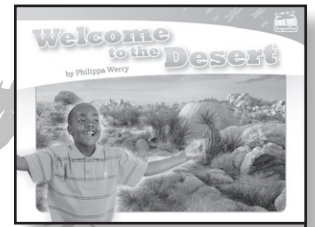


Welcome to the Desert

by Philippa Werry



Overview

This book is a simple scientific report on how animals and plants survive in the desert. Vivid desert photographs are overlaid with images of a boy acting as a guide. (Big idea: Scientists study plants and animals to help us understand them.)

Suggested purposes

This book supports the following **comprehension strategies**:

- making and confirming predictions **MP**
- identifying the main ideas. **MI**

It supports the following **non-fiction strategies**:

- using a picture glossary (boldface type)
- getting information from photographs.

Key vocabulary

The vocabulary that is focused on includes:

- Anchor words – *animals, habitat, plants*
- Content words – *cactus, coyote, desert, Earth, ground, hole, leaves, rabbit, rain, rat, roots, seeds, stem, water*
- High-frequency words – *from, get, has, here, not, there, too, when*

Features of the text

- Non-fiction features:
 - cover flap, which provides support for identifying the big ideas and anchor words
 - the topic (habitats), which expands on pages 8 and 9 of the anchor book *Being a Scientist*
 - preview question on the back cover
 - questions that focus attention on the topic
 - bold text for glossary words
 - cutaway photographs
 - photographs of a boy who acts as the reader's guide
 - picture glossary
- Word study:
 - contractions – *it's, doesn't, there's*
 - medial sound "ee" – *need, deep*
- Questions marks
- Commas
- Exclamation mark



Setting the scene

If you have already introduced the topic using the whole-class lesson plan and the anchor book (*Being a Scientist*), you can review the discussion and show the students pages 8 and 9 of the anchor book.

Discuss deserts and what they might be like.

- *What is a desert?*
- *How might you feel in a desert?*
- *What would you need to survive?*
- *How is this habitat different from our own?*

ELL support

A great way for ELL students to make connections with their reading is by providing them with opportunities to talk about a book with other students. They will process and internalise their learning through purposeful conversations.

Introducing the book

Front cover – Discuss the photograph and have the students brainstorm words about the desert. Prompt them with words such as “dry”, “rocky”, “bright sun”. *What kind of plants do you see? Where is the boy? What is he going to tell us?* Read aloud the title and the author’s name.

Back cover – Read aloud the preview question. Lead a discussion to build the students’ background knowledge. *What animal is this?*

Using the flap – Read aloud the text on the flap, and (if relevant) remind the students that they have read this in *Being a Scientist*. Read aloud the anchor words on the other side. Encourage the students to point out the words when they find them in the book. Ask them to leave the flap open as they read.

Title page – Listen as the students read the title. Discuss the photograph. *How is this tree different from other trees?*

The first reading

Pages 2 and 3 – Point out the exclamation mark. *How does the author want you to read this sentence?* Read aloud the text with expression. *The text tells us that there’s not much water in the desert. What does that mean for plants and animals?*

MP **Page 4** – (Making predictions) Discuss the photographs, focusing on the boy’s stance. *People stand like this when introducing somebody or something.* Use the cover photograph to further this discussion. Read aloud the page, prompting the anchor word “plants”. Encourage the students to respond to the question and write their predictions on the board.

Page 5 – Refer back to their predictions. *Were you right? Point to “roots”. Why is this word in bold?* (highlights an important word, which is in the glossary) Have the students turn to the picture glossary on page 12.

MP **Page 6** – (Making predictions) Discuss the photograph. *What kind of plants are these? How would these plants get water?* Refer to the students’ predictions from page 4. Have them look up “stem” in the picture glossary. *How does the stem help them live in the desert?*

MP **Page 7** – *What is this animal? How might it survive in the desert?* (Making predictions) Ask the students to respond to the question. Record their predictions on the board.

Pages 8 and 9 – *Where do these animals get water?* Point to “ground” and “seeds”. Have the students use the picture glossary to gain a visual meaning. Draw attention to the visuals around the page numbers, which reinforce and give visual clues to the content.

Page 10 – Discuss the photograph. *Where does this animal get water?*

MI **Page 11** – (Main idea) *What message is the boy giving us? (It is hot and dry in the desert. Animals and plants have special ways of finding water. Look back at the lizard, coyote, rat, and rabbit. What do all of these animals have that helps them survive in the desert? (Their colours blend in with the landscape.)*

Vocabulary activity

Focus word: leaves

1. Read aloud page 10. *This rabbit eats leaves. There is water in the leaves.*
2. Say “leaves” with me.
3. Explain that leaves grow on plants. *Some plants have flat, smooth leaves. Some have sharp, spiky leaves.* Explain that “leaves” also means “goes away from a place”. *When you leave a place, you go somewhere different.*

4. Give examples that show how “leaves” can be used.
 - *In autumn, the leaves on some trees turn red and gold.*
 - *I raked all the leaves into a pile. Then a gust of wind came and scattered the leaves all over the yard!*
 - *My friend leaves home at 8:00 a.m. every morning.*
 - *Remember to say goodbye before you leave class.*
5. Do the following activities:
 - Bring a collection of leaves to the classroom. Discuss their differences. Brainstorm descriptive words around “leaves”. Sort and categorise the leaves – (thin, fat, glossy, pointy).
 - Go for a walk around the neighbourhood to look at different kinds of leaves.
 - Have the students discuss with a partner what they do before they leave home each morning. Ask them to use the starter “Before I leave home, I ...”
 - Have the students draw a picture of a person or thing leaving somewhere – for example, a plane leaving an airport, a train leaving the station, or a superhero leaving planet Earth.
6. *What is the word we have been learning? Say “leaves” with me.*

ELL activity

Language objective: Using a graphic organiser to support comprehension of the main idea

- *We’ve been reading Welcome to the Desert, and we’ve been learning about what it’s like to live in the desert.*
- Ask the students to tell a partner what plants and animals in the desert need. (water) *What did you learn from the book?*
- *Everything needs water. Is there lots of water in the desert? Reread page 3.*
- *Let’s find out how plants and animals in the desert get water. Reread the book. When you have finished reading, provide the students with a graphic organiser (below), which lists content words. You could draw a picture of each plant or animal to provide more support.*

Plants and animals in the desert need water. How do they find water?	
plant	
cactus	
coyote	
rat	
rabbit	

- Model how you’d use the book to find information about how the tree finds water (page 5). Draw the students’ attention to the glossary word “roots”, and use the picture glossary for support.
- The students can complete the chart as a group or in pairs.
- Review the completed chart. Model forming complete sentences. For example, “Trees use their roots to find water. A rabbit eats leaves to find water.”

Ideas for revisiting the text

1. Review and check

- Listen as the students reread the text, observing their fluency and decoding strategies.
- Review the anchor and content words. Check that the students know what each word means and how it is used.

2. Stop and learn

a. Decoding/word attack activities

Practising onset and rime

Reread page 6 and discuss “stores”. Write the root word “store” on the board. Clarify its meaning (to hold). Discuss the “or” sound. Brainstorm more “or” words (more, sore, wore, tore, bore, gore, pore, lore) and discuss their meanings. Write them onto cards, making “or” a different colour. Add them to the word wall.

Practising contractions

- Write “It doesn’t rain” on the board. Ask the students to practise saying it.
- Explain that “doesn’t” is a contraction. Model writing a contraction, and explain that the apostrophe replaces a letter.
- Continue the lesson using the following words:
 - it’s – *It’s raining.*
 - there’s – *There’s no rain.*

BLM – Practising writing contractions

Have the students write the correct words in the spaces. They can then write a sentence about the desert, using “there’s”.

b. Comprehension activities

- Discuss the book's message. Explain that the message is the most important idea. *What is the main idea in this book?* Explain that this main idea is supported by facts. Have the students recall the ways that plants and animals survive in the desert.

BLM – Recalling the main ideas from the text

Have the students draw pictures of how some plants and animals survive in the desert.

- Discuss the desert habitat. *What would it be like?* Revisit the title page and encourage the students to use the photograph to imagine being in the desert. Brainstorm things they can see (sand, rocks, spiky plants). Turn to pages 2 and 3 and add further items (bare hills, low bushes, grass, wide spaces between plants). Continue adding items as you look at the remaining pages (stumpy trees, thick branches, bushes, white blooms, tall cactus, lizard, coyote, rat, seeds, rabbit). Encourage the students to share their personal feelings about this habitat.

c. Writing activities

Have the students write:

- a list poem about the desert, using the words they brainstormed when discussing the desert habitat. They can combine two words to make short phrases, writing one word on a line, then on the next line writing two or more words they can continue this pattern to write a poem.
- a fact sheet about a desert animal
- a list of questions about the desert
- a letter to someone in their family, describing a trip to the desert.

3. Suggestions for further activities

- Grow a cactus. Research its features and habitat.
- Find out how other plants and animals survive in the desert.
- Make a poster about survival in the desert.