

Name: _____

How the Desert Tortoise Got Its Shell

by Linda Kennett

1 Long ago, Desert Tortoise was a small green animal that lived in a burrow. There he hid from the heat of his enemy, Desert Sun.

2 From time to time, Tortoise had to leave his burrow to find food and water. One day in early spring, Desert Tortoise knew he needed go out and look for some food and water. As he crawled out, he saw that the desert was alive with beautiful wildflowers. Desert Tortoise especially liked the taste of the desert dandelion. One of the dandelions had fallen to the ground. Tortoise picked it up and carried it in his beak.

3 As Desert Tortoise traveled on in the sand, he got hotter and hotter. This made him angry with Desert Sun. Finally, he stopped to rest in the shade of a big rock. He put his dandelion gently on the ground. "I'm fed up with this heat. Maybe it's time for my snack," he thought.

4 Suddenly, Desert Bee swooped in. "What are you doing with that flower?" he buzzed.

5 "I think I will have it for lunch," replied the tortoise. "Desert Sun has been chasing me all day and I am starving. I'm so tired I could fall asleep right now- I'm beat!"

6 "When someone bothers me, I just sting them with my stinger," boasted Desert Bee. If you will trade me your dandelion, I will give you my stinger. If you sting Desert Sun, he will leave you alone."

7 Desert Tortoise was excited by this news. He quickly agreed to the trade. Desert Sun began to beat down on him again as he left the shade of the rock. "You won't hurt me

anymore,” yelled Tortoise. He threw the stinger at Desert Sun as hard as he could. The stinger went up in the air but it didn’t reach the sun and fell back to the ground only a few feet away.

8 Desert Tortoise picked up the stinger and continued his walk. After a while he met Desert Cactus. She was standing with her arms stretched wide.

9 “What are you doing with that long, sharp thing? Is it a cactus needle?” demanded Desert Cactus when the tortoise got closer.

10 “Desert Bee gave me his stinger to use to fight my enemy, Desert Sun,” muttered Desert Tortoise. “But it didn’t work.”

11 “Of course it didn’t work,” laughed Desert Cactus. “The best way to fight Desert Sun is with some cactus juice. If you drink my juice you will be safe. I will trade you the juice for the stinger.

12 This sounded like a good idea to Desert Tortoise. “I’m bound and determined to finally beat Desert Sun,” he said. Desert Cactus gave him a cupful of her juice and she placed the stinger among the other spines on her arm.

13 Desert Tortoise took a small drink of the juice and he felt better. “Maybe Desert Cactus was right,” he thought. Before he had much more to drink, Desert Tortoise came to a dry riverbed.

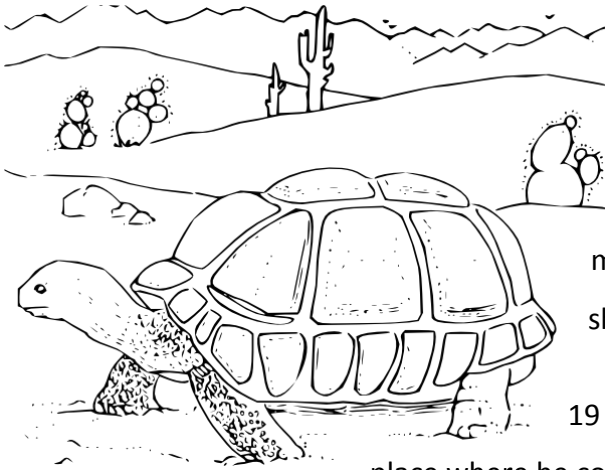
14 “What are you doing with that cactus juice?” asked Desert River.

15 “Desert Cactus gave it to me to fight my enemy, Desert Sun,” answered the tortoise.

16 “I have a much better idea,” Desert River said. “I am dry now, but if you pour your juice into my riverbed, it will turn into water. You will be safe from Desert Sun with me.”

17 After trying so many different things to defeat Desert Sun, Desert Tortoise didn’t want to get his hopes up. However, the thought of soaking in a river sounded very good to Desert

Tortoise. He poured the juice and then jumped into the water. He sunk down to the bottom and cooled himself with the wet river mud.



18 At last, he needed a breath of air so he came out. He was so tired from all his adventures and still so covered in mud, that he fell asleep on the banks of the river and slept like a log for a long time. As he slept, the mud began to dry. Soon the mud baked and cracked into a shell that covered the tortoise's body.

19 Finally, Desert Tortoise awoke to find himself in a place where he could always hide from the sun! To this very day, the desert tortoise can be found safe inside his shell in the American Southwest and in Mexico.

Review Questions

1. Part A: Reread these sentences. How does Desert Tortoise feel at this point in the passage?

"As Desert Tortoise traveled on in the sand, he got hotter and hotter. This made him angry with Desert Sun."

- ☐ discouraged
- ☐ tired
- ☐ unhappy
- ☐ nervous

2. Part B: Which word from the sentences best supports your answer to part A?

- ☐ angry
- ☐ traveled
- ☐ sand
- ☐ hotter

3. Part A: Which statement correctly describes the sequence, or order, of events in the text?

- ☐ While Desert Tortoise pours the cactus juice, he jumps into the riverbed.
- ☐ After Desert Tortoise jumps into the riverbed, he pours the cactus juice.
- ☐ As Desert Tortoise jumps into the riverbed, he pours the cactus juice.
- ☐ Before Desert Tortoise jumps into the riverbed, he pours the cactus juice.

4. Part B: Underline a detail from the text that best helps you understand the sequence, or order, of events in the text.

“I have a much better idea,” Desert River said. “I am dry now, but if you pour your juice into my riverbed, it will turn into water. You will be safe from Desert Sun with me.”

The thought of soaking in a river sounded very good to Desert Tortoise. He poured the juice and then jumped into the water. He sunk down to the bottom and cooled himself with the wet river mud.

5. Put these events from the passage in order. Write a 1 next to the event that happened first, and 4 next to the event that happened last.

_____ Desert Tortoise got a shell.

_____ Desert Tortoise decided to go out and look for water.

_____ Desert Tortoise covered himself with river mud.

_____ Desert Cactus gave Desert Tortoise some cactus juice.

Literal and nonliteral language questions *RL.2.4*

6. Read this sentence from the passage.

"He was so tired from all his adventures and still so covered in mud, that he fell asleep on the banks of the river."

What is the meaning of the word "banks" as used in this sentence in the passage?

- ☐ Places where money is saved
- ☐ Raised areas of the ocean floor
- ☐ Piles of soil or other materials
- ☐ Strips of land bordering water

7. Read this sentence from the passage.

As he crawled out, he saw that the desert was alive with beautiful wildflowers.

What does the underlined phrase mean as used in the passage?

- ☐ The flowers were living and breathing.
- ☐ The desert had many flowers.
- ☐ The flowers were speaking to Tortoise.
- ☐ The flowers were similar to animals.

8. Read this paragraph from the passage.

As Desert Tortoise traveled on in the sand, he got hotter and hotter. This made him angry with Desert Sun. Finally, he stopped to rest in the shade of a big rock. He put his dandelion gently on the ground. "I'm fed up with this heat. Maybe it's time for my snack," he thought.

Why did the author use the underlined phrase?

- ☐ To show that Desert Tortoise is hungry.
- ☐ To show that Desert Tortoise is beating Desert Sun.
- ☐ To show that Desert Tortoise is angry and frustrated.
- ☐ To show that Desert Tortoise is resting in the shade of a rock.

9. Read this paragraph from the passage.

"I think I will have it for lunch," replied the tortoise. "Desert Sun has been chasing me all day and I am starving. I'm so tired I could fall asleep right now- I'm beat!"

What does the underlined phrase mean as used in the passage?

- ☐ Desert Sun won their battle.
- ☐ Desert Tortoise is very tired.
- ☐ Desert Tortoise can't wait to find a rock.
- ☐ Desert Tortoise wants to play drums.

10. Read this paragraph from the passage.

From time to time, Tortoise had to leave his burrow to find food and water. One day in early spring, Desert Tortoise knew he needed go out and look for some food and water.

Which of the following most closely matches the meaning of the underlined phrase?

- ☐ Every day
- ☐ All the time
- ☐ Sometimes
- ☐ Each month

11. Read this paragraph from the passage.

At last, he needed a breath of air so he came out. He was so tired from all his adventures and still so covered in mud, that he fell asleep on the banks of the river and slept like a log for a long time.

Which of the following most closely matches the meaning of the underlined phrase?

- ☐ Slept on a piece of wood
- ☐ Slept deeply
- ☐ Got dirty and messy
- ☐ Gave up