Title/Author: *Owen & Mzee The True Story of a Remarkable Friendship* told by Isabella Hatkoff, Craig Hatkoff, and Dr. Paula Kahumbu

Suggested Time to Spend: 4 Days – about 30 minutes per day (3 days for the reading and one for the guided writing)

Common Core grade-level ELA/Literacy Standards: RI.2.1, RI.2.2, RI.2.4, RI.2.5, RI.2.7, RI.2.10; W.2.2; SL.2.1, SL.2.2; L.2.1, L.2.2, L.2.4

Lesson Objective:

Students will listen to an informative text, comparing and contrasting the physical and emotional characteristics of a tortoise and a hippo.

Teacher Instructions

**Before the Lesson**

1. Read the Big Ideas and Key Understandings and the Synopsis below. **Please do not read this to the students**. This is a description to help you prepare to teach the book and be clear about what you want your children to take away from the work.

Big Ideas/Key Understandings/Focusing Question

How does a friendship develop between two very different animals? How does the friendship help both animals? One key takeaway is that the friendship that develops between an old tortoise and a baby hippo provides the support the baby hippo needs to survive after being separated from his mother.

Synopsis

A tsunami separates a young hippo from his mother. As he is rescued and taken to a wildlife sanctuary, he develops an interesting and unlikely friendship with an old tortoise.

1. Go to the last page of the lesson and review “What Makes This Read-Aloud Complex.” This was created for you as part of the lesson and will give you guidance about what the lesson writers saw as the sources of complexity or key access points for this book. You will of course evaluate text complexity with your own students in mind, and make adjustments to the lesson pacing and even the suggested activities and questions.
2. Read the entire book, adding your own insights to the understandings identified. Also note the stopping points for the text-inspired questions and activities. *Hint: you may want to copy the questions vocabulary words and activities over onto sticky notes so they can be stuck to the right pages for each day’s questions and vocabulary work.*

*Note to teachers of English Language Learners (ELLs): Read Aloud Project Lessons are designed for children who cannot read yet for themselves. They are highly interactive and have many scaffolds built into the brief daily lessons to support reading comprehension. Because of this, they are filled with scaffolds that are appropriate for English Language Learners who, by definition, are developing language and learning to read (English). This read aloud text includes complex features which offer many opportunities for learning, but at the same time includes supports and structures to make the text accessible to even the youngest students.*

*This lesson includes features that align to best practices for supporting English Language Learners. Some of the supports you may see built into this, and /or other Read Aloud Project lessons, assist non-native speakers in the following ways:*

* *These lessons include embedded vocabulary scaffolds that help students acquire new vocabulary in the context of reading. They feature multi-modal ways of learning new words, including prompts for where to use visual representations, the inclusion of student-friendly definitions, built-in opportunities to use newly acquired vocabulary through discussion or activities, and featured academic vocabulary for deeper study.*
* *These lessons also include embedded scaffolds to help students make meaning of the text itself. It calls out opportunities for paired or small group discussion, includes recommendations for ways in which visuals, videos, and/or graphic organizers could aid in understanding, provides a mix of questions (both factual and inferential) to guide students gradually toward deeper understanding, and offers recommendations for supplementary texts to build background knowledge supporting the content in the anchor text.*
* *These lessons feature embedded supports to aid students in developing their overall language and communication skills by featuring scaffolds such as sentence frames for discussion and written work (more guidance available* [here](https://achievethecore.org/page/3159/ell-supports-for-writing-and-discussion)*) as well as writing opportunities (and the inclusion of graphic organizers to scaffold the writing process). These supports help students develop and use newly acquired vocabulary and text-based content knowledge.*

The Lesson – Questions, Activities, and Tasks

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| **Questions/Activities/Vocabulary/Tasks** | **Expected Outcome or Response (for each)** |
| FIRST READING:Read aloud the entire book with minimal interruptions. Stop to provide word meanings or clarify only when you know the majority of your students will be confused. | The goal here is for students to enjoy the book, both writing and pictures, and to experience it as a whole. This will give them some context and sense of completion before they dive into examining the parts of the book more carefully. |
| SECOND READING:Teacher models drawing a Venn Diagram on a chart, and gives each student a sheet of paper with the blank Venn Diagram on it.**Reread pages 1-2**Tell the students that the class will be comparing and contrasting characteristics of the two animals in the text. Ask what two animals we will be discussing. Write their names above the two circles. Owen MzeeTeacher says, “A tortoise is a turtle that lives on land. Mzee is an Aldabra (al-DAH-brah) tortoise, the largest species of tortoises. They can live up to 200 years.”**Reread pages 3-4**State “Informative text sometimes restates a word to help us understand the meaning of that word. In the text we read ‘Before the baby hippopotamus became known as Owen, he lived with his mother in a group, or pod, with about twenty other hippos.’ What does the text say the word *pod* means?”“Informative text may also have captions.” Show pages 3-4 to the students and ask them to read the caption chorally “Owen lived in a pod of hippos, like this one.” Ask “How does the picture help the reader to understand what a pod of hippos is? Teacher think aloud – I learned that hippos live in groups called pods. I’m going to put “live in pods” under Owen’s name.Model putting the words in the Venn Diagram under Owen’s name.Why were the villagers unable to chase the hippos back up the river? Turn and tell your shoulder partner.What additional information about Owen or Mzee can we add to the Venn Diagram?**Reread pages 5-6**The text describes how the young hippo is feeling, what words does the text use to describe this feeling? Why does the hippo feel this way?Describe why the villagers and visitors were working together to try and help the young hippo on page 6.Ask why salt water would make the baby hippo sick (if necessary, guide students in understanding the hippos live in the river which has freshwater and the sea water is saltwater).After reading pages 5-6, what additional information about Owen can we add to the Venn Diagram?**Reread pages 7-8**Read paragraph 1 only.Commotion is a noisy activity. How did the commotion play a factor in the rescue of the hippo? What other factors were there? What characteristics can be learned about Owen from the text on page 7? Add these to the Venn Diagram.Read paragraphs 2, 3, and 4. How did the hippo get his name? The text states, “Their happy cries could be heard almost a mile away.” The caption states – “The cheers could be heard almost a mile away.” How are the authors using the word *cry in the first statement*?Why was it possible that the cheers could be heard so far away?What additional information about Owen or Mzee can we add to the Venn Diagram?**Reread pages 9-10**Why will Owen have to stay at Haller Park for the rest of his life?The caption on page 10 states “Doctor Paula, Stephen, and Sabine were eager to help the orphaned hippo.” What does orphaned mean?What additional information about Owen or Mzee can we add to the Venn Diagram?**Reread pages 11-12**What was the purpose for putting a blanket around the hippo’s head?Why did it take many hours to move the hippo from the pickup truck into Dr. Paula’s truck?What additional information about Owen or Mzee can we add to the Venn Diagram?**Reread pages 13-14**We were introduced to Mzee on this page. What characteristics can be learned about Mzee from the text on page 13 and illustration on page 14? **Reread pages 15-16**Explain why Owen is weak and exhausted once they arrived at the sanctuary. Turn and tell your partner.Why did Owen go to Mzee after he scrambled from the truck?How did Mzee react to Owen, and what did Owen do?What characteristics can be learned about Owen and Mzee from the text and illustrations on pages 15 – 16? **Reread pages 17-18**What is stated in the text to help the reader understand that Mzee was becoming friendlier? How did Mzee help Owen?What are some similarities that are noticed on page 17 with Owen and Mzee?**Reread pages 19-20**The text says “Soon, they were inseparable.” Write *separate* on the board, have the class read the word chorally. What does separate mean?When “*in”* is written before a word, it means not. If Mzee and Owen are inseparable, what does that mean?Using the captions, what can we add to the Venn Diagram that shows how Owen and Mzee are either similar or different? What evidence in the text and illustrations shows that Owen and Mzee are inseparable? What are some things that Owen and Mzee do to show they trust each other?**Reread pages 21-22**What is one difference in paragraph 1 on page 22 that the text states about Owen and Mzee?State: “Wildlife experts are still puzzled about how this unlikely friendship came to be. Most have never heard of a mammal, such as Owen, and a reptile, such as Mzee, forming such a strong bond. Let’s look at our venn diagram at the ways Owen and Mzee are different and the ways they are alike.”  | Students draw a Venn Diagram, making sure the circles are large enough to write in. Owen MzeeThe text states that a pod means a group of hippos.The picture helps the reader to understand what a pod looks like. In the picture you can see many hippos grouped together laying and getting water from the river. Students write “live in pods” under Owen’s nameThe hippos did not want to move from where they were because they enjoyed eating the grass along the shore and in the villagers’ yards. The people were not large enough to scare the hippos as they are very dangerous and can weigh up to 8,000 pounds.We added that Owen lived in a pod.The text states that the young hippo is tired and frightened. He is unable to reach the shore on his own.The villagers and visitors were helping to save the hippo because the hippo was stranded on a coral reef in the sea grass. The villagers knew that hippos live in freshwater and will become sick in saltwater. They also saw that he was a young hippo, was alone and had been separated from his mother, he was not able to reach the shore on his own.Owen (hippos) lives in freshwater, and he is now stranded in the saltwaterLives in freshwaterThe hippo did not like the noise, or commotion, which made him angry, breaking through the nets and escaping their ropes. Also, although the hippo is short (only 2 feet tall), he is very heavy – 600 pounds, he is slippery, and he is strong which makes him very hard to rescue.Owen is short and hefty (heavy); he is young; he is strongThe baby hippo was named after the man who tackled him and helped others to be able to get the net around him. His name was Owen Sobien so they called the hippo Owen.The authors use *cry* to mean loud cheer.There were a thousand people that were shouting with joy.We didn’t learn anything else to add about Owen.The hippo is young, wouldn’t be able to fend for himself and has been separated from his pod. He will not be accepted into another pod and would be attacked as an intruder.He has no family now. Hippos have a hard time being accepted into other pods. They put the blanket around his head to help him calm down. People try to prevent animals from seeing things that would upset them – blinders on horses/mules, covers on bird cages, etc.The baby hippo was very scared and angry. He is very strong and heavy, and he fought the people which took time since he wasn’t calm.Owen is strong and heavy and easily scared.Students write 130 years old, unfriendly, and liked being tickled under the chin on their venn diagram under Mzee.He was in the shallow water and too tired to get to the beach, he had to fight the people trying to get him out of the water, he fought the people moving him from the pickup truck to Dr. Paula’s truck – he is exhausted!Owen is very tired and scared. He is young, and he wants his mama. He saw an animal that was big and thinking that it was his mama, he went to it and crouched behind it the way baby hippos hide behind their mama.Mzee hissed at Owen and moved away, but Owen did not give up. By the next morning Owen was snuggled up to Mzee, and Mzee didn’t seem to mind at all.“Owen could easily keep up with the old tortoise; Owen was fast, and Mzee was slow.” Students will write *fast* under Owen and *slow* under Mzee.Looking at the pictures (pages 15-16), it looks like Owen and Mzee are very similar in size. So, in the middle of the venn diagram, write *size.*At first when Mzee moved away from Owen, Owen would follow him. Then, sometimes Owen would move away, and Mzee would follow him. This small gesture showed that Mzee was beginning to accept Owen’s friendship. He showed him how to eat the leaves and seemed to help him feel safe.The both eat leaves, they both are beginning to want to be friends and at one time they were both stubborn (Mzee being friends and now Owen not wanting to eat). *Students write eat leaves, want to be friends and are stubborn in the middle of their venn diagram.*Students say “separate.” It means to keep apart.That means the two cannot be separated.Both of them love water. *Students add this to their Venn Diagram.* The text states that they still have a strong bond. They also swim together, eat together, drink together and sleep to each other which shows that they do not like to be separated. The illustrations also show that they are together while they swim and on land. *Students add swim together, eat together, drink together and sleep together in the middle of their Venn Diagram.* Owen and Mzee rub noses, they playfully nuzzle each other, and they tickle each other.The text states that Owen is a mammal and that Mzee is a reptile. *Students add mammal and reptile to the outer portion of the Venn Diagram.* Owen and Mzee are two very different animals. The hippo Owen is a young mammal who was separated from his mother. He is strong and fast. Mzee is a reptile. He is a very old, slow, unfriendly tortoise. The two animals are alike in several ways. When Owen arrives at Haller Park, they are the same size and shape. Their coloring is similar, they both eat leaves, and they like to play in the water. Even though Owen and Mzee are different kinds of animals, they discover they enjoy being together and become very good friends. |
| THIRD READING: We read that wildlife experts are puzzled about the unlikely friendship between Owen and Mzee. Let’s look for ways they show friendship. (Optional: Read the beginning of the text to pages 19 without stopping for questioning.) **Reread pages 19-20**How do the animals show friendship to one another? *List the comments of the students on the board.***Reread pages 21-22**The authors say “Our most important friends are sometimes those we least expected.” What does the author mean?**Reread pages 23-26**What is remarkable about the role Mzee has played throughout this text? | They are inseparable; swim, eat, drink, sleep together; when Owen nuzzles Mzee’s neck he stretches it forward to be stroked more; they are gentle with one another; a sense of trust has grown between them.Owen needed his mother; Mzee wasn’t his mother, but his shape and coloring may have reminded Owen of his mother; Mzee had always preferred to be alone, but he may have decided to like OwenAlthough Mzee didn’t like to be with other animals and was very different from Owen in some ways, he helped take care of Owen and became a good friend. |

FINAL DAY WITH THE BOOK - Culminating Task

Using the Venn Diagram and the information gathered while reading the text, write a well-developed paragraph defining the meaning of friendship. The paragraph should include how Owen and Mzee established a bond of friendship despite their differences. Be sure to include the emotional aspects that led to the unlikely friendship. Make sure to use proper capitalization, punctuation, and grammar throughout your writing.

Sample:

*The people at Haller Park were surprised when the old tortoise Mzee and the young hippo Owen became friends. Mzee was a 120 year-old reptile, and he was not very friendly. Owen was a year-old mammal that had been separated from his mother, and he was scared and lonely. They both ate leaves, and Mzee showed Owen how to eat them. They both enjoyed the water. While Owen was a lot younger, they were a similar size and color. The text states that Owen may have thought Mzee was like his mother which could explain why they became friends and began to lean on one another. At first Owen followed Mzee when he moved away from him, but then Mzee began to move toward Owen. Soon they became good friends and wanted to eat and play together.*

Vocabulary

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| **These words merit less time and attention** (They are concrete and easy to explain, or describe events/processes/ideas/concepts/experiences that are familiar to your students)  | **These words merit more time and attention**(They are abstract, have multiple meanings, and/or are a part of a large family of words with related meanings. These words are likely to describe events, ideas, processes or experiences that most of your student will be unfamiliar with) |
| Page 2 – tortoise – a turtle that lives on land - some can live up to 200 yearsPage 3 – pod – group of hipposPage 3 – racing – water moving very fastPage 3 – wallow – to roll aroundPage 6 – surging waves – big wall of water moving very fastPage 6 – stranded – separated from, alonePage 7 – commotion – noisy activityPage 7 – hefty – very big and heavyPage 7 – cries – loud cheersPage 7 – hoisted – liftedPage 9 – sanctuary – a safe place for the animalsPage 9 – fend – take care of himselfPage 10 – orphaned – having no parentsPage 13 – enclosure – a fenced-in placePage 16 – exhausted – very tiredPage 16 – scrambled – moved quicklyPage 16 – crouched – squattedPage 16 – companion - friendPage 17 – protective presence – feeling safe when something/someone is nearbypage 19 – nuzzled – to rub or push against gently with the nosepage 23 – endure – lasting a long timepage 26 – resilience – determinationpage 26 – remarkable role – important part | Page 19 – inseparable – not able to separate |

Venn Diagram



Mzee

Owen

size

eat leaves

love the water

shape

coloring

affectionate

gentle

trust one another

live in pods

live in freshwater

short

heavy

young

strong

hippos don’t accept others into their pod

fast

mammal

scared

lonely

old

unfriendly

likes being tickled under the chin

slow

reptile

loner

became friendly

 Both

Extension learning activities for this book and other useful resources

* Divide students into groups giving each group a different topic about either hippos or tortoises (physical characteristics, habitats, activities/eating habits). Students can research their topic and create a page along with an illustration. Once completed, the pages can be combined to form two class books. Each book can be read aloud by the students. *Note: This is particularly supportive of English Language Learners.*
* Reread the texts Lola and Tiva (or other books about unlikely friendships) and Owen and Mzee and compare and contrast the unlikely friendships between the texts.

Note to Teacher:

* A discussion guide for this book, *Cultivating Resiliency: A Guide for Parents and School Personnel*, has been developed for this book and can be found at [www.scholastic.com/discussionguides](http://www.scholastic.com/discussionguides). Look under Owen & Mzee.
* There is a website about Owen & Mzee – [www.owenandmzee.com](http://www.owenandmzee.com) that has a lot of information about the two, including that the back of a tortoise may look something like a hippo’s face.
* Although the meaning of the name Owen is not mentioned, the Celtic meaning is “young warrior” or “young fighter,” a fitting name for the young hippo!

**What Makes This Read-Aloud Complex?**

1. **Quantitative Measure**

Go to <http://www.lexile.com/> and enter the title of your read-aloud in the Quick Book Search in the upper right of home page. Most texts will have a Lexile measure in this database.

Most of the texts that we read aloud in K-2 should be in the 2-3 or 4-5 band, more complex than the students can read themselves.

2-3 band 420-820L

4-5 band 740-1010L

 920

1. **Qualitative Features**

Consider the four dimensions of text complexity below. For each dimension\*, note specific examples from the text that make it more or less complex.

The meaning/purpose is straightforward. The story is about a friendship that develops between two animals that are not normally friends.

This informative text is written in narrative form. There are photographs and captions to assist in comprehension.

Several sentences are long and complex (As soon as the ropes that held him were untied, Owen scrambled from the truck directly to Mzee, resting in a corner of the enclosure.) Some of the vocabulary may be unfamiliar to students (commotion, hoisted).

Students may need assistance with background knowledge of habitats for hippos (salt water, fresh water), the purpose of the wildlife sanctuary, and the reason Owen was separated from his mother.

**Meaning/Purpose**

**Structure**

**Language**

**Knowledge Demands**

\*For more information on the qualitative dimensions of text complexity, visit <http://www.achievethecore.org/content/upload/Companion_to_Qualitative_Scale_Features_Explained.pdf>

1. **Reader and Task Considerations**

What will challenge my students most in this text? What supports can I provide?

*Background knowledge of the setting will be a challenge for the students. Supports will be provided through online resources and information provided throughout the text as it is read to the students.*

How will this text help my students build knowledge about the world?

*Students will learn about a friendship developed between a mammal and a reptile as they are learning about the needs of the tortoise and the baby hippo.*

1. **Grade level**

What grade does this book best belong in?

 2nd grade

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