

A Desert Habitat

Synopsis: This book informs readers about the Sonoran Desert and the animals and plants that live there. It describes the characteristics of a desert habitat and explains the many ways in which plants and animals have adapted to survive in its harsh conditions.

Introduction: Explore Informational Text

Explain to students that this is an informational text about the desert habitat of the Sonoran Desert. Say, *A desert is not an easy place in which to live. The plants and animals that live in a desert habitat have adapted for life in the desert. Animals and plants from other habitats, such as a jungle or a forest, could not survive in a desert.* Ask students what words they might use to describe a desert habitat. Record their suggestions. Explain that the book gives many interesting facts about the ways plants and animals that live in a desert habitat keep cool and get the food and water they need to stay alive.

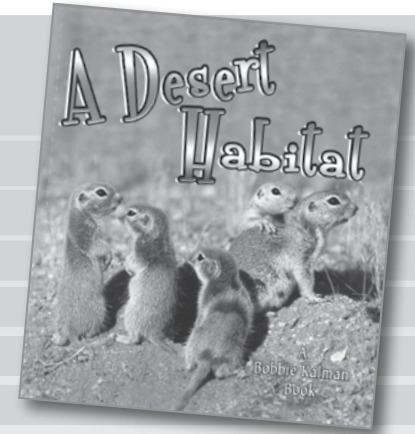
Vocabulary

Tier Two: burying, desert, energy, food, howl, nature, nests, rattle, roots, sunlight, toad, underground, wander, weather

Tier Three: burrows, cacti, cactus, carnivores, collard peccaries, coyote, gila monster, habitat, herbivores, iguana, Mexico, omnivores, photosynthesis, saguaro, scorpion, Sonoran Desert, tarantula

Word Work

Introduce vocabulary in context as it appears within the book before or during reading. Explain to students that sometimes the meaning of an unfamiliar word can be found in context within the same sentence or in the surrounding sentences. Have students turn to page 4 in the book. Read the sentence, *“A habitat is a place in nature.”* Ask, *What does this sentence say that a habitat is?* (a place in nature) Point out that the meaning of the word comes right after it in the same sentence. Then have students turn to page 18 in the book. Read aloud the third sentence: *“Animals that eat only plants are called herbivores.”* Ask, *What are herbivores?* (animals that eat only plants) Continue by reading and discussing the meanings of *carnivores* and *omnivores* on the next page, both of which are defined in context. Encourage students to remember to watch for the meanings of unfamiliar words in the same sentence or in surrounding sentences as they read. Explain that this is called *using context clues* and is a good reading strategy for determining the meanings of unknown words, especially in informational text.



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Genre: Informational Text

Guided Reading Level: L

English Language Support

Offer realia, gestures, or photos to support the introduction of the new vocabulary. Display a map showing the location of the Sonoran Desert in the southwestern United States and northern Mexico. Explain to students that it is a very large desert, covering 120,000 square miles. Make use of the many captioned images in the book to introduce students to the names of desert plants and animals. Point out that the words *Sonoran*, *saguaro*, *coyote*, and *iguana* are words of Mexican/Spanish origin. Demonstrate the meaning of *burying* by covering up an object in dirt or sand.

Understanding the Text

Literal: *How do plants make their own food? What is the process called?* (Plants make their own food using sunlight, air, and water. It is called *photosynthesis*.)

Interpretive: *Why do cacti grow well in deserts? (They can store water inside themselves.) Why do so many desert animals eat cacti? (Cacti have water in them that the animals need to stay alive.)*

Applied: *Why it is important to learn about desert habitats?*

Phonics and Word Recognition

Have students turn to page 11 in the book. Ask a volunteer to read the sentences. Call students' attention to the word *bloom*. Ask a student to pronounce the word. Point out that the word includes the /oo/ sound. Explain that the oo vowel team makes a new sound that isn't a *long-o* sound or a *short-o* sound. Next, have students turn to page 14 and ask a volunteer to read the sentences. Point out that the word *food*, which has the /oo/ sound, appears in every sentence. Then have students turn to page 15. Ask students to read the page silently and locate the word with the /oo/ sound. (*roots*) Have a student pronounce the word. Finally, have students turn to page 16 and find a word on the page with the same oo vowel team. Ask a volunteer to read aloud the sentence with the word. (*"The animals know how to keep cool."*) Explain that the /oo/ sound can be made with other vowel teams and spelling patterns. Provide clues for the following words, record them where all can see, and underline the vowel team or spelling pattern in each that creates the /oo/ sound. Clues might include: *We use this to wash our hair. This animal has a pouch. (shampoo, kangaroo, grew, stew, new, shoe, canoe, blue.)*

Text Features

Explain to students that informational books have features that help readers find important facts or information quickly. Say, *One useful feature is a caption*. Explain that captions provide information about photographs, drawings, or diagrams in a book. Have students turn to page 17. Point out the captions and how they identify the animals. Challenge students to find other examples of captions in the book. Further explain that captions can be complete sentences explaining the graphic and offering extended information not included in the text. If possible, point out a more detailed caption in another informational title as an example.

Reading Informational Text

Discuss with students how living things get energy. Have students refer to page 20 and use the text from the book to answer the following questions.

Why do living things need energy? ("Living things need energy to grow and move.")

Where does energy come from? ("Energy comes from the sun.")

How do plants use the sun's energy? ("Plants use energy to make food.")

How do animals get energy? ("Animals get energy by eating.")

Remind students that even though plants and animals get energy in different ways, the energy comes from the sun.

Writing

Discuss how plants and animals get energy. Draw the following diagram of labels and arrows where all can see.

(sun--- > plants---- > herbivores--- > carnivores)

Have each student draw the diagram and enhance it by adding a drawing of the sun; a plant; a herbivore, such as a rabbit; and a carnivore, such as a hawk, above the appropriate label. Finally, have students title their diagrams "How Energy Flows to Living Things."