

## 1

# Water, water

## How do we use water?

### In this unit you will:

#### Experience

- Pakistan
- Isle of Wight
- Syria
- Bangladesh

#### Read

- prose fiction
- travel writing
- a postcard
- a poem

#### Create

- a composition
- a leaflet
- an account

Water, water, everywhere,  
Nor any drop to drink.

From 'The Rime of the Ancient Mariner' by Samuel Taylor Coleridge, 1798



What is the situation described in the quotation above? There is a clue in the title of the poem: a 'mariner' is a sailor.

In Coleridge's poem the sailors, surrounded by salty seawater, are desperate for water to drink. It is impossible for anyone to survive for long without fresh water.

### Talking points

- 1 How is water important to you?
- 2 How much of a role does water play in your daily routines?



## Prose fiction

From *Shabanu: Daughter of the Wind* by Suzanne Fisher Staples

In the following text, a twelve-year-old girl, Shabanu, describes her morning ritual. She lives with her family and their camels in the Cholistan Desert in Pakistan. Water is extremely precious to them. When their water source dries up, they move on to another part of the desert.



Pakistan, showing the location of the Cholistan Desert.

### Word origins

Some of the Urdu names in this novel are similar to English names. *Shabanu* is named after the eighth Islamic month, Shaban. In English the girl's names April, May and June are all the names of months. *Phulan*, the name of Shabanu's older sister, means 'flower'. In English the girls' names Rose, Daisy and Heather are all flower names. *Mithoo* is an affectionate name meaning 'sweet'. In English, little children are sometimes called 'sweetie'.

## ☞ Morning in the Desert ☜

The sky is pearl-grey when I awake. My sister Phulan pushes me out of bed. Yawning and rubbing my eyes, I tie a piece of soap into the corner of my chador. I pick up two earthen pots and a padded ring to balance one pot on my head. The other fits under my arm, balanced on my hip. My camel, Mithoo, and I set off for the water hole, the toba. Mithoo's small brass bell jingles cheerfully as he moves his head, impatient for me to fold back the reed door which leads from our courtyard to the outside. I make Mithoo carry the empty goatskin to the toba.

At the toba I look out over our dwindling water supply. We probably have a month, perhaps three weeks, before the

### GLOSSARY

**Cholistan** comes from the Urdu word *cholna* meaning to move or walk, and *-stan* meaning land or place of. You will see why when you read the story.

**Chador** is an Urdu (originally Persian) word for the shawl or veil worn by Muslim women and girls to cover their heads and shoulders.

A **toba** is a water hole.



water disappears. The monsoon will not begin for another two months. Then will be the time for flowers, mushrooms, weddings and water, but not now. Two-toed camel footprints are baked into the shiny clay at the outer edges of the toba. I lift my skirt with one hand, and the mud squirts between my toes as I enter the water. I push aside the green scum that floats just under the surface and place the edge of my chador over the mouth of the water pot to filter out impurities. I take the filled pot to the bathing rock at the edge of the toba and lift my tunic over my head. I throw my hair forward and pour water over it.

The sun edges over the horizon. I can feel its heat on my back and shoulders as the water trickles over my scalp. I rub the soap into my hair. I squeeze my eyes shut, letting the soapy water drain down my shoulders and neck, rubbing into my skin before rinsing off to preserve every drop. Mama used to bath my sister and me with a single cup of water when we were small.

The sun is extremely hot as I walk back. Over the next week we watch our water dwindle yet further. In the heat of the afternoons, before the daily wind and dust arrive, we dry herbs. As the precious water slips away with the hot desert wind, we also make our preparations for leaving the toba and moving on.

SUZANNE FISHER STAPLES

## Wordpool

Discuss the meaning of the following words taken from the extract.

to awaken (line 1)

to jingle (?)

cheerfully (?)

impatient (8)

monsoon (13)

scum (18)

impurities (20)

tunic (22)

horizon (24)

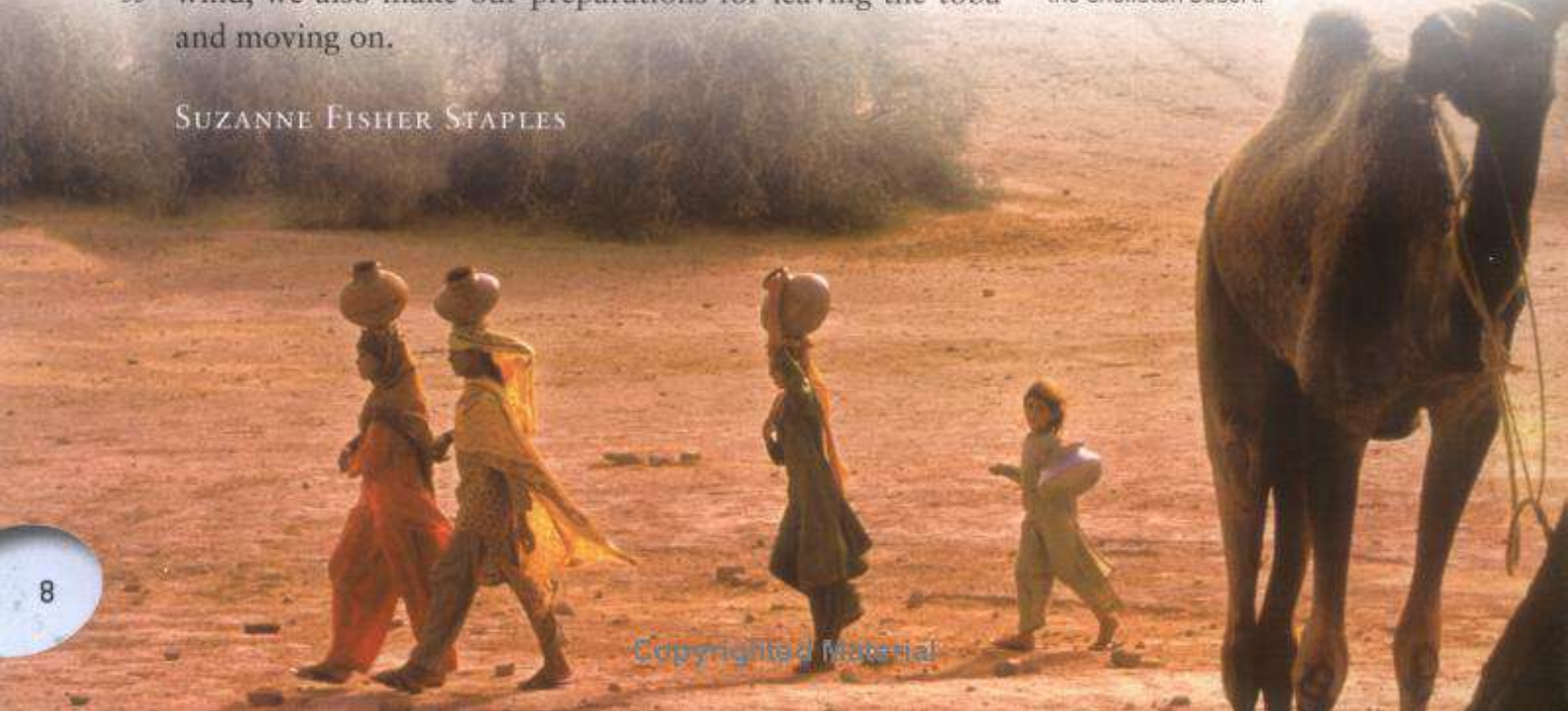
to preserve (28)

to dwindle (32)

precious (34)

Make your own word pool of any other unfamiliar words you come across.

Women carrying water jars in the Cholistan Desert.





## Comprehension

- 1 What does Shabanu take with her to the water hole?
- 2 How does Shabanu manage to carry two pots to the water hole?
- 3 What changes will the monsoon bring to the family's way of life?
- 4 How does Shabanu make sure that the water she collects in her pot is clean?
- 5 Why do you think the water level is so low?

## Looking closely



- 1 How does Shabanu describe the morning sky? (line 1)
- 2 'Goatskin' is made from two words put together. What do you suppose a goatskin is? What is it used for? (line 10)
- 3 Find a word that means 'getting smaller'. (paragraph 4)
- 4 What word is used to emphasize how hot the sun is? (paragraph 4)

## Toolkit

**W** Notice that this story is written in the *present tense*. To change it to the *past tense*, use the simple past tense form of the verb.

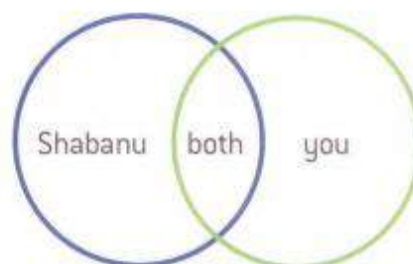
*Present tense:* I make Mithoo carry the empty goatskin.

*Past tense:* I made Mithoo carry the empty goatskin.

## Writing a composition

In the story *Morning in the Desert*, water is a luxury for Shabanu and her family and they use as little as possible. When they were young, her mother washed the children in just one cupful! You wash every morning too, but you probably don't have to walk to a water hole with a camel. How is your day similar to Shabanu's day? How is it different?

- **W** Create a Venn diagram that compares Shabanu's way of life to your own. You have probably used Venn diagrams in mathematics, but you can also use them to arrange ideas.
- Write a three-paragraph composition in which you compare Shabanu's life with your own. The Venn diagram will help you to decide what to put in each paragraph.





## How did people get water in the past?

From the earliest times of civilization, people have faced the problem of getting water up from under the ground.

In Britain there are a lot of old castles and fortifications. Long ago, people lived inside these walls so a source of water was essential. Today, the castles are attractive places for visitors.

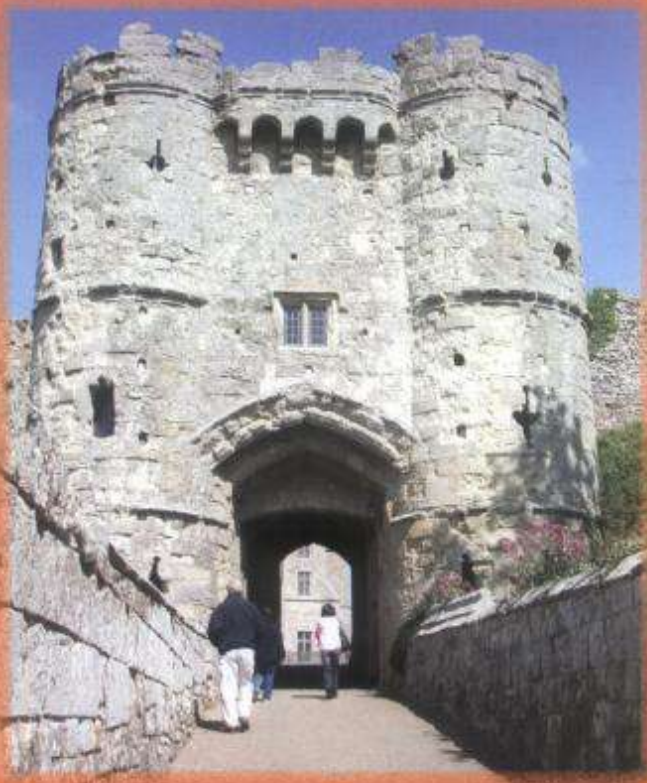
Carisbrooke Castle was built in the Middle Ages on the Isle of Wight, an island off the south coast of Britain. The following leaflet is about the donkey-powered well there.

### GLOSSARY

A **treadwheel** is a wheel that is kept moving by an animal or person walking on it. The turning wheel provides the power to raise water from a well, or to grind grain.

## Carisbrooke Castle, Isle of Wight

Have a great day out and learn about the island's history!



*The gatehouse entrance to Carisbrooke Castle.*

Carisbrooke Castle can be found right in the middle of the Isle of Wight. The main castle walls that stand today were built by Norman rulers in the 11th and 12th centuries.

The hill the castle is on was used as a site for several previous strongholds. A hill is a great place to build a castle because it can be defended from enemy attack.

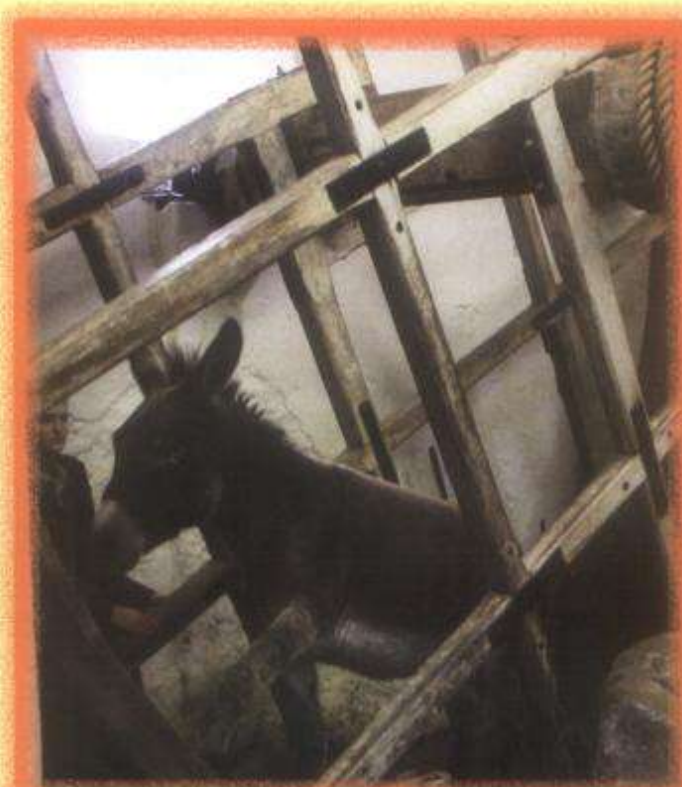
But just as important for the people living in a castle is access to water! At Carisbrooke Castle you can still see the unique way that water was brought into the castle.



## Come and see the only donkey-powered well in Britain!

- ❖ The well at Carisbrooke Castle was dug in 1136 when the original water source dried up.
- ❖ A wooden bucket was used to collect water from the well, which is 49 metres deep.
- ❖ A well-house and treadwheel were built in 1291 and donkey power was introduced to the castle!
- ❖ In 1587 the treadwheel was rebuilt by later island rulers. You can see one of the six castle donkeys working the treadwheel today!

*Water being drawn from the well, just as it was many centuries ago.*



### Talking points

- 1 Does the leaflet make you think you would like to go there? Why? Or why not?
- 2 How effective are the different types of sentences used in the leaflet?
- 3 Can you think of any ways in which the leaflet could be improved?

### Toolkit

The passive voice is useful when you want to describe how something was done to someone or something, without saying who did it.

*Example:* Carisbrooke Castle was built in the Middle Ages.

The *passive voice* is formed by using the appropriate form of the verb *to be* plus the past participle. It can also be formed using modal verbs.