

English

Class: 12th

Subject: English

Lesson 12: HITCH-HIKING ACROSS THE SAHARA

Author: G. F. Lamb

❖ **Exercise short questions:**

1. Give an idea of the size of the Sahara. How does it compare with England?

Ans: The Sahara Desert is many times larger than England. If England were placed in the middle of the Sahara, it would be very difficult to find because of the desert's vast size.

2. What had Christopher's foster-mother to do with his desire to see distant places?

Ans: When Christopher was naughty, his foster-mother used to threaten to send him to Timbuktu. Instead of frightening him, this idea created a strong desire in him to see distant places.

3. How did he manage to get a seat in the weapons carrier?

Ans: Christopher showed a permit from the War Ministry allowing him to join the French Foreign Legion. The officer did not notice that the permit was cancelled, so he allowed Christopher to travel in the weapons carrier.

4. What was the most noticeable feature of the desert city named Ghardaia?

Ans: The most noticeable feature of Ghardaia was the huge number of flies. They covered everything related to food and even the faces of children.

5. How did they manage to drive the heavy truck in the trackless desert with its soft sand?

Ans: When the truck got stuck in soft sand, steel mesh strips were placed under the wheels to provide grip. These strips were moved forward repeatedly until harder ground was reached.

6. What did the driver of the truck tell Christopher about three Englishmen who had attempted to cross the desert?

Ans: The driver told him that three Englishmen died after their car got stuck in the sand. They ran out of water, even drained the radiator, and were later found dried up like leaves.

7. Give an account of the little town named El Golea and compare it with In Salah.

Ans: El Golea was a beautiful oasis with plenty of water, pools, palm trees, and greenery. In contrast, In Salah was dry and struggling for survival as the desert sand was slowly burying the town.

8. What do you know of Professor Claude Balanguernon?

Ans: Professor Claude Balanguernon was a Frenchman who devoted his life to helping the Tuareg people. He promoted education while respecting their traditions and helped Christopher during his journey.

9. Describe the events leading to the killing of a camel. What sort of water did they get from its stomach?

Ans: When the travellers ran out of food and water, they decided to kill one camel to survive. They drank a greenish, unpleasant liquid taken from its stomach, which helped keep them alive.

10. Describe the journey through the Land of Thirst and Death.

Ans: The journey was extremely dangerous due to lack of water, dried-up wells, and violent sandstorms. The travellers faced constant risk of death from thirst, storms, and exhaustion.

11. Describe the stay at In Abbangarit. How did Christopher manage to get water there?

Ans: At In Abbangarit, Christopher was alone with no rope or bucket to draw water from a deep well. He used thin wire from his recording machine to make a long line and successfully pulled up water in a teapot.

❖ **Important Short Questions:**

1. Give an idea of the size of the Sahara. How does it compare with England?

Ans: The Sahara is vast, stretching almost the entire width of North Africa. It is many times the size of Great Britain.

2. What had Christopher's foster-mother to do with his desire to see distant places?

Ans: When he was naughty, his foster-mother threatened to send him to Timbuktu. Instead of fear, it inspired his curiosity and desire to see distant places.

3. How did he manage to get a seat in the weapons carrier?

Ans: Christopher showed a permit from the War Ministry to join the French Foreign Legion, convincing the lieutenant to let him travel despite regulations.

4. What was the most noticeable feature of the desert city, Ghardaia?

Ans: Ghardaia had an overwhelming presence of flies, especially around food. Christopher noticed children and adults covered by flies.

5. How did they manage to drive the heavy truck in the trackless desert with its soft sand?

Ans: The driver placed ten-foot strips of steel mesh under the wheels to prevent them from sinking and moved the strips forward as the truck advanced.

6. What did the driver tell Christopher about three Englishmen who had attempted to cross the desert?

Ans: Three Englishmen attempted to cross the desert with one day's water supply. Their car got stuck, and after three days they were found dead from thirst.

7. Give an account of the little town, El Golea, and compare it with In Salah.

Ans: El Golea was a true oasis with pools, trees, and plenty of water, unlike In Salah, which was struggling against the encroaching desert with sand swallowing homes.

8. What do you know of Professor Claude Balanguernon?

Ans: Balanguernon was a Frenchman who helped the Tuareg people. He promoted education while respecting their customs and acted as Christopher's guide and host.

9. Describe the events leading to the killing of a camel. What sort of water did they get from its stomach?

Ans: Food and water ran out. To survive, a camel was killed. The liquid from its stomach was greenish, like thin blood, unpleasant to drink but boiled to make it drinkable.

10. Describe the journey through the Land of Thirst and Death.

Ans: The region had dried-up wells, sandstorms, and extreme heat. Travelers had minimal water and food, and even a small sandstorm could be deadly.

11. Describe the stay at In Abbangarit. How did Christopher manage to get water there?

Ans: The well was 46 metres deep with no rope. Christopher twisted seven strands of wire from a recording machine to draw water using a small teapot, collecting 5.23 litres.

12. How did Christopher deal with the heat and thirst in the desert?

Ans: He drank little water, avoided the midday sun, and rested in shade when possible, conserving energy and avoiding heatstroke.

13. How did Christopher travel from Algiers to Timbuktu?

Ans: He hitch-hiked, traveling on trucks, weapons carriers, and later on camels with Tuareg guides.

14. What difficulties did Christopher face in Boussaada?

Ans: The desert trucks moved slowly, temperatures rose rapidly, and water in a flask became too hot to drink in two hours.

15. How did Christopher survive the intense heat in the truck to El Golea?

Ans: He stopped when necessary, helped with tasks like moving steel strips, and drank sparingly while keeping as much shade as possible.

16. How did he experience the desert's harshness on his bare feet?

Ans: Jumping from the truck onto hot sand caused intense pain, as if stepping on coals, highlighting the desert's extreme conditions.

17. What happened to Christopher after mixing wine with water?

Ans: He became violently ill, blacked out, and had to be dragged into the shade while companions poured water on him to cool him down.

18. What is the difference between El Golea and In Salah?

Ans: El Golea thrived as an oasis with greenery and water, while In Salah struggled against sand encroachment, losing vegetation and homes.

19. How did Christopher first reach Tamanrasset?

Ans: He traveled on a stifling truck, suffered heat and exhaustion, but recovered and reached Tamanrasset safely.

20. Who was Boubaker, and what was his role?

Ans: Boubaker was a young Tuareg noble and educated pupil of Balanguernon. He acted as Christopher's guide for the initial 1280 km journey to Timbuktu.

21. How did Christopher learn to ride a camel?

Ans: He practiced in Tamanrasset before the journey, falling multiple times over the camel's head and rear.

22. How long was the journey from Tamanrasset to Timbuktu by camel?

Ans: It covered 1280 km and took about two or three weeks before reaching the next village.

23. How did Christopher manage the shortage of food during the desert crossing?

Ans: He shared the last tin of beans with his guides and drank minimal water, following desert customs to survive until the next water source.

24. What threat did the vultures pose, and what happened to them?

Ans: Twenty large vultures watched for prey, expecting to eat them, but were disappointed as the travelers survived the night.

25. How did the killing of a camel help them survive?

Ans: The camel's flesh and stomach liquid provided both food and water, sustaining them for two more days.

26. Describe a sandstorm Christopher experienced in the desert.

Ans: The camels moved to a depression, dunes appeared like fire, and sand hit him like needles despite using the camel as a shield.

27. How did the desert affect Christopher physically?

Ans: His hands cracked, he fell off the camel, and had to walk for a while. The heat and rough terrain exhausted him.

28. Describe Christopher's encounter with the snake.

Ans: While collecting stones, he lifted a rock to find a four-foot poisonous snake, which struck, but he jumped back in time. The slave killed it.

29. How did Christopher reach Timbuktu, and how long was the journey?

Ans: He traveled 3,200 km across the Sahara via trucks, camels, and various detours, finally reaching Timbuktu.

30. How did he recover after reaching Timbuktu?

Ans: He regained weight, felt physically fit, and explored more of the desert out of curiosity.

31. How did Christopher arrange to meet Professor Balanguernon after Timbuktu?

Ans: He sent a telegram, then traveled eastward by plane, jeep, and camel to rendezvous at a well in In Abbangarit.

32. Why was the caravan detour dangerous?

Ans: It wasted two days, delaying him from reaching the main route and putting him at risk of starvation or dehydration.

33. Describe the bordj at In Abbangarit.

Ans: It was a simple mud building with four walls, a roof, one window, and one door. The well was 275 metres away.

34. How did Christopher initially attempt to draw water from the well?

Ans: He tried to use bits of cord, clothing, and his turban to tie a line to a small teapot, but it only reached halfway.

35. Why could he not use his sleeping-bag for water?

Ans: It was winter, nights were bitterly cold, and he needed the sleeping-bag to avoid freezing to death.

36. How did Christopher finally make a rope for the teapot?

Ans: He twisted seven strands of wire from a small recording machine to make a strong enough line.

37. How much water did he collect from the well?

Ans: He collected 5.23 litres of water by drawing potful after potful with the teapot.

38. What was the condition of the water?

Ans: It was muddy and sulphurous but drinkable after boiling.

39. How did Christopher perceive the approaching sandstorm outside the bordj?

Ans: He first thought it might be a car, but the dust indicated a large Desert Patrol rescue party.

40. Who arrived to rescue Christopher at In Abbangarit?

Ans: Claude Balanguernon and a friend arrived in a jeep, accompanied by the Desert Patrol, saving him from starvation and dehydration.

41. Why was the rescue delayed?

Ans: A native misdirected Balanguernon, thinking Christopher had returned to Agades, causing a two-day delay.

42. How did Balanguernon ensure Christopher's safety?

Ans: He coordinated with the Desert Patrol to send trucks to In Abbangarit to find Christopher.

43. How did Christopher's foresight and preparation help him survive?

Ans: He used his recording wire to draw water, conserved resources, and awaited rescue, which ultimately saved his life.

44. What does this journey reveal about the Sahara desert?

Ans: It highlights the extreme heat, dryness, sandstorms, lack of water, and the desert's potential lethality.

45. How did the Sahara journey end for Christopher?

Ans: He survived, returned to the Hoggar region safely, and completed the Sahara crossing without fatal consequences.

Note:

This chapter is designed to provide a solid foundation of knowledge, with the goal of deepening understanding and encouraging further

exploration of the subject. The content has been carefully selected to support effective learning and inspire students to engage with the topic more deeply.

Author: Muhammad Asghar

Purpose: To contribute to education by offering insightful, valuable content that enhances learning and understanding.

Copyright & Usage Policy

© **2026 Muhammad Asghar**. All rights reserved.

No part of these notes may be reproduced, redistributed, or used for commercial purposes without explicit written permission from the author. These notes are intended solely for personal study and educational use.