

About the Book

Text Type: Nonfiction/Informational Page Count: 20 Word Count: 1,473

Book Summary

The desert might not seem like a place where plants can grow and flourish, but it is. One such plant is the saguaro cactus. This informational book offers facts about this giant cactus, including physical characteristics, where it lives, how it grows, and ways it can be used. The text is peppered with details about this unique cactus and is filled with exceptional photographs.

About the Lesson

Targeted Reading Strategy

- Summarize

Objectives

- Use the reading strategy of summarizing important information in text
- Identify main ideas and supporting details
- Understand subject/verb agreement
- Recognize and use homophones

Materials

Green text indicates resources available on the website

- Book—*The Mighty Saguaro Cactus* (copy for each student)
- Chalkboard or dry erase board
- Finding details, subject and verb agreement, homophones worksheets
- Discussion cards



Indicates an opportunity for students to mark in the book. (All activities may be demonstrated by projecting the book on interactive whiteboard or completed with paper and pencil if books are reused.)

Vocabulary

- Content words:

Story critical: *cactus* (n.), *decompose* (v.), *germinate* (v.), *hospitable* (adj.), *pollinate* (v.), *transpire* (v.)

Enrichment: *evolve* (v.), *javelina* (n.), *predator* (n.), *spines* (n.), *tribute* (n.), *unfortunate* (adj.)

Before Reading

Build Background

- Draw a web on the board with the word *cactus* in the center circle. Have students tell what they know about cacti. Attach smaller circles filled with the information students already know.

Preview the Book

Introduce the Book

- Give students a copy of the book and have them preview the front and back covers. Have students discuss what they see on the covers and offer ideas as to what kind of book *The Mighty Saguaro Cactus* might be. Have them predict what they might find out about cacti.

- Tell students to look at the box at the top of page 5. Explain that this box shows the reader how to pronounce the title of this book. Show students the title page and read the title. Talk about the information that is written on the page (title and author's name).
- Direct students to the table of contents. Remind students that the table of contents provides an overview of what the book is about. Each section heading provides an idea of what they will read in the book. After reviewing the table of contents, model using it to summarize what the book is about.

Introduce the Reading Strategy: **Summarize**

- Tell students that one way to understand and remember what they read is to summarize paragraphs, sections, or chapters of a book in their mind or on paper. Explain that summarizing means to organize the most important information they have read.
- **Think-aloud:** *To summarize what I've read, I need to decide what's important and what isn't. Then, in my mind, I organize the important information into a few sentences and think about them. If I need to write a summary, I'll put the information in my own words. Since I haven't read the book yet, it's difficult to decide what's important and what isn't. I think all of the sections will have some important information about the saguaro cactus, but I'll have to read the book to find out.*
- Have students preview the rest of the book, looking at photos and captions. Point out the map on page 7, the box with information at the top of page 8, and the chart on page 11.
- Show students page 19, titled "Digging Deeper." Explain that this page provides additional resources to learn more about saguaro cacti. Point out the glossary that follows and explain its purpose.
- As students read, encourage them to use other reading strategies in addition to the targeted strategy presented in this section.

Introduce the Vocabulary


- Remind students of the strategies they can use to work out words they don't know. For example, they can use what they know about letter and sound correspondence to figure out a word. They can look for base words within words, prefixes, and suffixes. They can use the context to work out meanings of unfamiliar words.
- Model how to apply word-attack strategies. Point out a word in bold, such as the word *evolve* on page 6. Model how students can use context clues to figure out the meaning of the word. Read the first sentence in the paragraph and ask students which word might be a clue (*old*). Read the second sentence and tell students that the context clue comes from the way the sentence is worded. Explain that it could have been written as follows: *First, people invented cars, then they invented televisions, and now they have invented computers.* Point out that the author is showing how things used to be and how they are now. Explain that in the third sentence the reader learns that the oldest saguaros may have been around to see the owners of the land on which they grow change ownership from one country to another (Mexico to the U.S.). Tell students that when you put all of the clues together, you think that the word *evolve* must mean *to change or move forward*. Have students follow along as you read the sentence to confirm its meaning.
- Remind students that they should check whether words make sense by rereading the sentence.
- Have students turn to the glossary on page 20. Have them read the glossary words and their definitions aloud. Next, have students turn to the pages indicated and read each glossary word in the sentence in which it appears. Use context clues in the surrounding sentences to work out unfamiliar vocabulary words as necessary.

Set the Purpose


- Have students pause at the end of each section and quickly summarize what they have read about saguaro cacti. (Students can summarize mentally or use a pencil and scrap paper.)

During Reading

Student Reading

 **Guide the reading:** Have students read to the end of page 8. Tell them to identify the main idea in each section (what the section is about). Then tell students to underline the most important information, or the supporting details, in each section. Have students to go back and reread the sections if they finish before everyone else.

- When they have finished reading, ask students to tell what the section titled “One Cool Cactus” is about. Explain that the author included this section to get the reader’s attention and that it serves as an introduction to the book.
- Ask students to tell what the section titled “Surviving the Sonoran Desert” is about. (The Sonoran Desert is a difficult place for plants and animals to grow and live.) Ask students what they underlined and make a list on the board.
- Model summarizing the main idea and supporting details in the first section.
Think-aloud: *I think the main idea of this section is that the Sonoran Desert is a difficult place for plants and animals to grow and live. As I read, I underlined the words, phrases, and sentences I thought were most important. (Add any information that was not generated by students to the list on the board. Review the list and explain which details are important and which are not, crossing out the unimportant details as you go.) After sorting through the information and deciding what was important and what wasn’t, I put the information in my own words to make a summary. (Sample summary: The Sonoran Desert is a harsh environment. It is very hot, and it doesn’t get a lot of rain. Half of all the rain that falls comes during the monsoons. The plants and animals that live in the Sonoran Desert have learned how to find water and deal with the heat.)*
- Have students read the remainder of the book, looking for the most important information about saguaro cacti in each section.

 Have students make a small question mark in their book beside any word they do not understand or cannot pronounce. Encourage them to use the strategies they have learned to read each word and figure out its meaning.

After Reading

- Ask students what words, if any, they marked in their book. Use this opportunity to model how they can read these words using decoding strategies and context clues.


Reflect on the Reading Strategy

- Reinforce that summarizing the important information in each section as they read keeps them involved in the reading and helps them understand and remember what they have read.

Teach the Comprehension Skill: **Main ideas and details**

- **Discussion:** Have students tell what the author’s purpose was for writing the book (to tell information about the saguaro cactus). Ask what they learned about the saguaro cactus that they didn’t already know.
- **Introduce and model:** Review or explain that many books are mainly about one thing, or topic. Show students the book and ask them what the topic of this book is (saguaro cactus). Remind students that in a book like this one, which has the topic as the title, it is easy to tell what it is about. In other books, it may be necessary to look at the table of contents or to read the book to identify the topic.

- Explain that main ideas are the most important things the writer wants the reader to know. Remind students that the headings of sections or chapters often give clues to the main ideas. Direct students to the table of contents on page 3. Explain that each section contains details about the Sonoran Desert or the saguaro cactus. Have students find the section title that follows “The Cactus Hotel” (Sweet Desert Desserts). Explain that this section tells about desserts that are made from the saguaro cactus and that it contains details about harvesting the fruit. Remind students that finding details will help them understand and remember what they read.
- **Check for understanding:** Have students look at page 14. Ask them to find one main idea and one detail about how the Tohono O’odham harvest the saguaro’s fruit (women and children harvest the fruit; they use long wooden “ribs” of dead saguaros to knock the fruit to the ground).
- **Independent practice:** Give students the [finding details worksheet](#). Tell students that the topic of this book is in the center. Connected to this topic are some of the main ideas. They will need to add the details that support each main idea. Explain that organizing the information will help them remember what they read. Tell students they are to choose one of the main ideas and write, in their own words, a summary using the supporting details. Have students complete the worksheet. Discuss their responses. Have students share their summaries.

 **Extend the activity:** Instruct students to use the inside cover of their book to write why they would or would not want to visit the Sonoran Desert to see a saguaro cactus.


Build Skills

Grammar and Mechanics: **Subject and verb agreement**

- Explain that writers choose their words very carefully when writing a story or an informational book like *The Mighty Saguaro Cactus*. Tell students that writers have learned the rules about how to make the subject and verb in a sentence work together. Explain that if the subject of a sentence is singular, the verb must be singular, and if the subject of the sentence is plural, the verb must be plural.
- Write the following sentence on the board: *The saguaro looks as if it is waving*. Ask students to identify the subject and verb in the sentence (*saguaro, looks*). Ask if the subject is singular or plural. Tell them that once they decide if the subject is singular or plural, they will know what verb to use. In this sentence, the singular noun takes the singular verb *looks*.
- Write the following sentence on the board: *Many saguaros look as if they are waving*. Ask students to identify the subject and verb in the sentence (*saguaros, look*). Ask students if the subject is singular or plural. Reinforce that a plural noun needs a plural verb.
- Review or explain that most singular nouns are made plural by adding -s or -es. Ask students to tell which of the endings is added to the following words: *bird (s), fox (es), flower (s), bush (es)*.
- Review or explain that the singular form of a verb usually ends in -s or -es. Verbs that end in -s, -x, -z, -sh, and -ch always have -es added.
- Share the following with students if they know how to form plural nouns. If a noun ends in -s, the verb does not. If the verb ends in -s, the noun does not.
- **Check for understanding:** Give students the [subject-and-verb worksheet](#). Do the first sentence together. Tell students to complete the worksheet. Discuss their responses.

Word Work: **Homophones**

- Write the words *there, their, and they’re* on the board. Review or explain that these are *homophones*, or words that sound the same but have different spellings and different meanings. Explain the meanings of the words and write each one in a sentence on the board: *There are two saguaros. Their arms are huge. They’re living in the Sonoran Desert.*
- Write the words *its* and *it’s* on the board. Tell students that these are also homophones. Explain the meaning of each and ask volunteers to use the words in sentences. Write student sentences on the board.

 **Check for understanding:** Have students use the inside front cover of their book to write down and number the homophones listed on the board (1 through 5). Then read the following sentences and have students write the number of the homophone that belongs in each sentence. Check their answers (4, 2, 1, 2, 5).

The saguaro stores water in its arms and trunk.

Many birds make their nests in saguaros.

The baby birds are safe from predators there.

Their nests are made with twigs.

It's a treat to see a baby owl.

- Have students complete the [homophones worksheet](#). Discuss their responses.

Build Fluency

Independent Reading

- Allow students to read their book independently. Additionally, allow partners to take turns reading parts of the book to each other.

Home Connection

- Give students their book to take home to read with parents, caregivers, siblings, or friends.

Extend the Reading

Writing and Art Connection

Have students write a story from the perspective of a saguaro cactus. Brainstorm plot lines, such as a bird that won't go away, the cactus thief who wants to cut down and steal it, the snake that lives under the rock nearby, or the smelly javelina that won't take a bath. Have students illustrate their stories and share them with the group.

Visit [Writing A-Z](#) for a lesson and leveled materials on narrative writing.

Science Connection

Have students select an animal that lives near or in a saguaro cactus and write a report about it. Have students share what they learned with the group.

Skill Review

[Discussion cards](#) covering comprehension skills and strategies not explicitly taught with the book are provided as an extension activity. The following is a list of some ways these cards can be used with students:

- Use as discussion starters for literature circles.
- Have students choose one or more cards and write a response, either as an essay or as a journal entry.
- Distribute before reading the book and have students use one of the questions as a purpose for reading.
- Cut apart and use the cards as game cards with a board game.
- Conduct a class discussion as a review before the book quiz.

Assessment

Monitor students to determine if they can:

- summarize important information in text as they read
- identify main ideas and supporting details in the book
- understand subject and verb agreement in text and apply understanding in a worksheet
- understand and use homophones in writing

Comprehension Checks

- [Book Quiz](#)
- [Retelling Rubric](#)