



Discussion Guide for

ALEJANDRO'S GIFT

Author:

Richard E. Albert

Illustrated By:

Sylvia Long

Publisher:

Chronicle Books

THEME:

Water offers the gift of life to all living things.

PROGRAM SUMMARY:

The lush oases of California's Indian Canyon desert provide the setting for *Alejandro's Gift* narrated by Francisco Rivela. In this episode, LeVar discovers the vast importance of water and demonstrates how the 'gift' of water can be the most important gift of all.

TOPICS FOR DISCUSSION:

Alejandro gave the gift of water. Discuss other 'gifts' that people can give to animals. At the end of the book the author said that Alejandro had received a gift. Discuss what that gift might be. Alejandro also felt a great deal of satisfaction about what he had done. Have the students talk about a time that they felt very pleased with something they had done for someone (or something) else.

Before viewing the program, brainstorm a chart 'What We Know About the Desert.' After viewing, use a different colour of marker to add newly acquired information to the chart. Continue adding to the chart as students gain information from other sources. Using a different colour of print for each source helps students visually understand how much they learn by using a variety of sources.

Before viewing the program, discuss the concept of "survival." What do plants and animals need to survive? Do people need different things for survival? How would a person survive if she/he were lost in the mountains, in the desert, in a forest etc.

CURRICULUM EXTENSION ACTIVITIES:

Have students research the animals and plants mentioned and pictured in story. -The glossary at the back of the book may get them started. Have students collect pictures from magazines and other sources and create a collage, 'Ways that People Use Water.'

On a large piece of tan mural paper, have students make a map of Alejandro's place, including his adobe house, the burro's shed, his garden, the windmill and well, and the desert road.

Have them create a desert scene on the mural by adding plants and animals depicted in the story. After they have added these details, students will need to decide where to put Alejandro's first water hole and the second one.

Set up an experiment with some common garden vegetable plants to test the effects of soil composition, water, and heat on plant growth. Carrots, beans, tomatoes, and melons offer a good contrast in types of plants and were all part of Alejandro's garden. Plant seeds or small plants in different combinations of these conditions: sandy soil, rich soil, limited water, adequate water moderate temperature, hot temperature. (There are 8 possible combinations of these 3 conditions. For a useful math activity, have students determine the number of possible combinations and what they are). Keep light as a constant, so that soil, water, and temperature are the factors being compared. Have students keep a written log of changes they notice. Encourage them to make sketches in their logs as well. At the end of the experiment, students can compile all the data from their logs onto a chart. Based on the data, discuss some of the challenges that Alejandro had in maintaining a productive garden.

Brainstorm a list of ways in which people can conserve water. Books such as *Going Green* by John Elkington, J. Hailes, D. Hill, and J. Makower (Puffin Books) and *50 Simple Things kids Can Do to Save the Earth* by the Earth Works Group (Scholastic) may give the students some practical ideas. Some of these tips could be printed on word bubbles and posted at various places in the school building, such as above drinking fountains and sinks.

Have students generate a collection of 'water words.' Sort the words into categories, such as bodies of water (lake, creek, pond, etc.), words that describe movement of water (geyser, waterfall, trickle, etc.), and water sounds (splash, drip, patter, etc.). They might creatively display the words by putting the bodies of water on blue paper cut in a pond shape, the movement words on waves of water, and the water sounds on raindrops.

Brainstorm a list of wild animals in your area. Invite a wildlife specialist into the classroom to talk about appropriate behaviour toward and around wild animals.

Investigate how a windmill works. David Macaulay provides an explanation in *The Way Things Work* (Houghton Mifflin) and in the CD ROM of this title (Dorling Kindersley).



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About The Author:

Richard E. Albert began his career as a writer of pulp westerns. He stopped writing for 30 years to pursue engineering, but has returned to writing with Alejandro's Gift his first book for children.

About The Illustrator:

After years of working as an artist, Sylvia Long only recently began illustrating books for children. Her affection for animals and the outdoors inspired her illustrations for Alejandro's Gift.

RELATED THEMES:

- water cycle
- water conservation
- desert life

RELATED READING RAINBOW PROGRAMS:

- Monsters Meet You at the Airport
- Desert Giant
- Jack the Seal and the Sea

BOOKS REVIEWED BY CHILDREN:

IT RAINED ON THE DESERT TODAY by Ken and Debby Buchanan, illus. By Libba Tracy (Northland)

THE DESERT ALPHABET BOOK by Jerry Pallotta, illus. by Mark Astrella (Charlesbridge)

WATER, WATER EVERYWHERE by Mark J. Rauzon and Cynthia Overbeck Bix (Sierra Cub Books)

SUPPLEMENTARY BOOKLIST:

WATER by Frank Asch (Harcourt Brace)

THE DESERT IS THEIRS by Byrd Baylor, illus. by Peter Parnall (Scribner's)

THE MAGIC SCHOOL BUS AT THE WATER WORKS by Joanna Cole, illus. by Bruce Degen (Scholastic)

COULD STILL BE WATER Allan Fowler (Children's Press)

SPLISH SPLASH by Joan Bransfield Graham, illus. by Steve Scoff (Ticknor & Fields)

C4RING FOR OUR WATER by Carol Greene (Enslow Publishers)

LISTEN TO THE DESERT by Pat Mora (Clarion)

WATER'S WAY by Lisa Westberg Peters, illus. by Ted Rand (Arcade)

MOJAVE by Diane Siebert, illus. by Wendell Minor (Crowell)

DESERTS by Seymour Simon (Morrow)

WATER UP, WATER DOWN: THE HYDROLOGIC CYCLE by Sally M. Walker (Carolrhoda)

WATER by Angela Webb, photographs by Chris Fairclough (Franklin Watts)

Programs Details

Length:

30 minutes

Subject Areas:

Environment/Water

Audience Levels:

Ages 6 - 11

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