**Lesson One:**

**Introducing the Sharqiya Sands**

**Objectives**

* To know where the Sharqiya Sands are in the context of Oman, the Middle East and the World
* To be able to use map skills to locate the position of some of the key features of Oman and the Sharqiya Sands
* To understand why some areas in the Sharqiya Sands region were chosen as sites for human settlement

**Context and Rationale**

Before studying a new location, it is important that students gain a contextual understanding of that place and space. This lesson will set the scene for students with regards to the mapped location of the Sharqiya region and provide a grounding in the area’s physical geography, which will facilitate further learning in subsequent lessons. Studying human settlements allows students to begin to visualise the Sharqiya Sands beyond the concept of a wilderness and make its positioning far more real.

Introducing students to the Outward Bound Oman Desert Centre and its position on the north-west edge of the Sharqiya Sands (through web based mapping) highlights to students the feel of the area and the degree of remoteness felt there. Students may like to discuss why the Centre is located in such a place and what benefits that location has both practically (in its positioning in the very environment that students may wish to study, its juxtaposition to the Al Hajar mountains and its relative proximity to Muscat as an entry point to foreign visitors).

*This lesson is also presented as a walk-through PowerPoint presentation (Lesson One Walkthrough).*

**Starter**

Show students *Where am I presentation* and for each photo in the presentation ask them to plot on *World map template* where they believe the photo was taken. At the end of the presentation, confess to the students that in fact the photos were all taken in the same country. Ask students to choose one of their map plots that they think is the site of all the photos, before revealing that the location is actually Oman. You can have a competition to see which student got the closest plot to Oman and the exercise can be extended by asking students to verbalise or record in writing why they chose that particular location and what particular features they picked out of the photographs to inform their opinion.

Students can then be given the context and structure of the forthcoming unit of work.

**Body**

Students can be given *Location of Sharqiya Sands map*. Using an atlas, Google maps or a similar app, students should complete the map and key by identifying the key features of the country. Students can then practise their map skills by completing *Practising map skills in Oman*. Academically stronger students may also wish to complete the extension activity that sees them plot a course around some of the key features of Oman.

Focussing on the Sharqiya Sands region, students should then think strategically about the site and situation needs of a settlement in the area. For weaker students, or for those new to this style of thinking *Reasons for siting a settlement presentation* can be used. In the context of deciding where a new Omani settlement should be in the Sharqiya Sands region, and by using *Sharqiya settlement siting presentation*, students should then rank each potential site against their chosen criteria. *Sharqiya settlement siting grid* can be used, with predefined criteria for weaker students and a weighting system for those students who are more confident with data handling.

A class vote may be used to show which of the sites is preferred by the group and verbal feedback on reasons why this site was chosen (and why others were rejected) can develop. Teachers should be able to draw out in a conclusion the notion that no single one of the potential sites were perfect and to that end, in fact all the potential sites, with the exception of site B, actually represent towns and cities in real life (shown through *Sharqiya city reveal presentation*). Students can then add the names of those settlements to their original *Location of Sharqiya Sands map* on the Oman magnification.

**Plenary**

Students can play a map from memory game. First students study their *Location of Sharqiya Sands map* (Oman magnification) for three minutes in which time they try to memorise as much detail as possible. After that time, students cover their map, and using *Oman map template* on an interactive white board, students are then challenged to draw as much of the map as they can from memory. Their peers can rate their efforts and suggest improvements if appropriate.

**Homework or Extension / Enrichment Tasks**

Tell the students that the former name for the Sharqiya Sands is Wahiba Sands, named after the tribal group that lives in the desert region. Students should research the English translation for the Arabic word ‘Wahiba’ and suggest what this might suggest about the region and its people.