

TOOLS FOR TEACHERS

TEACHING CURRICULUM FOR HOME AND THE CLASSROOM



Danger in the Desert *by* T.S. Fields

Scott and Robbie always wanted candy and root beer for dinner, but now they've got their wish, and it doesn't sound so good. They've been kidnapped and left in the brutally hot desert with no food or water. It's up to them to survive, using only what they happen to have in the station wagon.

How can a pair of shoes, a set of hubcaps, and the contents of their mother's shopping bags be used for survival? You won't be able to stop reading until you find out.

Quality chapter books are enjoyable just for their stories and pictures. However, activities such as those here can help teachers develop the themes of a book in a more complete way. We encourage you to adapt these activities to your classroom needs.

Recalling

After reading the book, test your memory and retention by answering these questions:

1. How was the kidnapper able to steal the car?
2. What does the kidnapper use to tie up Scott?
3. How did the boys get the keys to the car?
4. Why does Scott want Robbie's shoes?
5. Why did the tire tracks disappear overnight?
6. Name three things the boys took from the car to help them construct their shelter.
7. To whom does Scott try to write a letter?
8. What happened to the kidnappers?

Science

1. Scott and Robbie find themselves getting very thirsty in the desert, much more than they would on a normal day. Find out about why people need more water when they are exposed to the sun. Why is it better to drink water than root beer when it's hot?
2. Scott and Robbie are very lucky that it rains the night they are stuck in the desert, since deserts get less than ten inches of rain (on average) per year. The plants and animals that live in deserts have adapted to the dry conditions by developing ways to survive with less water. For example, the Kangaroo rat gets all the water it needs from the seeds it eats. It can store

water in its body for a very long time, so it never needs to drink. It also stays inside its underground burrow during the heat of the day, coming out only at night, another good way to conserve moisture. Find out more about the plants and animals that live in deserts and how they get by with so little water. Start with some of these:

Animals: bat, burrowing owl, cactus wren, chuckwalla, cottontail rabbit, coyote, desert hairy scorpion, desert spider beetle, desert spiny lizard, desert tortoise, Gila monster, javelina kangaroo rat, rattlesnake, red-spotted toad, red-tailed hawk, roadrunner, sidewinder, skunk, stink beetle, tarantula.

Plants: cholla, Joshua tree, mesquite tree, ocotillo, prickly pear cactus, saguaro.

Additional challenge: Do a special report on one plant or animal that interests you. Present your report to the class as a special interest news report.

Spelling

These words look and sound alike, but they all have different meanings. You can remember which which by associating something about each meaning with its correct spelling. For example:

dessert: You always want two desserts (desserts has two s's.)

desert: The desert is sparse: it only has one 8.

desert: Scott and Robbie were *deserted* in the *desert*.

Find more words that have close spellings and make up your own way of remembering how to tell them apart.

principal and principle
stationary and stationery

Journalism

Create a class newspaper that centers around *Danger in the Desert*.

Some students can be reporters and write articles for the front page about how the boys were found. They can write a feature article on the deputies and the work they do. One person in class could play the part of Robbie, another could play Scott and a third and fourth could interview them, then write feature articles on the two boys.

One or two students could write an editorial on the dangers of drugs and the problems drug abusers and dealers can cause.

One student can design a masthead for the paper.

Rising Moon

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