

A VISIT TO A DESERT IN MEXICO

Jose and his family decided to travel to the Sonora Desert in Mexico. They had already visited other deserts in North America including Mojave, Chihuahuan, Painted and Great Basin Deserts. However, it was the first time the family drove out into the Sonora Desert to look at its vegetation.

They started their trip early morning. They took a shade tent with them, as well as plenty of water. Jose learned about the cactus plant at school. He wanted to see as many cacti as he could. He knew that there were more than 2,000 kinds of cacti. He also knew that Mexico had more varieties of cacti than anywhere else. He wanted to dig one up and take it home with him.

Even early in the day, it was hot as Jose and his family admired the beautiful cactus flowers. "They don't look like any other flowers I've ever seen," said his mother. His younger sister added, "Look at the colors of the flowers. I see red, yellow, orange, purple, white and pink."

Jose remembered his report and explained, "Most cactus blossoms do not last long." Then he said "Did you know that a cactus plant has fruits? Some people say you can eat all cactus fruit." Indeed, the birds like the fruit and even the flesh of the plant. If a person was without water in the desert, he could break open a piece of cactus and get the water stored inside.

"Ouch! You have to get past those awful stickers first," said his sister. "Ranchers sometimes burn the spines off and feed the cactus to their cattle when it is really dry and there is not enough grass for them." Jose told his family. "The cattle seemed to enjoy it."

"I'm glad you know about cactus plants," his father said. "Let's have a cool drink and then head back to town. Did you find a cactus plant to take home, Jose?"

"No, they are so beautiful here in their natural home. I'm just going to take some pictures. I'm not sure that the immigration officers let me carry a cactus plant across the border anyway. I'd rather remember the cactus the way they are here, with the sand, the blossoms, and the mountains in the distance," he answered. (Taken and adapted from: Ventriglia, L. Opening Doors D. Reading and writing activities. Richmond Publishing)

Read the statements, and then choose the answer that fits best. (8 points, 1 each)

1. This story was written to tell ____
 - how Jose traveled to a desert.
 - how Jose got a beautiful cactus plant.
 - how Jose learned about cacti.
2. Jose and his family wanted ____
 - to visit his first Mexican desert.
 - to find some cactus plants.
 - to admire the Mexican culture.
3. They traveled ____ early in the morning.
 - by plane
 - by car
 - on foot
4. ____ caught Jose's mother attention.
 - The 2,000 kinds of cacti
 - The beautiful colors of the cacti
 - The flowers of the cacti
5. Jose ____ and talked to his family about cacti.
 - read a school report he wrote
 - recalled a school report he wrote
 - found a school report he wrote
6. Ranchers sometimes use the cacti ____.
 - to cook their food
 - to provide food for their animals
 - to grow grass
7. Jose's father was happy for Jose because he ____.
 - saw the cacti.
 - got a cool drink for all.
 - knew about cactus plants.
8. What did Jose do at the end of the trip?
 - He took some photos.
 - He carried a cactus plant.
 - He went to the immigration office.

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