

## Unit 1 Grade 2 The Cactus Hotel by Brenda Guiberson

### Synopsis:

It is another hot day in the desert. Birds and other animals scurry about looking for food. When they get tired they stop to rest at a giant cactus. It is their hotel in the desert! Many different animals live in the cactus hotel. It protects them; and they protect it, by eating the pests that could harm the cactus. The cactus grows larger and larger and will live for about two hundred years. When one animal moves out, another moves in. There is never a vacancy in the cactus hotel!

### Big Ideas and Key Understanding:

- Biology and Life Science
- Habitats and Ecosystems
- Plants and Flowers

### Key words and Vocabulary activities:

Scurry

Vacancy

Pests

Ecosystem

Hotel

Play hangman using the key words listed above– see if you can stump your friends!

### Pre Reading Questions:

Based on the picture on the cover of the book, what do you think the book is about?

How do you think animals survive in the desert?

**Read Story:**

**Discussion Prompts:**

The book is called Cactus Hotel. Do you know what a hotel is?

Why do we need hotels when we are traveling?

What kinds of animals stayed in the hotel?

Why is it important to protect unique environments?

**Extension Activities:**

How would you tell the story from the cactus' point of view?

Go to Google Maps and try to find the Saguaro National Monument. How far is it from your house?

<https://www.google.com/maps>

Draw your life cycle– include when you were born, when you learned to walk, when you went to school, how big you are now and what you can do!

## Unit 1 Grade 2 Facing West a Story of the Oregon Trail by Kathleen Kudlinski

### **Synopsis**

The year is 1845, when eleven-year-old Ben finds out that he and his family are going to make the long and difficult trip from Missouri to the Oregon Territory. Unfortunately, he believes it his fault — his doctor says that the air in the West would be better for his severe asthma. Wracked with guilt, he also blames himself for the hardships his family will have to endure along the way, including bears, snakes, and hunger. On the expedition, a man named Pete becomes Ben's mentor, helping him understand that everyone has fears. Most importantly, Pete gives Ben the strength and courage he needs to live with and accept his asthma.

### **Big Ideas and Key Understanding**

- Westward Exploration and Expansion
- Courage, Bravery, Heroism
- Honor

### **Key Words and Vocabulary Activities**

Asthma

Guilt

Hardship

Expedition

Mentor

Courage

Pioneer

Have your parents/teacher help you to make a wheel with a spinner that includes the following phrases:

Act it Out!

Spell it!

Draw it!

Use it in a Sentence!

Using each of the vocabulary words, spin the wheel and see where it lands!

**Pre- Reading Questions:**

How much do you know about pioneers who went Westward?

Why do you think they took their chance to go so far away from home?

How would you feel if your family told you you were moving thousands of miles away?

**Read Story:**

**Discussion Prompts:**

Where is Ben's family headed? Why?

What 5 things were crowding Ben's mind so much that he couldn't write?

Explain what Ben meant when he compared asthma to mud.

What do the pioneers need so desperately?

What did Mama do that surprised everyone?

**Extension Activities:**

Using a map of the United States and colored pencils, follow the trail that Ben's family took to Oregon. Make a key showing where the trip started and ended and any other important happenings along the way. A free download is listed below:

<http://www.freeworldmaps.net/download/united-states.html>

Ben's job on the trail is to keep a journal of the daily events. Pretend that you are Ben and write a journal/diary entry for your favorite chapter!

