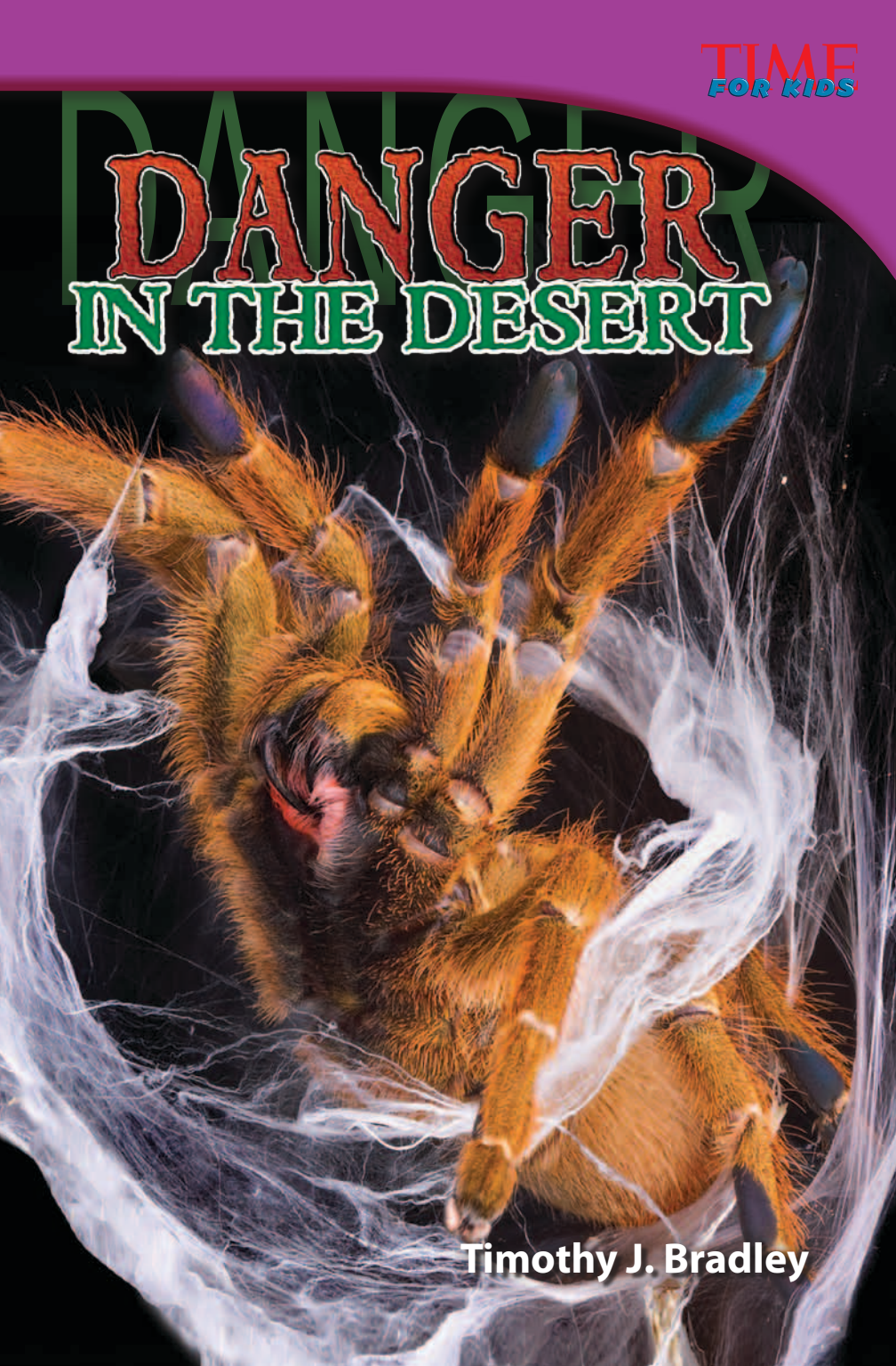
TIME FOR KIDS

DANGER IN THE DESERT



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For teachers' inspection ONLY

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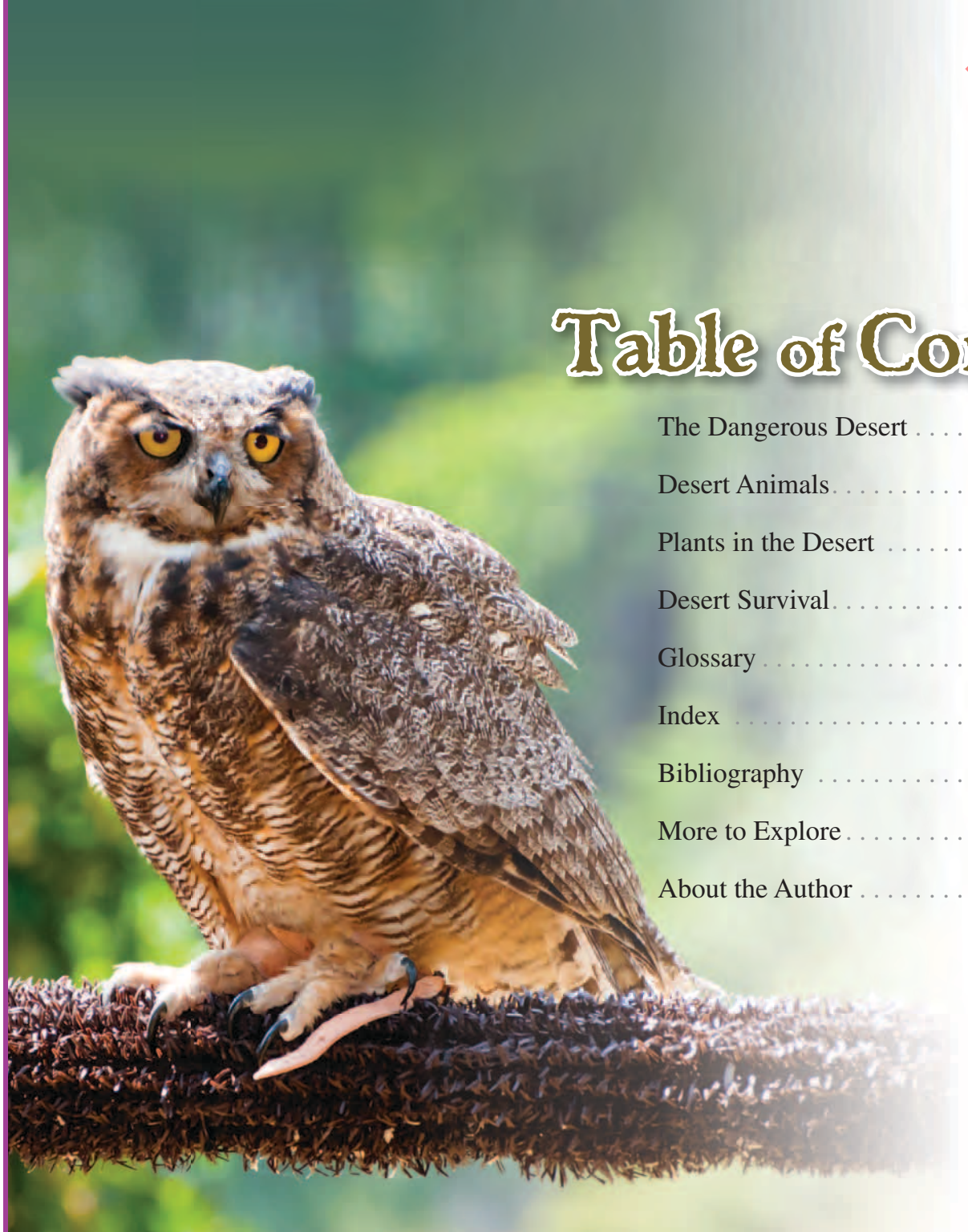


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vulture

The Dangerous Desert

The desert is a harsh place. The sun feels hotter under the dry wind. The land is **parched** and cracked, with little food for those who may try to survive there. A desert is an area that gets less than 10 inches of rain or snow per year. It is a hostile place for anyone—plant or animal. But the desert is not deserted. Thousands of **species** call it home.

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A Desert Is Born

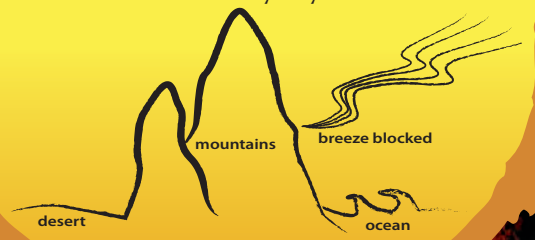
There are many reasons why deserts form. Some deserts develop naturally over time. Others form because of human activity. Natural deserts tend to develop at high **altitudes** where the air is thin and dry. Fewer plants grow in these conditions. Fewer plants means more sunlight hits the ground. The earth grows hot and dry, creating a desert.

Deforestation can also cause deserts to form. When large areas of trees are cut down, an empty field is left behind. Wind blows away soil. Plants cannot grow without soil. Without plants, only a desert can grow.

Some of the world's greatest deserts were once great forests.

Side by Side

Deserts often form near mountains. A tall mountain range blocks the cool, moist ocean breeze from the land on the other side. This creates very dry conditions.



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Desertification

Deserts can be dangerous places for those who live in them. But they also affect people who don't live anywhere near a desert. When **desertification** happens, the land supports less life. That puts us all at risk. Humans can't grow crops. And if we can't grow crops, we can't eat. Animals lose their water supply because land dries up. Species can die out. Scientists around the world are studying our deserts closely. They track how much of the world is in danger of desertification.

Scientists use satellites to view Earth from above. By taking measurements over time, they can see how the land is changing. These photographs show a lake shrinking. The land is drying out, causing the lake to get smaller and smaller.



the Aral Sea in Uzbekistan, 2000



the Aral Sea in Uzbekistan, 2011

Nearly 25 percent of the land on Earth is experiencing desertification.