

The land in Mexico can vary greatly from region to region, but around $\frac{1}{3}$ of the country is covered with desert. Many different types of cactus can be found throughout Mexico and especially in the desert regions. Cactuses have become an important symbol for the country and many of them are eaten as food.

Materials Needed: "Desert" chart from Tuesday's large group, pictures of cactuses from **Appendix 2.2**

Ask children if they can remember what part of Mexico you started to talk about yesterday. Show children the "Desert" chart you made during Tuesday's large group and identify each of the pictures. Guide the class towards a discussion of the cactus pictures. How many cactuses are there? Are they all the same color? Are they all the same shape? Have you ever seen a real cactus? If so, where, when?

On a new piece of chart paper, write the word Cactus across the top. Ask children to identify the beginning sound and to name the letter that makes that sound. Cactus starts with the letter C. Are there any other Cs in the word cactus? *There are two Cs in the word cactus!* Count all of the letters in the word cactus. *There are six letters in the word cactus and two of those letters are the letter C. Let's sing a song about cactuses:*

Sing this song to the tune of the *Cookie Monster Song*:

C is for cactus, its green and prickly
C is for cactus, its green and prickly
C is for cactus, its green and prickly
Oh, cactus, cactus, cactus starts with C!

Invite your children to learn some facts about cactuses while they act them out.

1. Cactuses come in many shapes and sizes. (Invite your children to be small cactuses, medium cactuses, and large cactuses. Call out cactus sizes in random order.)
2. Cactuses can store water for a very long time. That's why they can survive in the desert with very little rain. (Invite your children to pretend to drink water and then trace the water through their bodies to their fingertips and toes and back up to their heads. They should pretend to be full of water.)
3. Cactuses usually have sharp spines on them, making them very prickly. (Have children pretend to be cactuses and then touch themselves and say "Ouch, prickly!")
4. Most cactuses produce flowers at some point in their life. (Have children pretend to sprout flowers from their heads, shoulders, knees, etc.)
5. Many kinds of cactuses have become popular foods in Mexico. (Pretend to eat and say, *delicioso!*)

Domains / Skills and Concepts

PTLA Alignment

Physical- acting out cactus facts,

Language and Communication- Vocabulary- words to describe cactuses; children respond verbally and nonverbally; Pre-literacy- singing- rhythm rhyme, repetition, phonological awareness- beginning sounds, letter recognition, visual discrimination

Cognitive- Math- counting cactus pictures, shapes and sizes; Science- (natural world) characteristics of a cactus; Cultural/Social Studies- There are many different kinds of cactuses in Mexico.

Dramatic play- pretending to be cactus

Social/Emotional- positively relating to other children, listening manners, recognizing and responding to needs of others, confidence in what they can do, sense of self with others

Approaches to Learning- focused attention, time on task, eagerness and curiosity, participation/response

3K: 3-PD.4;
 3-LLD.9,10;
 3-CD.4,9,10,14,21;
 3-SED.8,9,10;
 3-AL.1,9
4K: 4-PD.4;
 4-LLD.8,12;
 4-CD.4,9,13,23;
 4-SED-5,7,8;
 4-AL.1,14

The cactus is an important symbol in Mexico. Varieties of cactus can be found in most parts of the country.

Materials Needed: Playdough, small pieces of playdough, small beads or fruit loops

Provide the children with playdough (preferably green) and small pieces of pipe cleaners. Encourage the children to make their own cactus plants out of the playdough and then add the spiky spines to their cactus plants. Provide some small beads (or fruit loops) and encourage the children to thread the beads onto the spines to represent the flowers that can be found on some cactus plants.

When everyone in the group has made their cactus, compare the sizes of the cactus plants to see who made the largest/smallest cactus plant. Invite children to count the prickles (pipe cleaners) on their cactus.

Cactus begins with the letter Cc. An uppercase C and a lower case c are the same shape, just different sizes. Demonstrate how to roll playdough into a snake shape and then bend it to form the letter c. Encourage the children to make an uppercase and a lowercase c. If your children are ready, talk about some other objects and words that begin with Cc while they are rolling the playdough to form their own letters. If anyone in your group has a name that begins with C, make sure you talk about the fact that their name begins with a capital C.

For younger children: Remind them to gently add the flowers to their cactus. Help children to count.

For older children: Provide tweezers and encourage the children to use the tweezers to pick up the pipecleaners and beads.

| Domains / Skills and Concepts | PTLA Alignment |
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| <p>Physical- manipulating playdough, pipe cleaners, cereal and beads</p> <p>Language and Communication- cactus, pipe cleaners, number words, measurement words, gain understanding through listening; Pre-literacy- letter recognition, beginning sounds, forming letters</p> <p>Cognitive- math- green, measurement terms, one to one correspondence; Science- cause and effect; Art- creating cactus from playdough, creativity; Social Studies/Culture- cactus native to Mexico</p> <p>Social/Emotional- ,impulse control, attempts mew challenges, social skills to participate in groups</p> <p>Approaches to Learning- interest in mastering new skills, problem solving, focused attention</p> | <p>3K: 3-PD.5; 3-LLD.3,9,15,16; 3-CD.5,8,10; 3-SED.6,10; 3-AL.1,9,11</p> <p>4K: 4-PD.5; 4-LLD.8,14; 4-CD.6,7,13; 4-SED.7,8,12; 4-AL.1,8,12</p> |