

Cactuses

by Lesley Pether

Overview

Use this book to give children an opportunity to explore the characteristics of cactuses.

Literacy Focus *Word Count: 237 words*

High Frequency Words
grow, help, live, long, many, some, their, these

Content Words
cactuses, plants, desert, stems, ribs, roots, waxy, skin, prickly, spines, flowers, seeds

Decoding Skills

- **Long Vowel Sounds:** a, o, i (same, place, shade, grow, spines, like)

- **Vowel Digraphs:** ee, oo, ai (keep, seeds, look, cool, roots, rain)

- **Word Endings:** -s, -es for plurals (plants, parts, stems, ribs, roots, spines, animals, flowers, cactuses)

**Comprehension/
Thinking Skills**

- Relating text to prior knowledge
- Comparing and contrasting

**Writing/Speaking
and Listening**

- Writing a paragraph about cactuses
- Sharing knowledge of cactuses and the desert
- Discussing a cactus's characteristics

Observe/Assess

See Oral Reading Records in the Assessment Handbook.

Science Focus

**Content and
Thinking Skills**

- Identifying characteristics of cactuses
- Learning that cactuses live in the desert
- Understanding that their unique characteristics help cactuses survive
- Comparing and contrasting plants

Background Information

The over 1,650 species of cactuses have a variety of sizes and shapes. Most live in dry regions, but a few are found in tropical or subtropical climates.

The text helps children to understand the function of each part of a cactus. It also helps children to compare cactuses with other plants.

**Correlation to
National Standards**

Life Science

- Characteristics of Organisms
- Organisms and Environments

See Standards Chart on page 204.

Literacy Focus

Set the Scene

Ask children what they know about a cactus. List responses to refer to during the reading.

Who has seen a cactus?

What is special about them?

Where do most cactuses grow?

Read and Discuss

Cover and Title Page

Focus on the cover and the title. Discuss unusual aspects of the cover illustration and the features of a cactus.

Pages 2–3

In what ways are these plants different from each other?

In what ways are these plants the same as each other?

How are cactuses different from other plants?

Pages 4–7

After children have read the text, ask:

Who has been to a desert?

What is the climate in the desert?

How does a cactus store water?

How does it keep cool?

Pages 8–11

As children read, ask these questions:

How do the roots help the plant?

What would waxy skin be like?

What are the prickly spines for?

What are the flowers for?

Page 12

List the similarities and differences between this cactus and the other plants in the text.

Respond

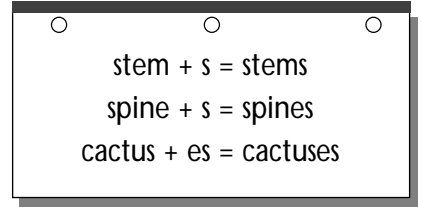
- Play a guessing game with the content words. Give a few clues and ask children to tell what word you are thinking of. Have children take turns giving clues and guessing.



Plural Endings

Activity Master, page 48

Review adding plural endings before children complete the Activity Master, page 48.



- Ask children to find words in the book that have the long vowel sounds of *a*, *o*, and *i*. Discuss the letter patterns that indicate the vowel sound will be long. Then have children find words with digraphs *oo*, *ee*, and *ai*. Compare the sounds these letters can represent.



Meeting

Individual Needs

For specific teaching strategies for meeting individual needs, see pages 198–203.

Science Focus

Science Concept

Plants develop characteristics that help them live in their environment.

Activities

Parts of a Cactus

Review all the parts of a cactus. What is the job of each part? Have children read the book again to find the information.

Interesting Facts

Have the children make cards with the interesting facts about

cactus plants written on them. Glue the cards onto a large chart. Add any other facts that children find out about cactuses.

Class Mural

Have children draw or paint a large picture of a desert. Draw or paint desert animals and plants in the background.

Plant Show

If possible, bring in a variety of cactus plants for children to observe. Children may be able

to borrow houseplants to share with the class. Research the cactus plants that you and the children bring in. Label each plant and include facts about that particular plant species.



A Cactus Plant

Activity Master, page 49

Reinforce understanding of the parts of a cactus by having children label the diagram on the Activity Master, page 49.

Name _____

Cactuses

Add *-s* or *-es* to make these words mean more than one.

plant _____

stem _____

root _____

spine _____

flower _____

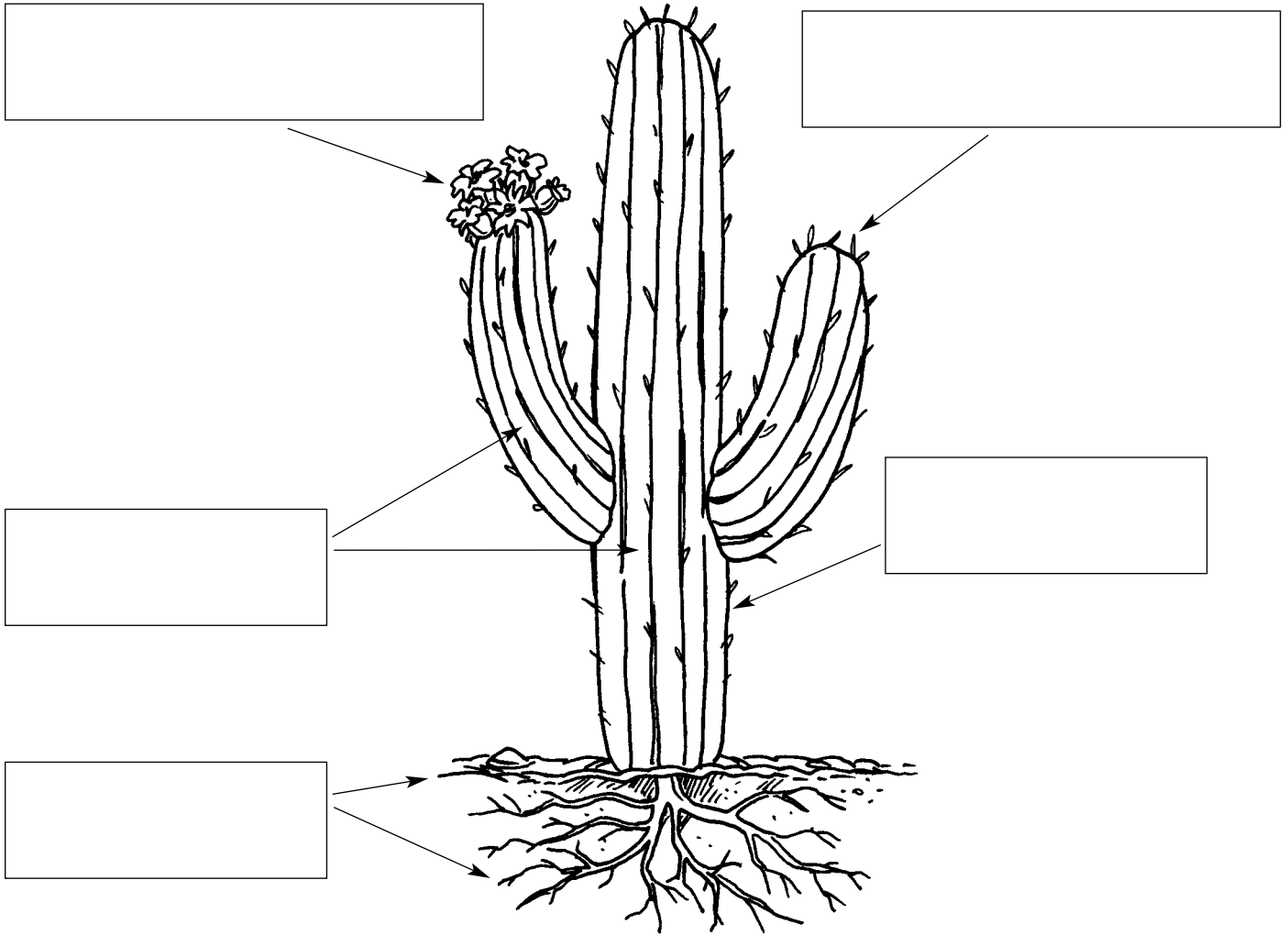
cactus _____

Write about a cactus. Use as many of the words listed above as you can.

Name _____

Cactuses

Cut out the labels below. Glue them onto the correct boxes.



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| | | |
|--------|---------|-------|
| stem | ribs | roots |
| spines | flowers | |