

How to use this document.

1. Print out the pages. It's always better for focus to use paper copies.
2. Do the decoding pretest. Figure out which words are unfamiliar to you
3. Look over the decoding exercises. Try to decode the meanings of the unfamiliar words by looking at the context. (Some of these might be too challenging, but I'd say only a couple per exercise fall into this category.)
4. Memorize the definitions of the "Other Vocab Words." That's right. Do this before you read the article.
5. No, seriously: memorize the definitions BEFORE you read the article. Draw pictures next to the words to help you out. This way, seeing the words in the article will reinforce their meaning.
6. Look over the "Social, Political, and Economic Terms," but don't worry about memorizing them. Keep the sheet with their definitions handy as you read.
7. Read the article. After each page, write a 3-5 sentence summary of the page contents. If you are struggling to focus, write a one-sentence summary of each paragraph. (Yeah. Work. But how many hours of math problems have you done over the course of your life in Silicon Valley? Do you have a similar number of hours of training in reading? If not, this is your training.)
8. Finish the article. Write a 1-paragraph summary.

Social, Political, and Economic Terms

commodity: something that is bought and sold

water table: the level below which the ground is filled with water

aquifer: a body of rock loose enough to store groundwater

irrigated: describes cropland supplied with water by a mechanical system

water diversion: changing the flow of water so that it flows to a new area

hydrologist: scientist or engineer who studies water

aqueduct: a structure that channels water

preside over: be in charge of (a place or situation) [president]

contemporary: 1. present historical moment 2. having to do with the historical moment that the author is describing

zeitgeist: spirit of the times [geist = ghost = spirit]

American exceptionalism: the belief that America is a historically unique country and thus not subject to the developments that have occurred in other countries throughout history

Manifest Destiny: the belief, in 19th-century America, that the country should extend from the Atlantic to the Pacific

Other Vocab Words

perennial: occurring each year

subterranean: underground

discrete: individually separate and distinct

bedrock: solid rock underlying looser rock

convalescent: recovering from illness

protrusion: something that sticks out

gargantuan: enormous

alpine: having to do with mountains [think of the Alps that Hannibal crossed]

allocation: an amount or portion of a resource assigned to a particular recipient [think of putting something into a *location*]

bank on: to bet on

fatalistic: believing that it is impossible to change outcomes

grievance: a real or imagined wrong or other cause for complaint or protest, esp. unfair treatment

curtail: to shorten

unfettered: with no restrictions

dilemma: a choice between two equally unpleasant options

resolve: to determine to do something

junction: place where major roads, channels, or events join

double down: to renew one's commitment to a course of action

exhume: to remove from a grave

carcass: a dead body

anachronism: something that is historically out of place, like a knight on horseback riding the streets of Palo Alto

parable: a story that contains a moral

hubris: excessive overconfidence, caused by having great abilities

Decoding Pretest

livelihood

parched

plight

acute

sparse

predicament

decimation

pernicious

impoverished

deplete

midwife (v)

abatement

subside

jut out

forestall

destitution

mandate (v)

deplore

cope

lug

persist

ample

indefinitely

ingenuity

Decoding

Scott Houston's **livelihood** depends on those streams flowing, as well as on their not flowing. ... he hauls the water to customers throughout northeastern Fresno County whose residential wells have run dry, for about \$225 per delivery.

The inhabitants of Auberry have been hit hard by the drought, even by the standards of California's **parched** Central Valley region

Aubrey's [a city whose wells are running dry] **plight** is exceptionally **acute**, but no part of Fresno County ... has been spared the water shortage.

Perez [a woman who ran out of water when her neighbor drilled a well deeper] can't afford to drill her household's well deeper, but even if she could, she says she wouldn't choose to. "Even if we drill here," she says, "we'll take the water from the neighbor, and then they'll drill, and they'll take the water from us. [Her] **predicament** is shared by thousands of her neighbors in the San Joaquin Valley,

Alongside the **decimation** of agricultural profits and the desperation of families with no sustainable source of domestic water, the drought's most **pernicious** effect may be the ecological and economic disaster ...

Despite that, the region is both water deficient and cash poor. The valley's average per capita income ranks it as one of the most **impoverished** parts of America

With its alpine source **depleted** by what is becoming the worst drought California has ever faced, today that [irrigation] system is failing to furnish nearly enough surface water—water gathered from above-ground streams, rivers, lakes, reservoirs and, ultimately, mountain snowfall—to sustain the enormous agricultural economy it **midwived**.

The desperate rush to tap the aquifer [i.e., dig wells for water] sparked a well-drilling boom that shows no sign of **abatement**. "These guys are booked up somewhere in a year in advance," Hill says.

As the water table falls, growers are compelled to drill yet deeper, creating a vicious cycle of groundwater depletion. "In some areas the ground is actually falling in where the water is **subsiding**," Hill explains.

Gus Carranza's citrus fields sit atop a shelf of bedrock **jutting out** from the Sierras.

To **forestall** financial ruin, this summer [a farmer who lost his water] bought \$100,000 worth of "emergency water" purchased from other growers and farmers at close to ten times what it would cost in a normal year.

He pictures a region of **destitution**, crime, addiction and all the other consequences of an absence of opportunity.

In 2006, a court-ordered settlement was reached in an eighteen-year-old lawsuit brought by the Natural Resources Defense Council against the federal government for violation of the Endangered Species Act, **mandating** scheduled releases of water from Friant Dam to restore the fish run on the lower part of the river.

Carranza and other growers in the area **deplore** the state's use of precious reservoir water to help the fish population of the San Joaquin while their fields go dry and their financial prospects sink further by the day.

During a short period when they weren't able to afford it, they **coped** by **lugging** water from Cinthya's father-in-law's tank to their home in five-gallon jugs.

When asked about what they plan to do if the drought **persists** another year, Hill and Carranza offer the same non-answer: that if California does not receive **ample** rain this winter— and snow in the high Sierras—growers will have run out of options.

[As a state, California bet] that one of the world's largest agricultural zones could be planted in the middle of a desert and sustained **indefinitely** by the artificial importation of water through the relentless application of human **ingenuity** and physical force.