

The Desert of Maine

The state of Maine is well known for its lush wilderness, boreal forests, and crystal lakes. Less known, however, is the “the Desert of Maine,” an area among the boreal forests in Freeport, Maine, on Desert Road. Although it is not technically a desert, the Desert of Maine is a forty-acre space of overgrazed farmland. The history of the land dates back hundreds of years to the Tuttle family, who apparently used the land to grow potatoes.

William Tuttle purchased the plot of land in 1797. By the late 1800s, the land had dried because decades of cultivating potatoes, without the rotation of crops, had robbed the soil of its nutrients. In addition, the land was further depleted by the grazing of the Tuttle’s flock of sheep. These two factors created an unnatural, desert-like terrain that rendered the land totally useless. The Tuttle family abandoned the plot in 1919. Eventually, great dunes formed from glacial silt that had been uncovered from the degradation of the soil. Today, the Desert of Maine is a popular tourist attraction, complete with a gift shop, sand museum, and farm museum.

1. Why did William Tuttle’s land become a “desert”?

- A. It was located on Desert Toad
- B. It was in the midst of boreal forests
- C. The soil lost its nutrients
- D. The Tuttle family abandoned its plot

2. What does the phrase “not technically a desert” suggest?

- A. The land doesn’t actually fit the definition of a real desert
- B. The land is real desert but isn’t located where most deserts are
- C. Although the land is a real desert, it may not appear that way to some people
- D. The land may or may not be a real desert

3. Which of the following is NOT true?

- A. The dunes are made of glacial silt rather than sand
- B. The “desert of Maine” has its own gift shop
- C. The rotation of crops is one reason the land became useless
- D. The Tuttle family once used the land to grow potatoes

4. What word could replace “rendered” in the following sentence?

These two factors created an unnatural, desert-like terrain that rendered the land totally useless.

- A. Cut
- B. Made
- C. Said
- D. Swayed

5. The grazing sheep...

- A. had no impact on the land.
- B. contributed to the land losing its nutrients.
- C. contributed to the usefulness of the land.
- D. allowed for the rotation of the crops.