



Imagine
you are living
thousands of years ago,

in Africa. Your family eats supper around a fire pit. Suddenly a child grabs a piece of hot antelope and burns his hand. An adult heads off into the bush, breaks off a piece of greenery, and spreads a clear, soothing gel on the burn. The plant, aloe, is one of the few plants that can boast a 4,000-year history of comforting, salving, and healing. And it is still being used today in much the same way as it was centuries ago! A familiar site on household windowsills, this spiky succulent is the one medicinal plant with which most of us have firsthand (or first-aid) experience. And its easy cultivation allows even those without green thumbs to feel accomplished.

Aloe's rich history, ability to thrive on neglect, and its unique adaptations to adverse environmental conditions make it an ideal plant for classroom investigations. Consider using aloe explorations as a springboard for a healing plant unit or a broader examination of people/plant connec-

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THE
Wonders
OF
Aloe

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Healing

THROUGH THE AGES

The virtues of humble aloe have been touted for thousands of years by many civilizations, including those in Egypt, Greece, India, and Africa. Although there is some controversy about its origins, most aloe species are considered indigenous to Africa. Because aloe is valued for its healing powers, it likely migrated

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