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# Activity Guide

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## Saving Sweetness

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### ABOUT THE STORY

Sweetness, tired of scrubbing floors with a toothbrush, has run away from the orphanage into the desert. The deputy follows her, trying to save her both from the desert and from the desperado Coyote Pete. Sweetness turns the tables on both the deputy and Coyote Pete, though, and comes up with a solution to her situation that suits everyone.

### ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Diane Stanley was born in Texas and grew up in Texas, New York, and California. At first, she planned to become a medical illustrator, but after she had children she discovered her love for children's books. She is the author of many books for young readers, including *Raising Sweetness*, another Live Oak Readalong. Ms. Stanley lives in Texas with her husband.

### ABOUT THE ILLUSTRATOR

G. Brian Karas was born in Connecticut. He went to the Paier School of Art and worked at Hallmark Cards for three years. After his first children's book was published in 1983, he went on to illustrate more than fifty books for young readers.

### INTRODUCING THE STORY

Ask children if they know what a tall tale is. Explain that tall tales are usually tales set in the American past, often in the West, featuring characters that are "larger than life" in the some way – incredibly brave, tall, or strong, for example. Tell them that the story they are about to read is a tall tale about an orphan named Sweetness.

### READING ACTIVITIES

#### **Comprehension/Thinking Skills**

- Why does Sweetness run away?
- How does Sweetness save the deputy?
- What does Sweetness do when the deputy offers to bring her back?
- What happened to Coyote Pete?
- What does Sweetness convince the deputy to do?"
- What word would you describe Sweetness? (*Analyze*)
- How do you think the deputy feels about Sweetness? (*Draw conclusions*)

### Vocabulary

Write these words and definitions on the chalkboard. Ask children to copy the words and definitions and draw lines matching each word with the definition. Then have children write a sentence using each word.

Words: varmint; canteen; dilemma; desperado; trifle; ambled; commenced  
Definitions: problem; pest; walking slowly; water container; unimportant matter; outlaw; began

### CROSS-CURRICULAR ACTIVITIES

#### **Language Arts: Wild Similes**

Remind children that a simile is a comparison using the word "like" or "as". Point out that there are many unusual similes in *Saving Sweetness*, such as "mean as an acre of rattlesnakes" and "cute as a specked pup under a wagon". Have children find the other similes in the story. Then ask them to make up their own similes and write them down. You can read children's similes aloud for the class to enjoy.

#### **Science: Life in the Desert**

Sweetness escapes into the desert, where it is hot during the day and cold at night. Many animals and plants live in the desert but they need special adaptations, or changes in the way they live, to survive the extreme heat, cold, and dryness. Have children report on an animal or plant that lives in the desert. Ask them to write a description of the animal or plant they find, telling how it manages to survive.

#### **Music: Song of the Wild West**

Find a recording of music of the old West to play for the class. Encourage them to listen closely to the words and music. Then lead a discussion of the songs, asking what topics they cover and what moods they evoke. How do the songs describe life in the old West?

#### **Language Arts: Wild West Dialect**

Many phrases and terms in *Saving Sweetness* include dialect that may be unfamiliar to children. Write these phrases on the chalkboard. Encourage children to guess at the meaning, and help them define each phrase.

fit to be tied ( <i>angry</i> )	lessen ( <i>unless</i> )
riding' for a fall ( <i>heading for trouble</i> )	tuckered out ( <i>tired</i> )
a coon's age ( <i>a long time</i> )	mosey ( <i>move slowly</i> )
chewed on it ( <i>thought about it</i> )	right cold ( <i>freezing</i> )

### INTERNET ACTIVITY

Before you send children to do research using any of the keywords listed below, you may wish to try them yourself to be sure the sites are suitable.

#### **Wild West outlaws and Heroes**

Have children find out about one of these real-life outlaws or lawmen of the Wild West by using a name as a keyword. Children can write a brief report on the subject's life and share the information they find with the rest of the class.

Outlaws: Butch Cassidy; Black Bart; Jesse James

Lawmen: Judge Roy Bean; Wyatt Earp; William "Bat" Masterson"