

Going to the River

by Feana Tu'akoi

illustrated by Kirsty Lillico

Overview

This narrative text features some African animals going to the river. The climax of the story occurs when Lion appears and the other animals beat a hasty retreat! There is an audio version on the Ready to Read CD *Readalong 2001*.

Suggested purposes

This book supports the comprehension strategies of making connections (with the children's knowledge of African animals) and forming and testing hypotheses. It provides opportunities to practise one-to-one word matching and to reinforce high-frequency words and knowledge of upper-case letters. The varying lengths of the animal names help to reinforce the concept of a word.

Text features

(Focus on only one or two per session.)

- the high-frequency words “going”, “is”, “the”, “to”
- the use of various upper-case letters
- the upper-case and lower-case forms of initial letters in “Going”, “going” and “River”, “river”
- the “ing” ending in “going”
- the animal names
- the repetitive sentence structure with a change on page 8
- the opportunities for prediction on page 7
- the use of an exclamation mark and enlarged text for emphasis on page 8
- the highly supportive illustrations.

Introducing the text

Show the children the cover, and support them to form hypotheses about the story, feeding in information as necessary. *What can you find out from the cover? Yes, it looks as if it will be about these animals.* Ask the children to identify them. If they don't know “Buffalo”, tell them that they can find this out during the reading.

Use what you know about these animals to think about where this story might be set. Establish that the animals are all from Africa. *I'm thinking about what Africa is like and why that might be important in this book ...* Discuss (or explain) the setting so that they understand that it's hot and very dry. Draw the children's attention to the fact that the animals are all going in the same direction. *I wonder where the animals are going ...* If necessary, model your thinking to demonstrate that hypotheses (predictions) should fit with the available information. Ask the children to read the title. If they suggest other water-related words (“water”, “stream”, “creek”), direct them to the initial letter for “River” and prompt them to cross-check. Read the names of the author and the illustrator.

The first reading

Title page – Listen to the children read the title again.

While you're reading, I want you to think about whether we were right about our predictions or whether we need to change them.

Pages 2 to 3 – Study the illustrations and review the children's predictions. *Were you right? How do you know?*

If necessary, ask questions to establish the pattern of the text. *What is this animal? Where is it going?* If they read "The Elephant is ...", prompt them to cross-check. *Read that page again, pointing to each word. Does that word look like "The"? Check the first letter.*

Listen to the children read, providing support and feedback as necessary. Observe their one-to-one word matching. You may need to model running your finger along the whole length of some of the longer animal names.

Page 5 – The children may read "Hippo" for "Hippopotamus". Draw their attention to the length of the word and have them practise saying it and running their finger along the whole word. Model your thinking about the narrative structure and encourage the children to speculate. *So far, I know the animals are going to the river but I'm wondering if something different or exciting is going to happen ...*

Page 6 – Monitor the children's attempts at "Buffalo" and encourage them to cross-check with the initial consonant. *Could that word be "cow"? Why not?* You could write "Buffalo" on the whiteboard and help the children to sound it out in chunks ("Buff-a-lo").

Page 7 – Check that the children understand that the lion is a threat. Note that his fearsome claws are prominent! *Who is this? Did you think something like this would happen? What will the other animals do? Why?* Encourage the children to predict the ending.

Page 8 – Discuss the exclamation marks and the use of enlarged print. Practise rereading this page expressively!

Discuss the children's predictions. *When did you realise that the animals were going to be in danger?* Draw out the idea that making predictions (forming hypotheses) helps the reader to notice more and think more about their reading, and it supports meaning.

Ideas for revisiting the text

(Choose only one or two per session.)

Listen to the children reread the text, observing their attempts to maintain accurate one-to-one word matching, use grapho-phonetic information (especially initial letters), and read expressively.

Ask the children to locate some of the high-frequency words. *Find the word "to" on page 2. Can you find "to" on the next page? Tell me the letters in the word.* Ask the children to write the words themselves.

Focus on some of the upper-case letters in the text. Think of other names that start the same way. *Yes, "E" for Elephant and "E" for Ellen!*

Use the whiteboard or magnetic letters to compare the upper-case and lower-case initial letters in “going” and “Going” or “river” and “River”. Locate these words in the text and discuss why words sometimes need capital letters. Discuss the visual features of “g” and “G” or “r” and “R”.

Find the word “going” in the text and write it on the whiteboard (or use magnetic letters). Rub out and then restore the “ing” ending and talk about the difference it makes. Do the same with some other regular verbs, such as “look” and “play”. Practise using the words in oral sentences.

Encourage the children to share their responses to the illustrations. Note that they are paintings and that the use of “hot” colours emphasises the dry environment.

Suggestions for further tasks

Have the children read along with the audio version on the CD *Readalong 2001*.

Innovate on the text, changing the setting to a farm with a dog at the end or to the bush and New Zealand native creatures. Make it into a big book or wall story illustrated by the children.

Have the children innovate on the sentence structure, for example, “Samuel is going to the party.”

Dramatise the story using simple masks or animal puppets.

Make a mural of the animals drinking at the river and add captions.

Read the big book *A Good Idea* to the children. This includes some different animals but reinforces the significance of the hot, dry African setting.