

File Name: I6R Center of Life

Informative/Explanatory

Grade 6

Range of Writing

Center of Life

The saguaro cactus is a huge cactus that lives in deserts. It can live up to 150 years old! Even though it grows very very slowly, it grows up to be one of the tallest plants in the desert! The saguaro cactus is very adapted to desert life and this makes it a good home and food for many animals.

The saguaro cactus is adapted to survive in the deserts in many different ways. Because of the heat in the desert, saguaro cacti have waxy skin to prevent moisture loss. Many more adaptations help the saguaro keep water, though. It holds water in its stem, that's pleated like an accordion so that it can expand and hold more water. The roots also help it get more water. They spread out very far, almost as wide as the cactus is tall so that helps. The roots are also very close the surface, as little as 3 inches below ground. Because of this, if it rains, the cactus can get lots of water before the ground sucks too much up.

The cactus is also a home and food for lots of animals that live in the desert. Snakes can find a home, and many birds can perch on the big cactus. Many small flying creatures eat the nectar from the flowers. The cactus also bears fruit. After a while in the sun, the fruit splits in half and birds and insects eat the oozing sweet stuff from inside the fruit. Other fruit falls to the ground, where lots of animals eat them. Other animals eat the seeds. But after a long time, the cactus dies and falls down. Still, it is a place for small ground dwelling animals. Scorpions can take shelter from the sun. Jackrabbits can make a home there.

The saguaro cactus is really and amazing plant. It's also a good place for animals to live and find food. If one day I could go to see one, I totally would. If I was stuck in a desert, I think I would go to the nearest saguaro cactus to wait for help.

Introduces the topic:

The writer provides context in the form of background information on the saguaro cactus and then states the main point / focus

Focus / **topic** of the piece is clearly stated

Organizes ideas, concepts, and information: the writer describes the adaptation of the cactus to desert life using various categories

Uses precise language and domain-specific vocabulary within evidence to develop and support topic of saguaro adaptation

Uses appropriate transitions to clarify relationships among ideas and concepts

Uses precise language and domain-specific vocabulary to develop and support topic.

Provides a concluding section that follows from the information presented by restating the main point and reflecting on the topic

In this assignment from a science unit, students were asked to explain how the saguaro, a desert plant, has adapted to desert life and provides a home and food for desert creatures. The writer gives some background about the saguaro in general in the introduction and then states his main point (the saguaro is well-adapted to desert life and provides a home and food for desert creatures).

The writer organizes information and ideas clearly by category to support the main point. Within each chunk, the writer uses precise language and domain-specific vocabulary to convey information about the saguaro. He uses appropriate transitions to clarify relationships among ideas and concepts. This makes the writer's thinking and understanding easy to follow.

While the language is sometimes a bit informal ("*If one day I could go to see one, I totally would*"), the bulk of the essay has a formal style. The conclusion follows from main point and, although not required by the Standards, provides some reflection on the topic.

Source: Achieve the Core, <http://achievethecore.org/page/504/common-core-informative-explanatory-writing-list-pg>