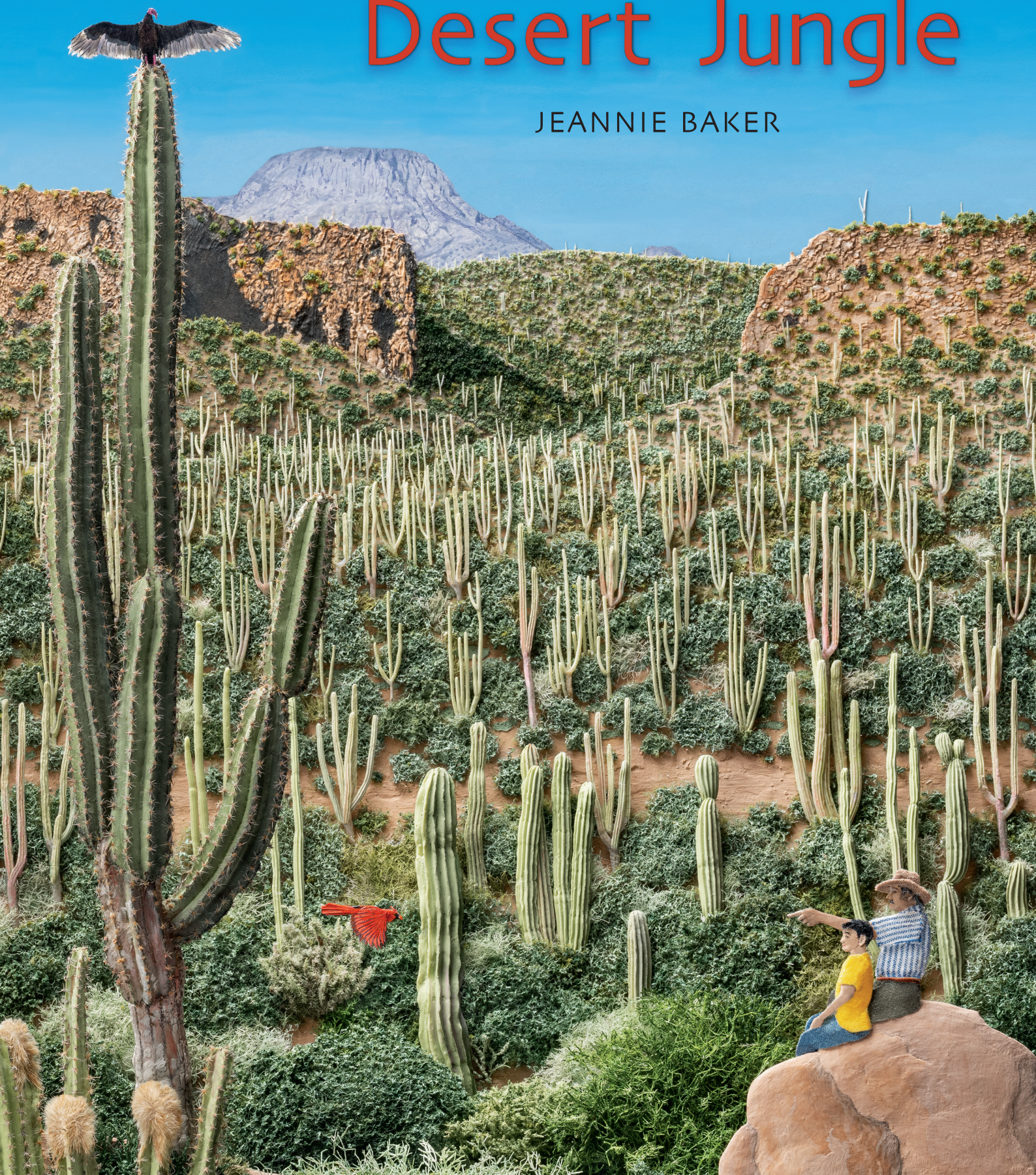


Desert Jungle

JEANNIE BAKER



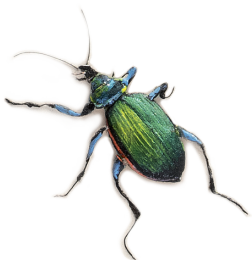
TEACHER NOTES

Teacher Notes by Robyn Sheahan-Bright

WALKER BOOKS

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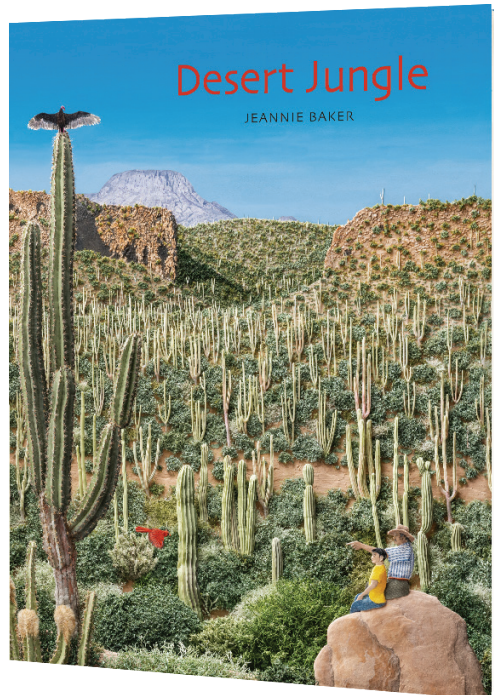
AUSTRALIAN CURRICULUM

AGES 3-8 (YEARS F-2)

		Foundation	Year 1	Year 2
ENGLISH	Language	ACELA1426 ACELA1429 ACELA1432 ACELA1786 ACELA1440	ACELA1787 ACELA1449 ACELA1451 ACELA1452 ACELA1453	ACELA1460 ACELA1462 ACELA1469 ACELA1470 ACELA1474
	Literature	ACELT1575 ACELT1783 ACELT1578	ACELT1581 ACELT1582 ACELT1583	ACELT1587 ACELT1589
	Literacy	ACELY1646	ACELY1655 ACELY1660	ACELY1669 ACELY1670
MEASUREMENT AND GEOMETRY	Shape	ACMMG009	ACMMG022	ACMMG042
SCIENCE UNDERSTANDING	Biological Sciences	ACSSU002		ACSSU030
	Earth and Space Sciences	ACSSU004	ACSSU019	
SCIENCE AS A HUMAN ENDEAVOUR	Nature and Development of Science			ACSHE034
	Use and Influence Science		ACSHE022	ACSHE035
SCIENCE INQUIRY SKILLS	Questioning and Predicting	AC SIS014	AC SIS024	AC SIS037
HUMANITIES AND SOCIAL SCIENCES	Geography	ACHASSK014 ACHASSK015 ACHASSK017	ACHASSK031 ACHASSK032	ACHASSK047 ACHASSK051
INQUIRY AND SKILLS	Questioning	ACHASSI001	ACHASSI001	ACHASSI001
	Researching	ACHASSI002		ACHASSI002
	Analysing	ACHASSI005	ACHASSI005	ACHASSI005
	Evaluating and Reflecting	ACHASSI008	ACHASSI008	
THE ARTS	Visual Arts	ACAVAR109	ACAVAR109	ACAVAR109

*Key content descriptions have been identified from the Australian Curriculum (<http://www.australiancurriculum.edu.au>). However, this is not an exhaustive list of Australian Curriculum content able to be addressed through studying this text. Information is current as of February 2023.

INTRODUCTION



ISBN: 9781406338010

*What you do not know, you will fear.
What one fears, one destroys.*

Chief Dan George

Desert Jungle challenges the notion that a desert is a barren, lifeless landscape and celebrates the astoundingly beautiful diversity of Sonoran Desert ecology.

It also addresses the issue of contemporary children being unaware of their environment and suffering an emotional and intellectual deficit because of that.

The desert, like so many habitats in the world, is threatened by a lack of appreciation of our natural environment, and the concomitant environmental impact of that death of empathy.

This stunning work, illustrated in Jeannie Baker's unique collage technique, is an emotional plea for both our recognition of desert habitat and for its protection.

Publisher's Summary

In spectacular and astonishing collage detail, Jeannie Baker captures the deep beauty, mystery, and hidden vitality of the desert landscape – and why it needs our protection.

Chico's grandpa has taken him on holiday where he grew up as a child, out in the desert. Chico has no interest in exploring the land – the desert jungle frightens him, and he'd much rather play on his tablet. Grandpa decides that it is time to show Chico the secrets and the wonders that the desert has to offer so that he will not fear it but, instead, welcome it, embrace it and help protect it. Grandpa shows Chico paths through the cactus and the scrub, teaches Chico the plants' names – ocotillo, cholla, cirios, pin cushion, fishhook – and, soon, Chico begins to understand the wonders of the wild. He learns the value of watching, waiting and listening for all the life that hums within his desert home.

Extract *from the* Author's Note



Our preconception of the desert as a barren, desolate, lifeless place needs to be challenged. Recent studies show deserts, not rainforests, are richest in pollinator diversity. The biodiversity of the world's deserts is rapidly disappearing as people who believe deserts to be wastelands unknowingly turn them into one.

In early 2017, drawn by the power of this landscape, I made a six-week research trip to the Sonoran Desert of Baja California and Arizona where I explored desert landscapes, spoke with locals and scientists, visited museums and documented this unique environment. I've depicted the desert as it looked then. It was later winter, there had been rain ... and it was glorious.

A decreasing number of children today grow up incorporating nature into their sense of home. They are often unfamiliar with even the common names of the plants and animals around them. They can feel so distanced from nature that they come to fear it. Nature-deficit disorder isolates children from the living world and breeds indifference towards environmental concerns.

By contrast, children who grow up with an intimate involvement with and a sense of wonder about the life around them learn to respect and care for the natural world and feel more connected to their local environment.

(Full Author's Note is on page 40 of the book.)

About the Writer of the Notes

Dr Robyn Sheahan-Bright AM operates justified text writing and publishing consultancy services, and publishes regularly on children's literature, Australian fiction, and publishing history. She was inaugural director of and is a Life Member of the Queensland Writers Centre, and was co-founder of Jam Roll Press. Her publications include *Paper Empires: A History of the Book in Australia* (1946-2005) (2006) co-edited with Craig Munro and *Hot Iron Corrugated Sky: 100 Years of Queensland Writing* (2002) co-edited with Stuart Glover. In 2012 she was recipient of the CBCA Nan Chauncy Award for Outstanding Services to Children's Literature. In 2014 she received the Queensland Writers' Centre's Johnno Award. In 2021 she was appointed a Member of the Order of Australia.



About Jeannie Baker

Jeannie Baker is the author and illustrator of a number of award-winning children's picture books, including *Where the Forest Meets the Sea*, the critically acclaimed dual language picture book *Mirror* and her previous masterpiece *Circle*. Her characteristic use of mixed media to create detailed and elaborate collages is stunning and unique. *Window* was shortlisted for the Kate Greenaway Medal in Great Britain and both *Window* and *Mirror* won the Children's Book Council of Australia Picture Book of the Year Award. Baker was the IBBY Australia nominee for the prestigious 2018 Hans Christian Andersen Award for Illustration. Her work focuses on a diverse range of issues including: family, society, sustainability, and the environment. Baker was nominated for the Astrid Lindgren Memorial Award in 2021 and 2022. Originally from the UK, she lives in Australia.

See: www.jeanniebaker.com

Desert Jungle

A. Critical Literacy

- **Before and After Reading the Book**

The title of this book, in itself, is provocative – pairing the two seemingly opposite words ‘desert’ and ‘jungle’ prompts the reader to ask questions and to question their presumptions about a desert landscape.

Examine the cover and discuss what the book might be about, and any other suggested message in the cover design. It consists of a double page spread on the front and back cover depicting a lush desert landscape with no blurb. This image is a stunning wordless introduction to the text. [See also **D. Visual Literacy & Visual Arts Activities below.**]

Read other books by Jeannie Baker and discuss common themes and style in her work.

Discuss desert ecology including that of the Sonoran Desert, Mexico and what students understand about this topic.

B. Themes & Curriculum Topics

NOTE: A comprehensive list of references to use as a starting point for activities in this section can be found below.

Author’s Note: *‘Our preconception of the desert as a barren, desolate, lifeless place needs to be challenged. Recent studies show deserts, not rainforests, are richest in pollinator diversity.’*

- **Desert Ecology including that of the Sonoran Desert, Mexico**

ACTIVITY: Under **The Setting** in the back of the book we are told that the Sonoran is the hottest desert in Mexico with average annual rainfall less than 125mm (5 inches). Research the many features of this incredible ecosystem.

ACTIVITY: **‘The Sonoran Desert** (Spanish: *Desierto de Sonora*) is a desert in North America and an ecoregion that covers the northwestern Mexican states of Sonora, Baja California, and Baja California Sur, as well as part of the southwestern United States (in Arizona and California).’ (*Wikipedia*) Research the terrain and refer to maps as you study this desert.

ACTIVITY: The Sonoran Desert landscape is full of vegetation: *‘Grandpa shows me amazing plants ... ocotillo, cholla, cirio, pincushion, fishhook...’* (p 17) Research some of the plants of this desert area also mentioned in **The Setting**. For example, *Cirio* is a tree which gives its name to the Valley of the Cirios which covers a third of Baja California. (Also known as boojums.) *Cardon Cacti, Elephant Trees* and the *Saguaro Cactus* are also found in this desert. Research these plants further.

ACTIVITY: Research some of the animals of this desert area mentioned in **The Setting**: ‘Mountain lions, bighorn sheep, peninsular pronghorn deer, frogs, chameleons, rattlesnakes, tarantulas, eagles, hawks, and owls.’

ACTIVITY: Make a list of other animals which might be found in this environment.

ACTIVITY: ‘Petroglyphs (carvings) and paintings (some prehistoric) can be found on rocks and in rock shelters and caves. It is believed these were created by different groups of hunter-gatherers and fisherfolk at various times over more than 7,000 years.’ **The Setting**. Research these artistic remnants of past cultures.

ACTIVITY: This book invites readers to study desert ecology in all parts of the world; encourage students to research a variety of deserts.

ACTIVITY: Invite students to study Australian desert ecology. Identify the ten Australian deserts such as the Simpson Desert, the Sturt Stony Desert and the Great Sandy Desert. What distinguishes each of these deserts? Identify features of each of them.

ACTIVITY: Many types of flora and fauna are found in each of these Australian deserts, for example, animals found in Australian deserts include dingoes, goannas, bilbies, malleefowls, common brushtail possums, yellow-footed rock wallabies, red kangaroos and many species of lizards and birds. Plants include tussock, spinifex, eucalyptus, Boab tree, acacia, and Old Man Saltbush. Sturt's desert pea is another well-known plant identified with a particular desert. Research the flora and fauna found in each of these deserts.

- **Sustainability/Loss of Habitat**

Author's Note: *'The biodiversity of the world's deserts is rapidly disappearing as people who believe deserts to be wastelands unknowingly turn them into one.'*

ACTIVITY: Research some of the threats to this habitat which the author tells us include 'land sales, sub-divisions, mining, tourism and industrial development.' **The Setting.**

ACTIVITY: What other threats might endanger this environment, for example, urbanisation?

- **Nature – Deficit Disorder**

DISCUSSION POINT: Richard Louv, co-founder and chairman emeritus of the Children & Nature Network, advocates for greater attention to the fact that children often have no connection with their local environment which presents a problem. He suggests that our environment will also be at risk if the next generation has no connection to nature. Discuss this concept.

DISCUSSION POINT: Invite students to name any plants or animals which are found in their local bushland area. This exercise could result in a discussion of how much or how little we observe in our own local ecology.

DISCUSSION POINT: Discuss with students the messages contained in this text. The boy lives on the edge of the desert but has no knowledge or interest in it. Invite students to reflect on this in relation to their own environment.

- **Climate Change**

ACTIVITY: Invite students to investigate the research into climate changes and its impact on the Sonoran Desert and on other deserts throughout the world.

ACTIVITY: Relate this question to Australian deserts, as another focused study.

C. English Language & Literacy

- **Plot & Structure**

DISCUSSION POINT: The text details the boy's journey to the desert and the change in his attitudes as he spends time there. It is framed by two wordless images of the boy sitting on a rock which are described under **D. Visual Literacy & Visual Arts Activities** below. Discuss and create a storyline for a tale set in this landscape using a similar structure.

- **Style and Use of Language**

DISCUSSION POINT: Jeannie Baker's writing style is spare, suggestive and lyrical. For example, alliteration:

'I hear scrunching, scratching, snapping' (p 12)

'At times I hide in the shadows, watching, waiting, listening ... and sometimes I am gifted to see a wonder of the wild.' (p 34)

Desert Jungle

DISCUSSION POINT: Discuss the language devices used in this text.

- **Writing Exercises**

ACTIVITY: Invite students to write a story set in the Sonoran Desert using some of the information they have gleaned from studying this text.

ACTIVITY: Write an acrostic poem using the letters in the words Sonoran Desert.

- **Further Reading Ideas for Class Discussion**

1. Read Jeannie Baker's *The Story of Rosy Dock* (1995) and Narelle Oliver's *Sand Swimmers* (1999) both of which deal with Australian desertification and similar issues to *Desert Jungle* (2023). Compare these three texts.
2. Locate other picture books about deserts throughout the world. [See **Bibliography**.]
3. Read non-fiction books and visit websites about deserts. [See **Bibliography**.]
4. Research Jeannie Baker's body of work and prepare a display of her books with a summary of her work and achievements.
5. Create a classroom display of books about deserts and students' responses to their research.

D. Visual Literacy & Visual Arts Activities

- **Plot and Cyclical Structure**

Every element in a picture book is designed to contribute to its meaning; elements are brought together into a sequence of images which tell a story in a filmic manner. Text and images should work together – images extend the text's meaning.

Encourage students to read both the written and the visual text closely, and to interpret them creatively. How do the images add to the written text?

ACTIVITY: Examine the cover (front and back) which is a continuous landscape with the boy and his Grandpa sitting on a rock to the far right, and a brightly coloured red bird contrasting the colours of the vegetation in the centre; a turkey vulture sits atop a Cardon cactus in the top centre of the spread. The image demonstrates the lush vegetation of this desert and illustrates the fact that it looks like a jungle. After reading, discuss the cover's relationship to the text.

ACTIVITY: Examine each double page spread and invite students to interpret its meaning and content. [Consider some of the General Discussion Points 1–5 below regarding aspects of book design.]

- **p 1** The Half Title Page depicts a boy with headphones sitting on a rock reading something on a tablet, with a lizard unobserved on the rock below him.
p 2 CIP **p 3** Title page includes a quote by Chief Dan George **pp 4** Blank **p 5** The boy is in his home with a tablet, headphones, and a laptop in front of him. There is a television monitor on the wall depicting the village with the desert in the foreground. The boy's head is turned away from this view. The scene is depicted as if through a window, from outside his home,
DISCUSSION POINT: What does this picture suggest about the boy's interests?
- **pp 6–7** This spread depicts the image from the television screen on the previous page enlarged to a double page spread. A coyote is depicted on the left side of the frame.
DISCUSSION POINT: What time of the day would you imagine this depicts?

- **pp 8–9** This depicts the boy and his Grandpa visiting the remote ranch house where his Grandpa grew up deep in the desert.
DISCUSSION POINT: What plants can you identify in this image? eg Cirio.
- **pp 10–11** This depicts the ranch house at night with a coyote taking the boy’s bag away in its teeth.
DISCUSSION POINT: What bird can you see on the roof of the shack?
- **pp 12–13** This shows the boy searching the surrounding area and then becoming lost.
DISCUSSION POINT: The image is powerfully atmospheric. The unknown plants loom menacingly over the boy and frighten him. They really do resemble a jungle. How does the boy’s body language and the drawing of the plants increase the foreboding nature of this image?
- **p 14** On the left hand page is an image of the boy still searching. The text reveals that he has got his bearings by observing the mountain behind the ranch house. **p 15** The right hand page is a portrait of his Grandpa hugging him, as he has found his way home. The boy describes the landscape as a desert jungle.
DISCUSSION POINT: The contrast between these two images is stark.
- **pp 16–17** Grandpa takes him on a walk and shows him the plants that grow there.
DISCUSSION POINT: This time the boy is listening and observing the wonders of this place. How does this beautiful image depict the diversity of this desert?
- **p 18** Grandpa stops to point out a ‘beautiful’ snake. **p 19** Grandpa with his arm around the boy is viewed from behind as they make their way back to the ranch house. This image depicts the ranch house from further away so that we can see the desert and the mountains behind it.
DISCUSSION POINT: How does this image differ emotionally from the earlier image of the ranch house in close up?
- **pp 20–21** The boy is now observing the wonders of the area; the page depicts ants, a hummingbird, an insect, a centipede, and a collection of ‘treasures’. The images on the two pages give a sense of movement and action.
DISCUSSION POINT: Each of these small images represent the diversity of this ecosystem. Research any one of them.
- **pp 22–23** The double page spread depicts the boy walking up the mountain when a sudden wind forces him to take shelter in a cave.
DISCUSSION POINT: The collage images cleverly suggest the wind as the tree branches are depicted blowing horizontally. How does perspective work to enhance the physicality of this image?
- **pp 24–25** The boy is sitting at the entrance of the cave, on the right hand page when he observes a coyote on the left hand page observing him. The text appears in a side bar on the left.
DISCUSSION POINT: The boy and the animal are framed in the cave entrance. What does the image suggest emotionally?
- **pp 26–27** A tree falls and the noise frightens the coyote away. The fallen tree is depicted outside. The text appears in a side bar on the left.
DISCUSSION POINT: The artist’s image on this and the previous page includes on the left hand side a Petroglyph which the boy hasn’t noticed. What else do you notice in this spread?
- **pp 28–29** A dark blue night sky and the ‘desert jungle’ appear with Grandpa holding a torch when he discovers the boy nearly home again. The mountain looms above them.

Desert Jungle

DISCUSSION POINT: What emotions are suggested by the colours used here?

- **p 30** The text is a side bar on the left hand page.
p 31 On the right hand page Grandpa and the boy have re-visited the cave and discovered a petroglyph depicting the coyote.

DISCUSSION POINT: Discuss how this image suggests the ancient nature of this ecosystem.

- **pp 32–33** This double page spread depicts the boy on the left sitting in the desert observing the wonders around him including the red bird which appears on the cover.

ACTIVITY: Invite students to identify the features in this landscape. What bird can we see?

- **pp 34–35** The text is a side bar on the left hand page; the boy is hiding behind the trunk of an elephant tree watching for wildlife.

DISCUSSION POINT: What does the design of this page, with the boy diminished by the rocks, suggest? What animal appears in the foreground?

- **p 36** The boy is sitting on the rock (echoing the half title page) but here he is closely observing the lizard beside him, and there is no tablet in sight. This image brings the story full circle to demonstrate the change in the boy. **p 37** Blank blue page. [See also Discussion Point 5: **Sub-Text** below.]

- **pp 38–39** **The Setting** is described on the left hand page with a map on the right hand page. **p 40** The **Author's Note** appears.

DISCUSSION POINT: These texts act as useful guides to the creative text which precedes them.

GENERAL DISCUSSION POINT 1: The standard picture book **Format** is generally 32 pages; *Desert Jungle* is 36 pages (plus four pages: one blank, The Setting, a map, and an Author's Note). It is 21.5cm wide x 28cm high, and is portrait in format. Each double page spread is designed differently i.e. Some spreads "bleed" across the gutter and encompass the whole double page; some consist of small images on a largely cream background; some single pages contrast to each other. Discuss picture book conventions and how they contribute to the reader's experiences. Use examples and discuss.

GENERAL DISCUSSION POINT 2: Jeannie Baker's intricate **collage medium** is unique in the use of materials such as grasses, leaves, feathers, fabric, wool, cardboard, natural fibres, to create extraordinarily detailed images which are then photographed. Research her style of art by visiting her website, reading her book *Playing with Collage* (2019), and watching the film listed in the **Bibliography**, and then create an image for your class' alphabet book activity below using some of her techniques.

GENERAL DISCUSSION POINT 3: Perspective and Spatial Construction: Examine the front and back cover which takes a view of the desert landscape with the boy and his Grandpa reduced in size on the right hand of the image. What does this perspective suggest to the reader? How does spatial construction in an image influence the reader's emotional and intellectual response to the image? Make use of each technique in your artwork.

GENERAL DISCUSSION POINT 4: How does **Colour** in an image suggest emotions?

GENERAL DISCUSSION POINT 5: Sub-Text is what makes a picture book engaging and challenging; images say what the text does not. What details did your students observe in the images?

ACTIVITY: Create a classroom response as a book – an alphabet of desert birds and animals in which pairs of students write and illustrate in collage a double page spread. Prepare for this by discussing the conventions of picture book design above.

ACTIVITY: Invite students to create a diorama of a scene in this book or to create a new diorama scene relevant to it.

ACTIVITY: : Create a one page comic strip interpretation of an incident described in this book. [See **Worksheet 3.**]

E. Geography

ACTIVITY: This book provides many opportunities to discuss **mapping of the Sonoran Desert**. Prepare an information booklet regarding this desert.

ACTIVITY: Choose any of the **other desert habitats** you have discovered in your research and discover the **geography** of that terrain.

F. Further Ideas Using Technology

ACTIVITY: Research **online** any of the topics covered in these notes.

Worksheets

WORKSHEET 1: Desert Jungle Collage
A template students can use to create a collage.

WORKSHEET 2: Desert Jungle Quiz
This quiz can be used to test comprehension of the text and facts contained in the accompanying Teachers' Notes and also requires some further research.

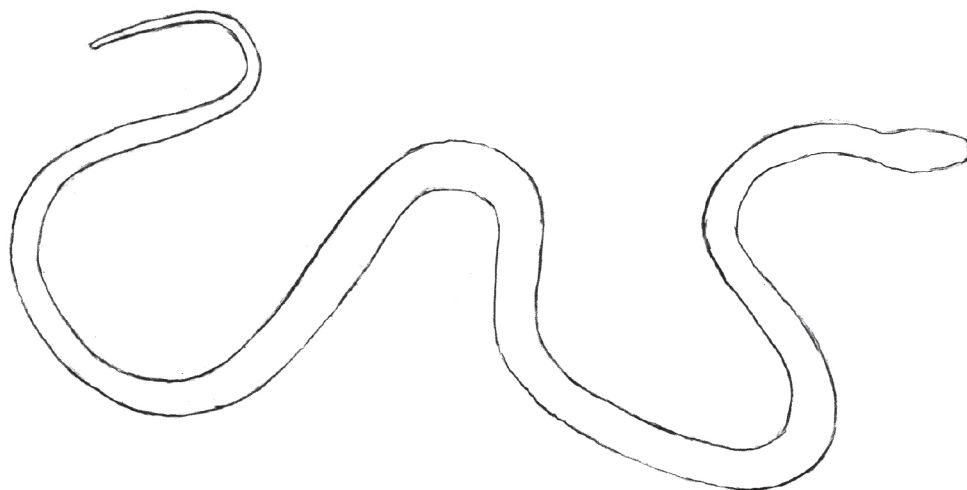
WORKSHEET 3: Desert Jungle Comic Strip
Create a one page comic strip interpretation of an incident described in this book, using the template.

Conclusion

This work is a homage to an ecosystem which is often poorly understood and appreciated for its incredible biodiversity and splendour. It is also a plea for protection of this habitat. And it is a salutary lesson on the dangers of Nature-Deficit Disorder and how this might not only damage a generation of children but lead to further ecological calamities in future.

Desert Jungle is another extremely powerful statement imbued with Jeannie Baker's artistic integrity and her ecological activism.

WORKSHEET 1 – Desert Jungle Collage



WORKSHEET 2 – Desert Jungle Quiz

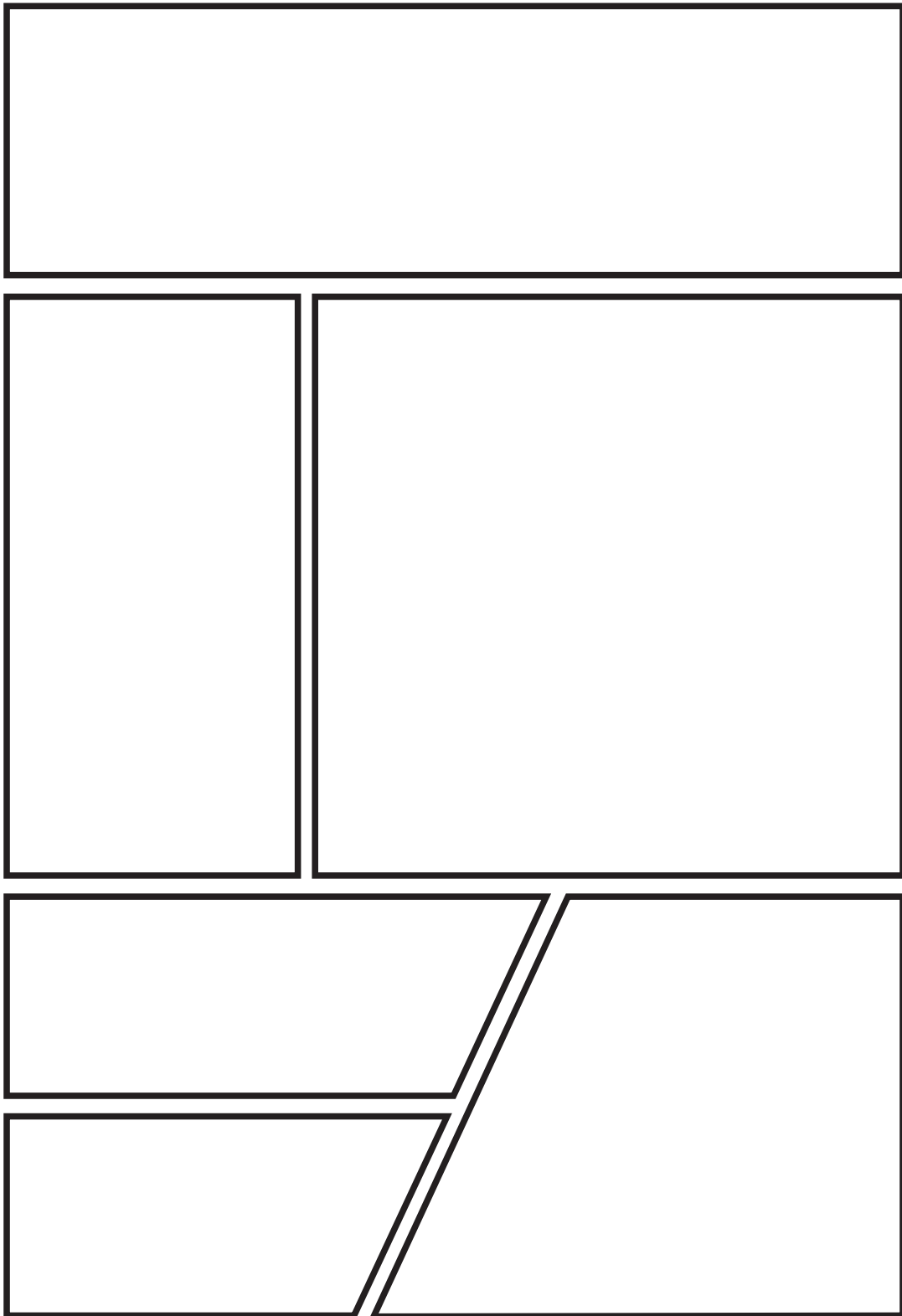
This quiz can be used to test comprehension of the text and facts contained in the accompanying Teacher Notes and also requires some further research.

1. What other name does the Cirio tree have in English?
2. What does Grandpa call his grandson?
3. What does Grandpa describe as beautiful?
4. What is the Spanish name for the Sonoran Desert?
5. Jeannie Baker has published *The Hidden Forest* (about the undersea forests of kelp), *Where the Forest Meets the Sea* (about the intersection between the Daintree Rainforest in far North Queensland and the ocean and the Great Barrier Reef). In this book she calls the Sonoran Desert a Desert Jungle. What does the interplay in her titles between forest, sea, jungle, and desert reveal about her concerns?
6. What is the largest city in the Sonoran Desert?
7. Which cactus will only grow in the Sonoran Desert?
8. The Valley of the Cirios covers a third of Baja, California. What is its name in Spanish?
9. What is the red bird which features on the cover of this book and on p 32?
10. What animal does the boy discover in the cave?
11. What small creature standing on its hind legs appears on the far right hand in the image on p 17?
12. What creature with a banded tail appears on the far right hand in the image on p 35.

Answers: 1. Boojum tree. 2. Chico (Spanish for small child). 3. A Gopher Snake. 4. Desierto de Sonora. 5. Jeannie Baker is aware that ecosystems are interconnected and that we need to care for each ecosystem in order for all to survive. 6. Phoenix, Arizona. 7. The giant Saguaro cactus. 8. Valle de los Cirios. 9. Desert Cardinal bird. 10. Coyote. 11. Antelope squirrel. 12. The Ringtail (*Bassariscus astutus*).

WORKSHEET 3 – Desert Jungle Comic Strip

Create a one page comic strip interpretation of an incident described in this book, using the template below.



Also *by* Jeannie Baker

Polar

Grandfather

Grandmother

Millicent

One Hungry Spider

The Hidden Forest

Wilderness Society Award for Children's Books, Winner 2001

Home in the Sky

CBCA Commended/Shortlist 1985

Where the Forest Meets the Sea

CBCA Honour Book 1988

Window

CBCA Winner 1992

Kate Greenaway Medal, Short-Listed 1992

The Story of Rosy Dock

CBCA Honour Book 1996

Home

ALA Notable Book

Belonging

CBCA Honour Book 2005

Mirror

CBCA Joint Winner 2011

Circle

Indie Award, Best Children's Book 2017



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