Teacher's Key

How a Solar Farm Brought New Life to the Gobi Desert (Level B2)

Vocabulary Matching

1 transformation = **N**
2 herders = **A**
3 graze = **H**
4 desertification = **L**
5 barren = **G**
6 leverage = **M**
7 erosion = **I**
8 evaporation = **E**
9 thrive = **D**
10 livestock = **O**
11 fertilizes = **J**
12 capacity = **K**
13 indicators = **B**
14 sustain = **C**
15 microclimate = **F**

Fill in the Blank

1 transformation
2 herders
3 graze
4 desertification
5 barren
6 erosion
7 evaporation
8 thrive
9 livestock
10 fertilizes
11 capacity
12 indicators
13 sustain
14 microclimate

True or False

1 **True.** Paragraph 1 states this directly.
2 **True.** Paragraph 2 states this directly.
3 **False.** They chose it for strong sunlight and flat terrain, not rainfall.
4 **False.** They reduce wind speed and slow evaporation, according to the reading.
5 **False.** Herders brought sheep to graze; the reading says engineers wanted to avoid heavy machinery.
6 **True.** Paragraph 5 states this directly.
7 **True.** Paragraph 6 states this directly.
8 **False.** The reading says the study cannot show how large or lasting the improvement will be.
9 **False.** It gives reasons to doubt this, including altitude, soil, and herding culture.
10 **True.** Paragraph 7 states this directly.

Language Focus: Cause and Effect Language

Example answer: The panels provide shade, **which keeps** the soil cooler and moister.

Comprehension Questions: Model Answers

1 Before, it was defined by sandstorms, persistent drought, and almost no plant life; now grass has returned, and local herders graze sheep among the panels.

2 Because the region offered strong, near-constant sunlight and vast, flat terrain, which are ideal for large-scale solar power.

3 According to figures reported by Chinese state media, the panels reduce wind speed at ground level by roughly half and slow evaporation by around 30 percent, so the soil keeps more moisture.

4 Tall grass could shade the panels and reduce electricity generation, so engineers turned to local herders, whose sheep graze the grass at low cost and without scarce water.

5 Mostly from park managers and Chinese state media, such as a park official quoted by People's Daily in 2025 and a 2022 China Daily report.

6 The livestock eat the grass and keep it short enough not to shade the panels, and their manure fertilizes the soil, which encourages more grass to grow the next season. This makes the cycle self-reinforcing.

7 Using 57 indicators, it rated conditions under the panels as "general" and land outside the park as "poor." It was an observational study at one site, so it cannot show how large or lasting the improvement will be.

8 The results may depend on Talatan's altitude, its soil, and an existing herding culture ready to use the new grazing land, and other deserts may not share these conditions.

9 Open answer. Accept a reasoned answer; the reading frames the result as a new, engineered microclimate rather than the restoration of an older ecosystem.

10 True. Paragraph 6 says the study rated conditions under the panels as "general" and land outside the park as "poor."

11 No. The writer says there are good reasons to doubt that the transformation will repeat in every desert.

12 Best answer: to help readers judge the evidence. The writer does not reject the official figures but shows which claims come from the people running the park and which come from an independent study, and what that study cannot show.

Notes on the Evidence

- Sources (checked September 27, 2026). Talatan (Gonghe) photovoltaic park, Gonghe County, Hainan Tibetan Autonomous Prefecture, Qinghai: Xinhua via China Daily, 'Desert solar panels foster greening, animal husbandry efforts' (October 24, 2025); China Daily, 'Solar-powered sheep' (July 12, 2022), source of the wind speed (about half), evaporation (about 30 percent), and 20,000-plus sheep figures; People's Daily Online, 'NW China's Qinghai combats desertification through solar power generation and animal husbandry' (July 18, 2025), source of the 98.5 percent desertification figure, the 2011 start of construction, vegetation cover above 80 percent (stated by park official An Fengjun), about 118,000 tonnes of grass a year, and 17.73 GW grid-connected capacity with 68 companies at the end of 2024.
- Independent evidence: Scientific Reports, 'Assessment of the ecological and environmental effects of large-scale photovoltaic development in desert areas' (Xi'an University of Technology, published September 28, 2024), a DPSIR assessment with 57 indicators; the section inside the park scored 0.439 ('general'), the transition zone 0.286 and the outside zone 0.28 ('poor'). pv magazine (October 10, 2024) reports it as a study of a 1 GW part of the park. This is observational, at one site, and does not measure long-term outcomes.
- Discrepancies: the start year appears as 2012 in some reports and 2011 in People's Daily (2025) and Wikipedia; the reading uses 2011 and attributes it. Grass production appears as about 110,000 tonnes in older reports and 118,000 tonnes in 2025. The company count appears as 60-plus and 68. Park area is given as 300-plus square km in older reports and about 420 square km in Wikipedia (March 2026); the reading says several hundred square kilometers. Wikipedia listed about 21 GW capacity as of March 2026; the reading gives the dated state media figure (above 17 GW at the end of 2024). 'Gobi' in the site's name is the local term for a gravel desert; Talatan is on the Tibetan Plateau, not in the Gobi Desert of Mongolia and Inner Mongolia. The fire-risk point is reported as a reason for grazing (Wikipedia summary); no specific fire incident was verified.
- Figures on wind, evaporation, vegetation cover, grass output, and sheep numbers come from park managers and Chinese state media and have not been independently confirmed for this lesson; the reading attributes them.
- Revision (September 2026, fix mode): Removed paragraph 6 on the Xinjiang (Urumqi) plant, which gave wrong figures (it is a 3.5 GW plant of about 13,000 hectares, not 5 GW and 200,000 acres, per Enerdata, POWER, and Wikipedia) and a dated 'world's largest' claim, and removed the reading's commentary on other outlets' errors (goats, millions versus billions). The new paragraph 6 reports the 2024 Scientific Reports study and its limits. Paragraphs 2, 3, and 5 now attribute and date the official figures (2011 start, 2025 vegetation and grass figures, 2022 sheep count). Paragraph 7 no longer credits unnamed engineers and site managers, and the reading now ends on an untested question. Vocabulary: 'output' replaced by 'indicators' (capacity and output accepted each other in fill-ins). Questions, true/false items, speed round, discussion questions (three overlapping and three about press errors replaced), IELTS items, model answers, and resource links updated to match.
- Hindi and Arabic translations are unchecked by a native speaker, as with every EnglishBridges unit.