

In what ways are the effects of drought different in medcs and ledcs essay



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Today we live in a society where water is plentiful: we know that if we want water the garden or wash the dishes it is only a 'turn of a tap' away.

However, when we suddenly find ourselves in a drought, only then do we realise just how much we use it and how it is imperative for basic living. It is an odd phenomenon that you only realise how much you relied on something when it is gone. The definition of a drought is a long, continuous period of dry weather. They usually occur where the land is most arid, which tends to be along the tropics. This is why droughts are a huge problem in Africa, for it is effected by both of the tropics.

In 1998 there was a 5 month drought in Texas. This reached a climax in late July/early August. For 29 days the temperature was above 38 Degrees Celsius. This means that vegetation dies out and can cause flooding for, when it starts to rain, because the ground is so dry, the water does not soak in and it runs off the ground. Also a significant drought occurred from 2007 to 2008 in the UK where the warm, dry summers were followed by dry, cool winters. This meant that the lack of winter precipitation failed to counteract the dry summers, so slowly the water table fell, and reservoir water levels began to fall.

Droughts have caused deaths in Europe in recent years - especially amongst the elderly. As you can see, these effects are not that serious and are very much based around the fact that you cannot use excess water e. g. to wash the car. However in LEDCs, the effects are much more serious. Countries in Africa have been very greatly effected by droughts.

Because they rely on primary sources of industry (a main industry from this sector is farming) that means that their whole livelihoods are affected because if they cannot grow any crops and that means they do not earn any money. The long period of drought causes the water supplies to dry up. Due to this the vegetation slowly dies off. The tree roots which retain moisture in the soil stop doing this and in turn, the water left in the ground dries up. The animals then die off having no water to drink and no food to eat.

When it does eventually rain, the ground is so dry that it doesn't soak into the ground, which then causes floods. All this slowly turns the land into desert, which is called desertification. People are not used to living in such conditions and so cannot survive and many people die. The Sahel Desert drought, which began in the late 1960s and lasted until the early 1980s, was the worst drought of the 20th century. The Sahel witnessed some of its most serious climate induced food shortages in 1972-'74 and 1984-'85. Up to 250,000 drought-related human fatalities occurred throughout the Sahel region between 1968 and 1973.

The rain shortage has killed many of the crops and left people with very bad harvests and so the food has had to be rationed. People have had to travel up to 4km to find the nearest watering hole, the lack of water is killing off the animals which they have to use to get food and money by selling them. The lack of vegetation has meant the animals have had to eat the leaves from the trees. These leave the ground with no shade and so all of the vegetation underneath die off. The trees also slowly die off, these trees usually retain some moisture so without them the ground is drying up even quicker. The

soil is then left open to the wind, the wind blows the top soil away and creates desert, when it eventually does rain the top soil is just washed away.

The soil that is left behind is worked for the crops that it can produce, the only problem is that the soil eventually becomes over worked and turns into desert. Due to Global Warming, the Earth's surface is warming up. This could mean that we experience more and more droughts. So therefore, maybe we should prepare now by creating extra reservoirs, so we do not feel the full effects of droughts which are destined to happen.