

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

# The Giants of the Desert: Zion National Park

Zion National Park, located in the high plateau country of southern Utah, is a land of massive sandstone cliffs that reach toward the sky like colorful skyscrapers. These cliffs, painted in brilliant shades of cream, pink, and red, were not built by people. Instead, they were shaped over millions of years by the power of water. The Virgin River, which looks like a small stream today, was once a powerful force that carved through layers of rock to create the deep, narrow valley known as Zion Canyon.

The park has a long and interesting history. Long before it was a park, Native Americans lived in the canyon and farmed the land. Later, explorers and pioneers arrived and were amazed by the tall rock walls. To protect this unique landscape, the government first named it Mukuntuweap National Monument in 1909. However, it wasn't until November 19, 1919, that it was officially designated as Zion National Park. This special status meant the land would be protected forever.



Sandstone cliffs at Zion National Park

Zion is a place of many different environments. In the lower parts of the canyon, it is a hot, dry desert where prickly pear cacti grow. These plants have thick stems that allow them to store water for months at a time. High above on the plateau, the weather is much cooler, and tall ponderosa pine trees provide shade for mule deer and wild turkeys. One of the most famous animals in the park is the desert bighorn sheep. These agile climbers have special hooves that act like suction cups, helping them balance on the steepest rock walls without falling.



Bighorn Sheep

If you visit Zion today, you might choose to hike "The Narrows." This is a unique trail where the canyon walls are thousands of feet high, but the space between them is only twenty feet wide! Because there is no room for a path on the ground, hikers must wear sturdy boots and walk directly into the cold, rushing water of the river. It is a difficult journey, but seeing the sunlight bounce off the orange walls from the bottom of the canyon is a sight most people never forget.



Hiking "The Narrows"

Park rangers now work hard to protect the delicate balance of nature. They make sure that visitors stay on the trails so they do not crush the tiny plants or disturb the animals' homes. By following these rules, we help ensure that this "place of peace" remains beautiful for the children who will visit a hundred years from now.

1. Which sentence best describes the main idea of the entire passage?
  - a. Bighorn sheep use their hooves to climb steep cliffs in the desert.
  - b. Scientists believe that sandstone cliffs are the tallest rocks in the state of Utah.
  - c. The Virgin River is very cold and dangerous for people who try to hike in it.
  - d. Zion National Park is a unique place with amazing rocks, animals, and history.
  
2. Based on the section about "The Narrows," what can you conclude about the hike?
  - a. It is the easiest and shortest trail for families with small children.
  - b. You should probably bring a swimsuit or water gear if you plan to go there.
  - c. The trail is closed during the summer because the water disappears.
  - d. Most hikers prefer to walk on the dry path next to the river.

3. According to the text, what is the correct sequence of the park's names?

- a. Zion National Park, then Mukuntuweap National Monument.
- b. Zion Canyon, then The Narrows, then Utah National Park.
- c. Mukuntuweap National Monument, then Zion National Park.
- d. The Virgin River Monument, then Zion National Park.

4. How does the author organize the information in the third paragraph?

- a. By listing the problems animals face and then giving the solutions.
- b. By comparing the different plants and animals found in various parts of the park.
- c. By telling a story about a specific deer that lives near the pine trees.
- d. By explaining the history of how the park got its name.

5. Why do prickly pear cacti have thick stems?

- a. To protect them from being eaten by the bighorn sheep.
- b. To make them tall enough to reach the sunlight in the deep canyon.
- c. To help them stay cool when the wind blows through the valley.
- d. To allow them to hold onto water in the dry desert environment.

6. What is the author's purpose for mentioning when the park was designated?

- a. To show that the park has been protected for over 100 years.
- b. To prove that the Virgin River is older than the park itself.
- c. To explain why the name of the park was changed from a monument.
- d. To list all the different explorers who visited the canyon.

Want to know more? Visit, <https://www.nps.gov/zion/index.htm>