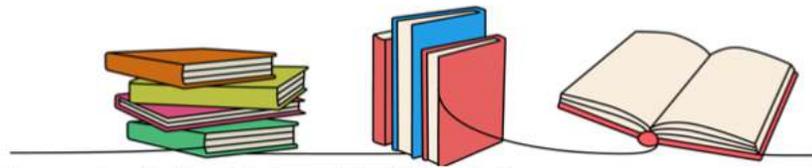


# About the Curriculum



When my daughter was in 3<sup>rd</sup> grade, she and I were both tired (already) of the daily grammar drills from her workbooks. I noticed that she was continually going over the same few grammar concepts day in and day out. Not only did she not need the excessive amount of practice, she was bored to tears. Around the same time, I read a post on the Five In A Row Message Boards about a mom who didn't use a grammar curriculum. She simply pulled out grammar lessons from the living literature she and her son were using as opportunities arose. My wheels started turning....

My daughter (and I) had long before fallen in love with really good literature. We'd both be happy to sit and read together all day long if the rest of the curriculum would just leave us alone! :o) Alas, other subjects had to be taught and grammar was one of them. In the midst of being unhappy with our grammar curriculum, I was also realizing that spelling was beginning to be a bore since it held no significance to anything we were studying. I also didn't feel like anything we were doing, as far as curriculum goes, was specifically teaching much about (or expecting much) reading comprehension.

I mulled all of these things over a bit before I decided to create a language arts curriculum that would meet the needs of my daughter—and pull all the loose ends together into a meaningful and easy to use language arts curriculum. And what follows is that curriculum.

I chose fifteen great pieces of age-appropriate fiction, historical fiction, and non-fiction picture books and put together various language arts activities ("Grammar Packets") for each book. I chose picture books rather than chapter books so the reading could be completed in one sitting. It's planned so the books can be read and the activities completed in any order.

Before I began, I researched grammar, language arts, reading comprehension, reading strategies, and spelling expectations for children in 3<sup>rd</sup>-4<sup>th</sup> grades. I used homeschool curriculum sources as well as traditional scope and sequences to determine exactly what skills my children needed to learn and practice within that age range.

My daughter started the curriculum during the second half of 3<sup>rd</sup> grade and finished it during her 4<sup>th</sup> grade year. My son didn't begin using it until his 4<sup>th</sup> grade year. Each book is meant to last one

week, but as you can probably tell if you're quick at math, we didn't always complete one book per week. Sometimes writing projects, grammar games, or other language arts lessons took the place of this curriculum.

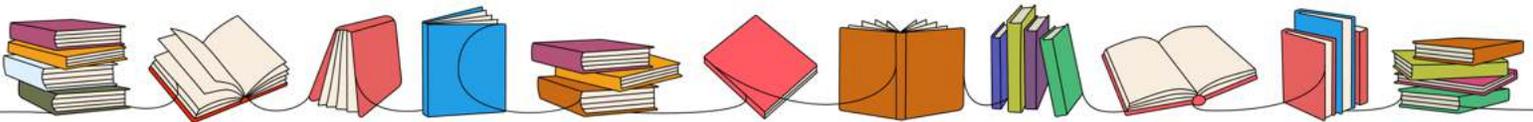
Like I mentioned before, the daily repetition of grammar skills weren't needed by my daughter. In other words, once she had it, she had it (usually.) I didn't see the need to continually practice the same skill over and over. For that reason, I specifically didn't include page after page of the same skill. If I noticed that she needed extra practice in a particular skill, I made sure to pull out a page from our old grammar curriculum or print a freebie page from the internet as additional practice. I hope you'll do the same if you notice a particular need from your child.

## Picture Books Used in the Curriculum

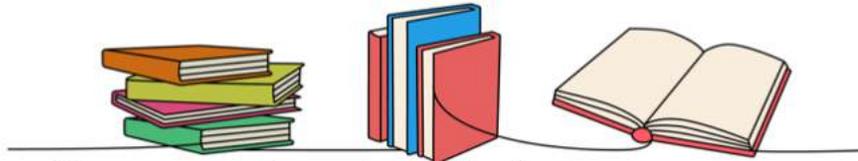
Use this booklist to gather the essential picture books needed for this curriculum. You can borrow them from your local library or add them to your home collection. These carefully selected books will guide the grammar, spelling, and writing activities in each lesson.

The lessons can be completed in any order, so there is flexibility if you can't get your hands on a particular book right away. Find a [clickable list here](#).

- Alejandro's Gift* by Richard E. Albert**
- Aunt Chip and the Triple Creek Dam Affair* by Patricia Polacco**
- Goin' Someplace Special* by Patricia McKissack**
- Harry the Dirty Dog* by Gene Zion**
- Mailing May* by Michael Tunnell**
- Mrs. Katz and Tush* by Patricia Polacco**
- Owl Moon* by Jane Yolen**
- Papa Piccolo* by Carol Talley**
- Snakes Are Hunters* by Patricia Lauber**
- Spiders* by Gail Gibbons**
- Storm in the Night* by Mary Stolz**
- The Hatmaker's Sign* by Candace Fleming**
- The Hickory Chair* by Lisa Rowe Faustino**
- The Mountain that Loved a Bird* by Alice McLerran**
- The Raft* by Jim Lamarche**



# Using the Curriculum



This curriculum is designed to provide structured language arts instruction while allowing flexibility to meet your child's needs. Below are the materials you'll need and a suggested approach to using the lessons effectively.

## MATERIALS NEEDED

- Copy paper
- Three-hole punch
- Three-ring binder
- Literature books from the book list

## PREPARING THE MATERIALS

1. Print the activity pages (referred to as "grammar packets") for each book.
2. Use a three-hole punch and store the pages in a three-ring binder.
3. Choose a book for the week and place the corresponding activity pages ("the grammar packet") at the front of the binder for easy access.

## USING THE CURRICULUM

Each book is designed to be completed in one week. A suggested schedule is as follows:

- **Day One:** Read the book together and discuss it. Instead of a discussion, your child may narrate (retell) the story.
- **Day Two:** Complete approximately one-third of the activities and rewrite each spelling word twice.
- **Day Three:** Complete another third of the activities and rewrite each spelling word twice.
- **Day Four:** Complete the final third of the activities and take a spelling pretest.
- **Day Five:** Review any missed activities, rewrite missed pretest words, and take a final spelling test.

## DAILY GUIDANCE & ORGANIZATION

- Mark the activities you expect your child to complete each day.
- Provide any necessary directions or mini-lessons before your child begins working.
- Check your child's work and review any missed answers together.
- When a book's activities are complete, move the pages to the back of the binder for easy organization.

## SKILLS COVERED

This curriculum integrates multiple language arts skills, including grammar, reading comprehension, reading strategies, spelling, oral language, narration, writing, and handwriting. A detailed list of skills, along with explanations, begins on page 9.

## ENCOURAGING INDEPENDENCE

While some children may need guidance, many can complete the lessons independently. Adjust your involvement based on your child's ability and confidence level.

## ACTIVITY DIRECTIONS & ANSWER KEY

Activity instructions are concise and straightforward. If a concept is new, a brief explanation may be needed before your child begins. An answer key is included at the end of the book for reference.

# Suggested Schedule



This curriculum includes 15 books, each designed to be completed in about one week. Since a typical school year lasts 36 weeks, here is my suggested way to structure the curriculum over the course of a year.

## Alternating Weeks of Grammar Packets & Language Arts Enrichment

This approach spends a week per grammar packet while incorporating additional language arts activities.

- **On Week:** Complete one grammar packet per week.
- **Off Week:** Review challenging grammar concepts through YouTube instruction or additional worksheets, and focus on other language arts activities, such as:
  - Writing projects
  - Phonics lessons
  - Typing practice
  - Latin and Greek vocabulary roots
  - Narration & Copywork
  - Poetry memorization

This schedule gives plenty of time to review tricky topics while keeping language arts engaging and well-rounded.

In a 36-week year, you will have six additional weeks after finishing this schedule. I suggest using the last six weeks of the school year to celebrate a year of hard work with some fun and creative language arts projects. Here are a few examples:

1. Enjoy an author study. Read several books by the same author, then write and illustrate your own in the author's style.
2. Create an end-of-year magazine to showcase your homeschool adventures. Write articles and add pictures to highlight memorable moments over the school year.
3. Connect language arts to a history or science project. Wrap up a history or science study by creating a research-based project on the subject.

# Skills Covered



Use this glossary to help you, as the parent, understand the various skills and concepts covered in this curriculum. The definitions provided offer clear explanations that can also be read directly to children when introducing or reinforcing key ideas. It's a good idea to print the glossary to have as a quick reference in your binder.

## PARTS OF A BOOK

**Author** – The author is the person who writes the words in a book. Sometimes, books have one author, but other times, more than one person works together to write a story or share information.

**Illustrator** – The illustrator is the person who creates the pictures or artwork in a book. Some books have drawings, while others use paintings, collages, or even photographs to help tell the story.

**Copyright** – The copyright is a special law that protects the author's and illustrator's work so no one else can copy or sell it as their own. You'll usually find the copyright date near the beginning of the book, showing when it was published.

**Dedications** – A dedication is a short message from the author or illustrator, usually found at the front of the book. It tells who the book was written or illustrated for, such as a family member, friend, or someone who inspired them.

**Genres – Fiction and Nonfiction** – Books fall into different genres, or types, based on what they are about. Fiction books tell made-up stories, while nonfiction books share real facts and information about the world. Some books even mix a little of both!

## BOOK ELEMENTS AND COMPREHENSION

**Setting** – The setting is where and when a story takes place. It could be a real or imaginary place and might change throughout the story.

**Characters – Main and Secondary** – Characters are the people, animals, or creatures in a story. The main character is the most important one, while secondary characters help move the story along but aren't the focus.

**Main Idea** – The main idea is what a story or passage is mostly about. It's the big idea that ties everything together, while details help explain or support it.

**Compare and Contrast** – Comparing looks at how two things are alike, while contrasting shows how they are different. This skill helps readers understand characters, events, or ideas in a deeper way.

**Sequence of Events** – The sequence of events is the order in which things happen in a story. Words like first, next, then, and finally can help identify the correct order.

**Fact vs. Opinion** – A fact is something that can be proven true, while an opinion is what someone thinks or feels. Recognizing the difference helps readers understand information more clearly.

**Graphic Organizers** – Graphic organizers are visual tools, like charts or diagrams, that help organize thoughts and ideas. They can be used to sort information, summarize a story, or plan writing.

**Critical Thinking Through Writing** – Writing helps develop critical thinking by encouraging readers to explain their ideas, ask questions, and support their thoughts with reasons and examples.

## POETIC DEVICES

**Descriptive Words** – Descriptive words help create a clear picture by appealing to the senses. They make writing more vivid by describing how something looks, sounds, feels, smells, or tastes.

**Alliteration** – Alliteration is the repetition of the same beginning sound in multiple words within a sentence or phrase. This technique makes writing more rhythmic and fun to read. Example: *Peter Piper picked a peck of pickled peppers.*

**Onomatopoeia** – Onomatopoeia refers to words that imitate the sounds they describe. These words help bring writing to life by making sounds more expressive. Examples: *buzz, bong, cluck, splash, sizzle.*

**Personification** – Personification gives human-like qualities to objects, animals, or ideas. This literary device makes descriptions more engaging by making non-human things act in human ways. Example: *The sun peeked over the horizon.*

**Similes and Metaphors** – Both similes and metaphors compare two unlike things to create vivid descriptions, but they do so in different ways.

- **Similes** use the words "like" or "as" to make a direct comparison. Example: *Sly as a fox. The wind whistled like a freight train.*
- **Metaphors** make a comparison without using "like" or "as," stating that one thing is another. Example: *The classroom was a zoo. Her smile is sunshine on a cloudy day.*

## PARTS OF SPEECH

**Nouns** – A noun is a word that names a person, place, thing, or idea. Nouns can be something you can see and touch, like a *book* or *tree*, or something abstract, like *love* or *freedom*.

**Common Nouns** – Common nouns name general people, places, or things and are not capitalized unless they begin a sentence. Examples: *brother, grocery, dog*.

**Proper Nouns** – Proper nouns name specific people, places, or things and always begin with a capital letter. Examples: *Gary, Walmart, Oreo*.

**Pronouns** – A pronoun is a word used in place of a noun to avoid repetition. Example: *They went to the store*. Common pronouns include: *I, me, you, they, them, he, she, it, we, him, her, us, and them*.

**Verbs** – Verbs are action words that tell what someone or something is doing. They are often called "doing words."

**Helping Verbs** – Helping verbs work with the main verb to add meaning or show past, present, or future tense. Common helping verbs include: *am, is, are, was, were, been, be, can, has, shall, will, do, does, did, have, should, may, might, being, would, must, could, had*.

**Subjects** – The subject is the main noun of a sentence. It tells who or what the sentence is about.

**Predicates** – The predicate is the main verb of a sentence. It tells what the subject is doing or what is happening.

**Adjectives** – Adjectives describe or modify a noun or pronoun, helping to create a clearer picture. Examples: *yellow dress, bright sun*.

**Adverbs** – Adverbs describe or modify verbs, adjectives, or other adverbs. They often tell how, when, or where something happens and often end in *-ly*. Examples: *sing beautifully, drove fast, worked quickly*.

**Possessives** – Possessives show ownership or belonging. Example: *Sarah's dog* (Who does the dog belong to? Sarah.)

**Prepositions and Prepositional Phrases** – A preposition links nouns, pronouns, and phrases to other parts of the sentence. Prepositions are always part of a phrase. Example: *The dog ran **into** the house*. You can find a large list of common prepositions on page 15.

**Interjections** – An interjection is a word or phrase that expresses strong emotion and usually stands apart from the rest of the sentence. Examples: *Great! Wow! Ouch! Oh, no!*

**Conjunctions** – Conjunctions are words that link other words, phrases, or clauses together. Common conjunctions include: *and, but, or, so, yet, nor, and for*.

## SENTENCES

**Complete Sentences** – A complete sentence expresses a full thought and includes both a subject (who or what the sentence is about) and a predicate (what the subject is doing or what is happening). Example: *The wind roared during the storm.*

**Sentence Fragments** – A sentence fragment is an incomplete sentence because it is missing either a subject or a predicate, making it unclear or unfinished. Example: *Like a tree limb.*

**Run-on Sentences** – A run-on sentence is two or more complete thoughts combined incorrectly without proper punctuation or conjunctions. It can make writing confusing and hard to read. Example: *The wind roared in the storm causing the tree limbs to break and the power lines to fall and the electricity to go out while we sat under the bed crying and screaming because we thought a tornado might be coming toward us when we heard a really loud sound like a train but it was only a strong gust of wind.*

## CAPITALIZATION

**Capitalization** – Capitalization means using capital letters correctly in writing. The first word of every sentence, names of people and places, days of the week, months, holidays, and titles of books and stories should always be capitalized.

**Punctuation** – Punctuation marks help make writing clear and meaningful. **Ending punctuation** includes periods (.), question marks (?), and exclamation points (!). **Commas** (,) separate items in a list, set off introductory words, and help avoid confusion. **Quotation marks** (" ") show when someone is speaking or to highlight a direct quote.

**Types of Sentences** – Sentences can have different purposes: **Declarative sentences** make a statement and end with a period. Example: *The dog is sleeping.* **Exclamatory sentences** show strong emotion and end with an exclamation point. Example: *That was amazing!* **Interrogative sentences** ask a question and end with a question mark. Example: *Where are my shoes?*

## WORD USAGE

**Homonyms** – Homonyms are words that sound alike but have different meanings and/or spellings. These words can sometimes cause confusion in writing. Example: *bear/bare.*

**Synonyms** – Synonyms are words that have similar meanings. Using synonyms helps make writing more interesting and varied. Example: *friend, buddy, chum, pal.*

**Antonyms** – Antonyms are words that have opposite meanings. Recognizing antonyms helps expand vocabulary and improve word choice. Example: *love/hate.*

**Compound Words** – A compound word is formed when two words that can stand alone are combined to create a new word with a different meaning. Example: *dog + house = doghouse.*

**Contractions** – Contractions are shortened forms of words created by combining two words and using an apostrophe to replace missing letters. Example: *can't, won't, don't, she'll, they're, I'll.*

**Past, Present, and Future Tense** – Verb tense shows when an action happens. **Past tense** refers to something that already happened. Example: *I went to the store.* **Present tense** describes something happening now. Example: *I go to the store.* **Future tense** describes something that will happen. Example: *I will go to the store.*

**Double Negatives** – A double negative occurs when two negative words are used in the same sentence, which makes the meaning unclear or incorrect. Example: *I don't have no money.* (Correct: *I don't have any money.*)

**Singular and Plural** – A **singular** noun means one item (*apple*), while a **plural** noun means more than one (*apples*). Many plural words are formed by adding *-s* or *-es*, but some have irregular forms.

**Prefix** – A prefix is a group of letters added to the beginning of a root word to change its meaning. A prefix cannot stand alone as a word. Example: *re + run = rerun* (*re-* means “again,” so *rerun* means to run again).

**Suffix** – A suffix is a group of letters added to the end of a root word to change its meaning or function. A suffix cannot stand alone as a word. Example: *run + -ing = running* (*-ing* changes the verb tense to show ongoing action).

**Root Words** – A root word is the base of a word before adding prefixes or suffixes. It can stand alone as a complete word. Example: *run* in *running* or *rerun*.

**Word Usage “Toughies”** – Some words are commonly confused because they look or sound similar. This curriculum provides practice with tricky word pairs, including: *more/most, sit/set, gone/went, -er/-est, to/too/two, there/their/they're, may/can, its/it's, a/an, good/well.*

## DICTIONARY AND SPELLING

**Spelling Words** – Spelling words are selected to help students recognize patterns, build vocabulary, and improve their writing. Practicing spelling regularly helps reinforce correct word usage.

**ABC Order** – Alphabetical (ABC) order is the arrangement of words based on the order of letters in the alphabet. This skill helps with organizing information and is useful for using dictionaries, glossaries, and indexes.

**Dictionary Practice** – Using a dictionary teaches students how to find word meanings, spellings, pronunciations, and parts of speech. It also helps develop research and reference skills.

**Thesaurus Practice** – A thesaurus is a tool that provides synonyms (words with similar meanings) and sometimes antonyms (words with opposite meanings). Practicing with a thesaurus helps students expand their vocabulary and improve word choice in writing.

**Dividing Syllables** – Dividing words into syllables helps with pronunciation, spelling, and reading fluency. A syllable is a single sound unit in a word. Example: *hap-py, el-e-phant, con-nect*.

## WRITING

**Handwriting and/or Cursive** – Handwriting practice helps improve legibility, letter formation, and writing fluency. Depending on what is expected, students may practice printing, cursive, or both to develop strong writing habits.

**Answering Questions with Complete Sentences and/or Paragraphs** – Students learn to respond to questions in full sentences or paragraphs, depending on the assignment. This skill reinforces proper sentence structure, punctuation, and clear communication of ideas.

**Factual Writing** – Factual writing focuses on presenting real information clearly and accurately. It includes writing reports, summaries, and explanations based on research or personal knowledge.

**Creative Writing** – Creative writing allows students to use their imagination to develop original stories, poems, or descriptive pieces. It encourages self-expression and the use of vivid language.

**Opinion-Based Writing** – Opinion writing teaches students to express their thoughts and beliefs on a topic while supporting their opinions with reasons and examples. This skill helps develop logical thinking and persuasive writing techniques.

# Preposition List

This list is helpful to print and keep in a pocket of your three-ring binder for reference.

About	During	Outside
Above	Except	Over
Across	For	Past
After	From	Since
Against	In	Through
Along	In front of	To
Among	Inside	Toward
Around	Instead of	Under
At	Into	Underneath
Before	Like	Until
Behind	Near	Up
Below	Of	Upon
Beneath	Off	With
Beside	On	Within
Between	On top of	Without
By	Onto	
Down	Out of	



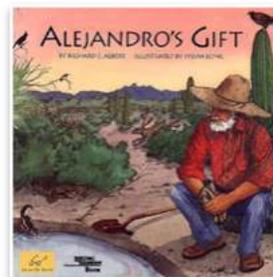
# Alejandro's Gift

Author \_\_\_\_\_

Illustrator \_\_\_\_\_

Circle the correct genre.

Fiction      Nonfiction

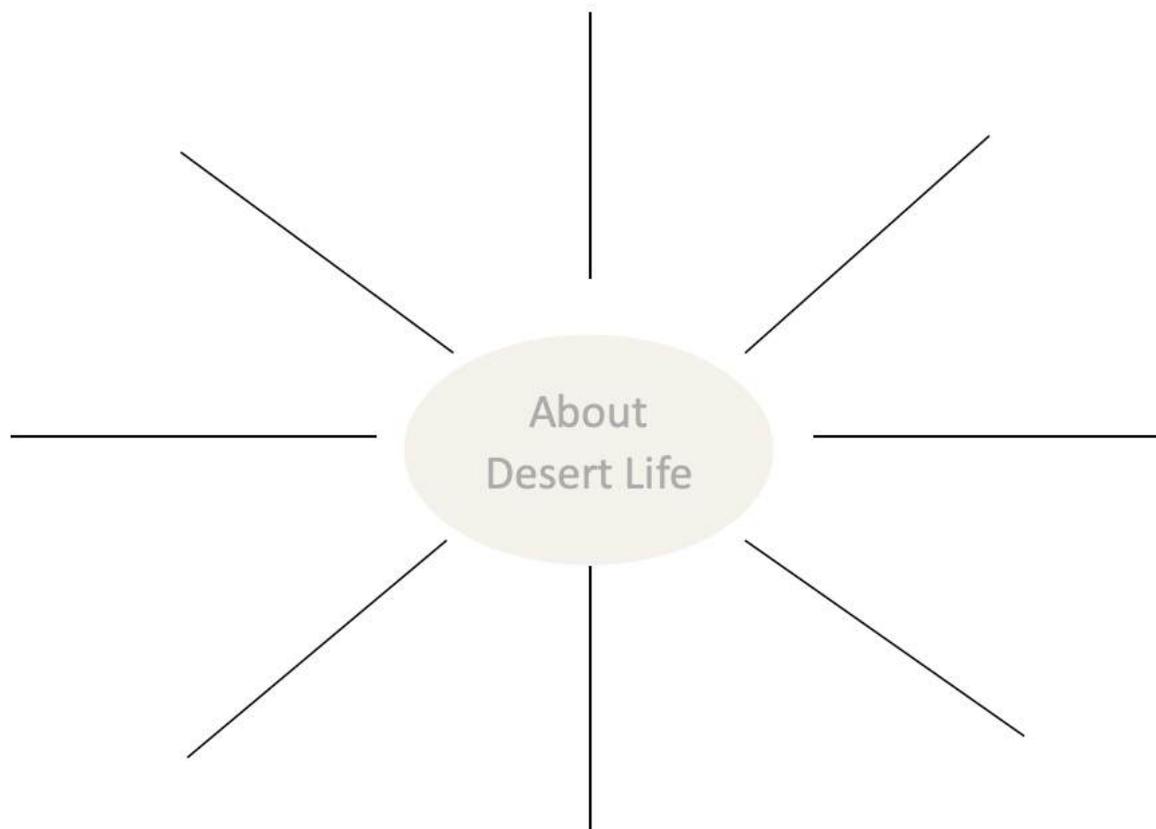


What is the setting of this story?

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From the illustrations and text, what are some things you learned about desert life? Draw a spider map to show the information.



**Some sentences are fragments and need to be combined. Some are run-ons and need to be shortened. Decide what to do and rewrite the sentences correctly.**

1. Alejandro planted a garden. Filled with carrots, beans and onions. Tomatoes and corn.

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2. A ground squirrel ran up to one of the furrows, drank its fill of water, and scampered away after it left, Alejandro realized that for those few moments his loneliness had been forgotten.

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**Sit means to take a resting position. Set means to place something in a certain position. Circle the correct usage in the following sentences.**

1. The birds (sit, set) on the cactus.
2. Alejandro will (sit, set) plants in his garden.
3. Alejandro (sit, set) up a very nice watering system for the animals and himself.
4. The animals will (sit, set) patiently and wait for watering time.

**Decide whether the verbs in each sentence are written in past tense, present tense or future tense.**

1. He took the time to build an elaborate watering system.
2. He is eating lunch right now.
3. The animals will come to get water today.
4. Why didn't the animals come this morning?
5. He will leave the animals alone.
6. The sun is setting in the sky.

**The suffix *-er* is used when comparing two things. (Comparative) The suffix *-est* is used when comparing more than two things. (Superlative) Decide which to use in each sentence.**

1. The roadrunner was the (smaller, smallest) of the two animals.
2. The pocket mouse was the (smaller, smallest) of all the animals coming into Alejandro's garden.
3. The jackrabbit was the (faster, fastest) of the two.
4. The large, old tortoise was the (heavier, heaviest) of them all.

**Add a pronoun to each sentence. Then, make up your own sentence with a pronoun in it. (I, me, we, us, he, she, them, it.....)**

1. \_\_\_\_\_ want to go visit the desert sometime.

2. Do you think \_\_\_\_\_ will ever be lonely again?

3. \_\_\_\_\_ are coming to the watering hole every day.

4. \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

**Circle the interjections. Then, make up a sentence of your own with an interjection.**

1. Wow! You sure did put a lot of work into that watering system.

2. Hey! The animals are coming! Hurry!

3. Oh, I sure do love seeing the animals!

4. \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

**Answer the following questions in complete sentences.**

What circumstances led to Alejandro being so lonely?

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Tell about a time you were lonely and what you did to help yourself.

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Why do you think the book is called Alejandro's "Gift"?

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What made the second watering hole so much better than the first?

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## SPELLING WORDS

Write each in cursive at least twice. Study!

watering \_\_\_\_\_

growth \_\_\_\_\_

desert \_\_\_\_\_

dessert \_\_\_\_\_

shunned \_\_\_\_\_

remain \_\_\_\_\_

possible \_\_\_\_\_

loneliness \_\_\_\_\_

windmill \_\_\_\_\_

unexpected \_\_\_\_\_

visitor \_\_\_\_\_

gardening \_\_\_\_\_

**BONUS:**  
disappointed \_\_\_\_\_

# Alejandro's Gift

Author: *Richard E. Albert*

Illustrator: *Sylvia Long*

**Circle the correct genre.** Fiction

**What is the setting of this story?** Any of the following would be acceptable: Desert, Southwestern Region of USA, Colorado, Arizona, New Mexico, Utah

**Some sentences are fragments and need to be combined. Some are run-ons and need to be shortened. Decide what to do and rewrite the sentences correctly.**

1. Alejandro planted a garden. Filled with carrots, beans and onions. Tomatoes and corn.

An acceptable sentence might look like the following: Alejandro planted a garden filled with carrots, beans, onions, tomatoes and corn.

2. A ground squirrel ran up to one of the furrows, drank its fill of water, and scampered away after it left, Alejandro realized that for those few moments his loneliness had been forgotten.

A ground squirrel ran up to one of the furrows, drank its fill of water and scampered away. After it left, Alejandro realized that for those few moments his loneliness had been forgotten.

**Sit means to take a resting position. Set means to place something in a certain position. Circle the correct usage in the following sentences.**

1. The birds (sit, set) on the cactus.

2. Alejandro will (sit, set) plants in his garden.

3. Alejandro (sit, set) up a very nice watering system for the animals and himself.

4. The animals will (sit, set) patiently and wait for watering time.

**Decide whether the verbs in each sentence are written in past tense, present tense or future tense.**

1. He took the time to build an elaborate watering system. **Past tense**
2. He is eating lunch right now. **Present tense**
3. The animals will come to get water today. **Future tense**
4. Why didn't the animals come this morning? **Past tense**
5. He will leave the animals alone. **Future tense**
6. The sun is setting in the sky. **Present tense**

**The suffix -er is used when comparing two things. (Comparative) The suffix**

**-est is used when comparing more than two things. (Superlative) Decide which to use in each sentence.**

1. The roadrunner was the (**smaller**, smallest) of the two animals.
2. The pocket mouse was the (smaller, **smallest**) of all the animals coming into Alejandro's garden.
3. The jackrabbit was the (**faster**, fastest) of the two.
4. The large, old tortoise was the (heavier, **heaviest**) of them all.

**Add a pronoun to each sentence. Make up your own sentence with a pronoun in it. (I, me, we, us, he, she, them, it.....)**

1. **Could be I or We** want to go visit the desert sometime.
2. Do you think **could be I, we, he, she or it** will ever be lonely again?
3. **Could be We or They** are coming to the watering hole everyday.
- 4.

**Circle the interjections. Make up a sentence of your own with an interjection.**

1. **Wow!** You sure did put a lot of work into that watering system.
2. **Hey!** The animals are coming! Hurry!
3. **Oh,** I sure do love seeing the animals!
- 4.

What circumstances led to Alejandro being so lonely?

An acceptable answer might include: He lived on a lonely desert road. No one except a burro lived with him. There were few visitors that passed his way.

Why do you think the book is called Alejandro's "Gift"?

An acceptable answer might include: He gave the gift of food and water to his companions, the animals.

What made the second watering hole so much better than the first?

An acceptable answer might include: The second watering hole was in a more remote place that offered the animals a better sense of safety from people and other animals.