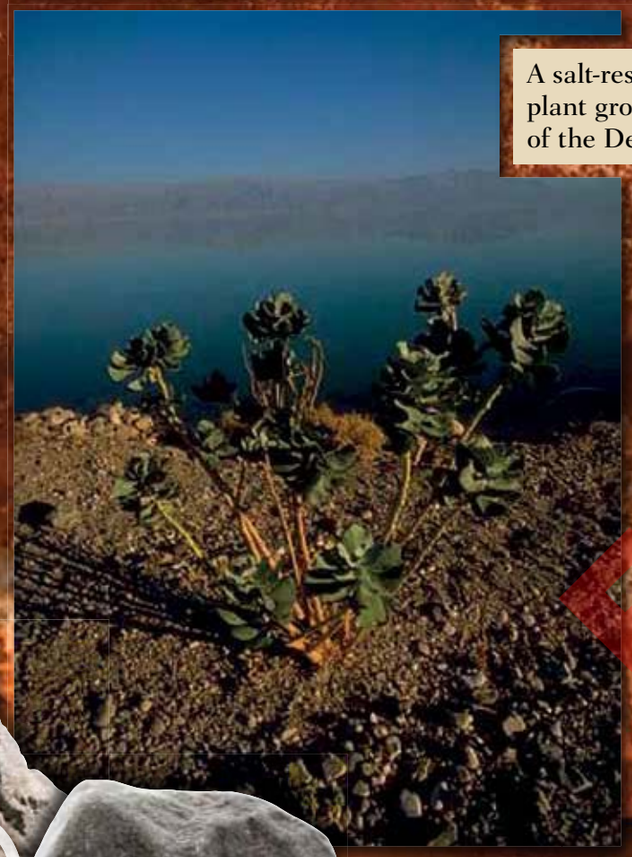
Evaporation leaves behind crystallized salt in the form of coral-like structures.

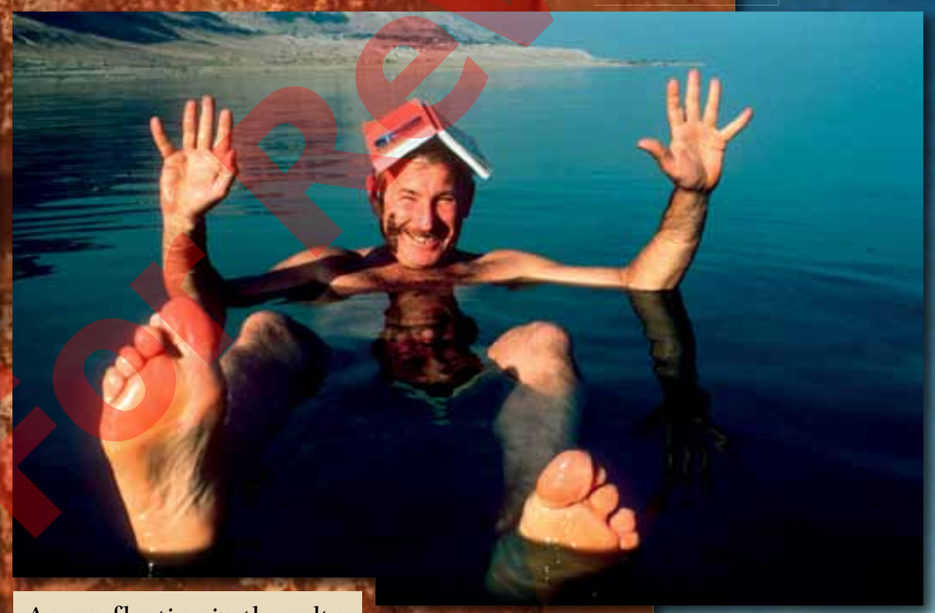
The Dead Sea gets its name from the Arabic words *al-bahr al-mayyit* and the Hebrew words *yam ha-mavet*, meaning *sea of death*. The high salt content, or **salinity**, makes it impossible for animals and plants to survive in its water. The fish carried into the sea by the Jordan River die on contact with its salty water. Only some species of bacteria and algae survive there.

Some species of hardy plants live on the Dead Sea's shores. They are adapted to surviving in salty soil. Plants like these are called halophytes.

The Dead Sea is known as one of Earth's natural wonders, because it is the lowest-lying body of water on Earth. Because of the water's high salinity, people can lie back and float easily on the surface. Salt water is denser than fresh water. The more salt there is in water, the denser it becomes. This increases the buoyancy of objects floating on the water.

A salt-resistant halophyte plant growing on the shores of the Dead Sea





A man floating in the salty waters of the Dead Sea

The Dead Sea is a rich source of minerals. Large factories have been set up along its shores to extract minerals such as potash and bromine from its water. Potash is used to make fertilizers. Bromine has many uses, for example, in pesticides. Some extracted minerals are used to make medicines and beauty products. These products are sold throughout the world.

The Dead Sea supports a large tourism industry. Its water and mud contain many minerals that are known to help heal some skin diseases. Many hotels and spas have been built on its shores. Every year, thousands of tourists visit the Dead Sea.

A huge factory on the Israeli shore of the Dead Sea

People coat themselves with Dead Sea mud, because it is thought to be good for the skin.