



The 27th Annual African Hippopotamus Race

Edward the hippopotamus is a very good swimmer. In this extract from the book by Morris Lurie, Edward's grandfather tells him about the most important swimming race in all of Africa.

Indeed, Edward was a very good swimmer. He wasn't exceptionally smart at school—though he tried very hard—and he wasn't brilliant at games, but in the water . . .

At quarter speed, he looked like a log shooting down a fast stream.

At half speed, he looked like a powerful motorboat.

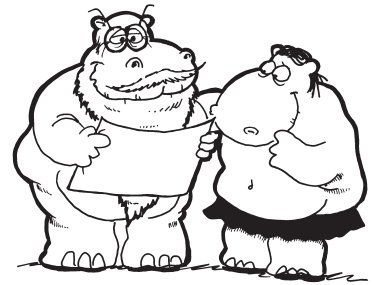
At full speed, you could hardly see him at all.

'Whoosh!' went Edward, diving down to the bottom.

Yes. Edward was fast. Why, only a week before his eighth birthday, he had won first place in the big local swimming race, beating every other hippopotamus in the neighbourhood.

'Thank you very much,' Edward said, when he had won the race, and everybody was crowded around him. 'Thank you very much. Actually, I think I was lucky. I got into a fast bit of river, that's all.'

When Edward had been weighed and measured and photographed, and come in from his swim, his grandfather put his arm around his shoulders, and said to him, 'Edward, my boy, how would you like to win the Twenty-Seventh Annual African Hippopotamus Race?'



'Gosh!' said Edward. 'Me?'

'Edward,' said his grandfather, 'I have seen some fast hippopotamuses in my time, as you know, and I think you've got the makings of a champion.'

'Gosh!' said Edward. 'Me?'

'Yes, Edward,' said his grandfather. 'You can do it. Prunella. Fetch me the map.'

Edward's grandmother ran upstairs to get the map, and while they were waiting, all Edward could say was, 'Gosh! Gosh!'

The Twenty-Seventh Annual African Hippopotamus Race!

'Here's the map,' said Edward's grandmother, panting a little from her run up the stairs.

'Hmmm,' said Edward's grandfather, spreading the map out over the dining table. 'Let me see. Ah, Edward,' he said, 'this is the Zamboola River.' He pointed with his finger.

Edward blinked. Running right across the map was a wide band of blue, and on it was written Zamboola River.

'The Zamboola River,' said Edward's grandfather, 'is the longest, widest, deepest river in all Africa. A treacherous and dangerous river. A hard river to swim. Unless you know what you are doing.'

'Gosh!' said Edward, blinking furiously.

'Over here,' said Edward's grandfather, 'are swamps. And over here is a waterfall. But in between are twenty-two kilometres of clear, blue water, and that's where the race is held.'

by Morris Lurie from
The 27th Annual African Hippopotamus Race (Puffin)

Teaching notes for The 27th Annual African Hippopotamus Race

Text form: Fantasy
Medium: Illustrated book
Field: A young hippopotamus enters a big swimming race
Tenor: Story teller to general audience
Mode: Written and illustrated

OTHER RESOURCES

Atlases and fantasy texts.
Drawing materials.

INTRODUCING THE UNIT

Ask students if they have read any other fantasies. Discuss what is needed to create a fantasy. Talk about fantasies they may have encountered in other media such as theatre, television, electronic games and movies. Discuss the distinction between the literal meaning of fantastic (imbued by fantasy, not real) and the popular meaning (very good).

LET'S TALK ABOUT IT

Help students to understand the distinction between fantasy narrative texts (in which the actions and/or characters could not exist in real life) and realistic narrative. For example, hippopotamuses do swim but they don't organise races, go to school, play games, take photographs, read maps or live in houses. Allow students to share their responses.

THAT'S IMPOSSIBLE

Ask students to justify their decisions as they complete the table. Assist students to understand that while many narrative texts are imaginary, fantasy narratives go beyond this to create their own reality.

CHARACTER DESCRIPTION

Help students to find the clues in the text about Edward's physical and personality traits. These develop our understanding of Edward's characterisation. The

extract supplies evidence that Edward is modest, well-mannered, enthusiastic and respectful. Students will write Edward's character description.

CREATING THE SETTING

In the extract there is a strong description of the river e.g. a wide stretch of blue; the longest, widest, deepest river in all of Africa; a treacherous and dangerous river; a hard river to swim; twenty-two kilometres of clear, blue water. Read the passage and write a list of the descriptive language used to create the setting of the river. Students are to write an orientation for a story including words that would create an effective atmosphere, time and setting. They may wish to introduce some of the characters and set clues in place for the complication to come.

MAKE A MAP

Ensure students include all features and details mentioned in the description on the map, e.g. the story is set in Africa, the swamp, the waterfall and some illustrative elements to show the length, depth and breadth of the river. Length is given as twenty-two kilometres so students may include a scale.

THAT'S FANTASTIC

Discuss the fantasy worlds in the fantasies students may have read. Create a chart of the features of these worlds. Have students create their own fantasy worlds. Encourage students to write a fantasy novel set in the world they create.

FOLLOW-UP/EXTENSION

Read the book *The 27th Annual African Hippopotamus Race* to the class. Students can complete a reading journal after each chapter. Look at Edward's character at the beginning and again at the end of the book. Has he changed? Has his character developed?



Let's talk about it

The 27th Annual African Hippopotamus Race is a fantasy text. Many of the things included in the story could not happen in real life.

Work with a partner to complete the table. List the things in the passage which could really happen and the things which could not really happen. An example is given to help you.

Could happen—Realistic

Africa is a real continent

Could not happen—Fantasy

Hippopotamuses talk



That's impossible

Draw two things from *The 27th Annual African Hippopotamus Race* which could not happen. Explain on the lines why each event could not happen in real life.

A large, empty rectangular box with a black border, intended for drawing.

A large, empty rectangular box with a black border, intended for drawing.



Character description

Write a character description of Edward, writing as if you are Edward. Include details about his age, height, weight, racing experience, interests and personality traits. Complete a drawing of Edward too.

NA 3.12a NSW 2.9 Uses strategies to plan, review, proofread and publish own writing with awareness of audience and written language features.

NA 3.11 NSW 2.10 2.14 Able to produce a clear text using correct sentence structure, most grammatical features and punctuation conventions of the text type.

NSW 2.12 Writes using consistent shape, size, slope and formation. Demonstrates basic desktop skills on the computer.



Creating the setting

In the extract, there are a number of words which describe the Zamboola River.

On the lines below, write all the descriptive language you can find which helps us to build a picture in our minds of the Zamboola River.

a wide band of blue

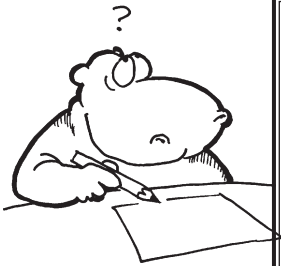
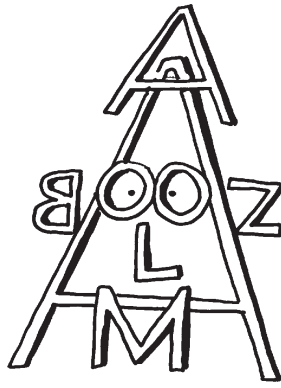


Write an orientation for a story set at a river. You can include some of the above descriptive language. Remember, you want to create the atmosphere, tone and setting for your tale.



Make a map

Morris Lurie used his imagination to create a setting—the Zamboola River. Use the descriptive language you found in the previous activity, and any other information from the extract, to draw a map of the Zamboola River.



MAP OF THE MIGHTY ZAMBOOLA RIVER

NA 3.5 NSW 2.5 Reads a wide range of written and visual texts and interprets and discusses relationships between ideas, information and events.
NA 3.8a NSW 2.6 Efficiently integrates a range of skills and strategies for interpreting printed and visual texts.



That's fantastic

Create your own fantasy setting. On the lines below, write groups of words to describe your setting.

Now give your world a name and draw a labelled map. Remember—this is a fantasy, so make it fantastic!

Name of my world _____

