
23. EXPLORING THE DESERT

Plant Characteristics and Habitat

Overview: Students will make careful observations of desert plants by sketching and describing them.

Objective: Students will use early techniques of sketching and describing characteristics and habitat of plants in a journal.

Time needed: 30 minutes

Group Size: 2

Age appropriateness: 4th grade and up

Site: anywhere

Background: Early explorers needed a means of keeping track of all new and different plants they found along the way. They would often stop and sketch the plants they found. Descriptive language was used to explain what plants looked like and where they were found. Plants develop different characteristics in order to survive and reproduce in their environment.

Materials:

Provided at the Garden

Clipboards

Provided by the classroom teacher

Construction paper

3 pieces of plain white paper cut in half to equal six pages

Stapler and staples

Pencils

Preparation: Make journals in the classroom.

Pre Activity: Videos, posters, and classroom discussions. Study techniques used by early explorers to record plants they saw along their journeys. Study desert plant characteristics and habitats. Practice with a buddy describing an object in the classroom and see if partner can guess what is being described.

Procedure:

1. Review Conservation Garden rules with students.
2. Group students and pass out journals.
3. Groups are to find a plant and sit down by it on the walkway.
4. Sketch the plant and describe the plant in much detail in the journal.
5. Students should share their journals in large group at the Garden or back in the classroom.

Modifications: Younger students may just draw the plant.

Extensions:

1. Back in the classroom, students could do additional research on the plant.
2. Students could develop a make believe habitat then draw and describe a plant which would thrive in that environment.

Reference List:

Down the Colorado with Major Powell by James Ramesey Ullman.
Coronado: Explorers of the Southwest by Matthew B. Grant.
What Kinda cactus Izzat by Reginald Manning.
A Desert Scrapbook by Virginia Wright-Frierson.
Easy Field Guide: Arizona by Dick and Sharon Nelson.
Living Desert Series--videos

Time of Year: any

****This activity was created by Debbie Weber and Paul Myer.**