



# DESERT GIANT

AUTHOR: BARBARA BASH

ILLUSTRATOR: BARBARA BASH

See a video of the book read aloud here: [Desert Giant](#)

**\*\* REMEMBER: HAVE FUN AND THE KIDS WILL TOO! \*\***

## OVERVIEW

### ABOUT THE BOOK

This informational text introduces the reader to the saguaro cactus in the Sonoran Desert. The saguaro cactus provides shelter and food for a diverse population of desert animals and people. With each visit of an animal, there is a description of the animal and how it uses the cactus. There are facts to support the scientific content and the reader learns about the life cycle of the cactus.

### ABOUT THE AUTHOR/ILLUSTRATOR

Barbara Bash has written and illustrated a number of books for children and adults about the natural world. She teaches workshops throughout the US, Canada and Europe exploring expressive brushwork, illustrated journaling, communication practices and the art of handwriting. ([www.barbarabash.com](http://www.barbarabash.com))

## THE READ ALOUD

### BEFORE READING

Use these before reading the story to help students activate background knowledge and make predictions:

- Introduce Barbara Bash.
- Has anyone ever seen a Saguaro Cactus?
- Where are cactus found?
- Do you know anything about them?
- The cover tells me that there are many things to learn about the cactus. What do you see on the cover?
- Do you think this will be fiction or nonfiction? Why do you think that?

### DURING THE STORY

Use these while reading the story to help students interpret the action and content.

- (p. 1) Can you imagine why the author refers to the cactus as wonderful?
- (p. 3) Do you think “hissssssss” is a powerful word? This is an example of onomatopoeia, words that imitate natural sounds.
- (p. 4-5) I notice that there is a difference between the male and female woodpecker. What is it?
- (p. 9) I wonder what the pollen is used for?
- (p. 11) Why did the author draw a diagram of the inside of the flower? Did anything

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### TOPICS & THEMES:

- Saguaro cactus
- Life cycle of plants
- Desert habitat

### *Tips for every book!*

### POWER PHRASES:

***I WONDER...***

***I NOTICE...***

***TELL ME MORE...***

### DIGGING DEEPER:

*“Tell me more, why do you think that?”*

*“How do you know that?”*

*“Why do you think they feel like that?”*

*“Interesting, did you notice anything else?”*

surprise you on the diagram?

- (p.13) How do diagrams help the reader?
- (p.21) Using clues and illustration on this page, can you tell me what decompose means?
- (p.27) How old is a saguaro cactus when its first arms appear?

## AFTER READING

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*Use these after reading the story to help students understand what they just read.*

- There were so many things that we learned in the book. Is there anyone who can tell me what the book was about in one sentence?
- Would you like to live in the desert? Why or why not?
- What fact did you learn that you never thought about?

## BRINGING THE BOOK TO LIFE!

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- Look at this map with me. How close to us is the Sonoran desert in Arizona?
- (p. 3) Hiss like a snake.

## COOPERATIVE LEARNING

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- I am going to read some words. Working with your partner, figure out if it is an example of onomatopoeia (words that imitate natural sounds). If you decide it is, thumbs up. If not, thumbs down. (reader: examples of onomatopoeia are bolded) Here are the words: **oink**, tree, cactus, **bang**, **zipped**, snake, **ticking**, **buzz**, **hummed**, yesterday, school, **snort** candle, **meow**. (After the list is complete and children are interested, ask if they have more examples.)

## SMALL-GROUP IDEAS

### 1. DISCUSSION ACTIVITY

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- Have you ever seen cactus for sale in the grocery store?
- Have you ever eaten cactus?
- Is the desert busy or quiet?
- Were you surprised by the time of day the blossoms open ?
- Review the ways the dead saguaro serves as a new ecosystem of creatures
- Many animals are dependent on the saguaro cactus. I wonder what the desert would be like without the cactus. Does anyone have an idea?

### Suggested Optional Activity:

- Draw a picture of a saguaro in the desert. Add desert animals and other plants to your picture. Label them.

### 2. WRITING ACTIVITY

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- Pretend you are a saguaro. Write a story about a day or year in your life

### 3. EXTENSION ACTIVITY

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1. Design a postage stamp with a cactus as its subject. (show students a stamp). Cut out your stamp and affix it to an envelope. (provide students with envelopes, or drawings of envelopes) Address the front of the envelope to anyone you wish.

## COMMON CORE LINKS

CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RL 3.1,3.4,3.7,3.8