

About the Book

Text Type: Fiction/Realistic Page Count: 16 Word Count: 625

Book Summary

Owen and the Tortoise is based on the true story of Owen, a baby hippopotamus who was in the river with his mother when a huge tsunami hit the coast of Africa. He was separated from his mother, swept out to sea, and then thrown by a giant wave back onto the shore, alone. A park ranger rescued Owen and took him to a wildlife park, where he befriended an old tortoise who reminded him of his mother. Illustrations support the text.

About the Lesson

Targeted Reading Strategy

- Visualize

Objectives

- Use the reading strategy of visualizing
- Analyze the problem and solution in the story
- Identify adjectives and the nouns they describe
- Arrange words in alphabetical order

Materials

Green text indicates resources available on the website

- Book—*Owen and the Tortoise* (copy for each student)
- Chalkboard or dry erase board
- Problem and solution, alphabetization, visualizing worksheets
- Discussion cards



Indicates an opportunity for students to mark in the book. (All activities may be demonstrated by projecting the book on interactive whiteboard or completed with paper and pencil if books are reused.)

Vocabulary

- Content words: *afloat, carefree, crest, current, debris, Kenya, nostrils, surrounded, swift, tortoise, tsunami, vast*

Before Reading

Build Background

- Ask students what they know about hippos. Ask how mothers relate to their young (whether they nurture their babies or leave them alone to raise themselves). Ask where hippopotamuses live in the wild.

Preview the Book

Introduce the Book

- Give students a copy of the book. Have them preview the front and back covers and read the title. Have them discuss what they see on the covers. Invite them to offer ideas as to what kind of book this is and what it might be about. Have students predict what they think will happen in the story.
- After introducing the book and building some background, invite students to continue previewing the book.

Introduce the Reading Strategy: **Visualizing**

- Have students recall times that they have imagined themselves doing something they were looking forward to doing. Explain that visualizing is a strategy readers use to picture in their mind what's happening in the story. Review student predictions about the story and ask students to close their eyes to picture their predictions taking place. Point out that visualizing helps readers understand more about how the characters might think and feel about what's happening in the story.
- Model visualizing.
Think-aloud: When I'm reading I like to see the story in my mind. I pause to see what's happening to make sure the words make sense to me. If the character is standing near his mother, I think about how big his mother must be and how small the character probably is. I think about how the character feels about his mother. I try to picture where they are and what they are doing. I know that helps me know more about the characters and more about what is happening in the story.
- As students read, they should use other reading strategies in addition to the targeted strategy presented in this section.

Introduce the Vocabulary


- Remind students of the strategies they can use to work out words they don't know. For example, they can use what they know about letter and sound correspondence to figure out the word. They can look for base words, prefixes, and suffixes. They can use the context to work out meanings of unfamiliar words.
- Model how to apply word-attack strategies. Have students find the bold word *current* on page 6. Tell students that they can look at the letter the word begins with and then use what they know about syllables and vowels (one vowel sound per syllable) to sound out the rest of the word. Tell students to first look for a clue to the word's meaning in the sentence containing the unfamiliar word.
- Model how students can use the glossary or a dictionary to find the word's meaning. Have a volunteer read the definition for *current* in the glossary. Have students follow along on page 6 as you read the sentence in which the word *current* is found to confirm the meaning of the word.
- Preview other vocabulary, such as *debris*, *afloat*, and *crest*, in a similar fashion before students begin reading.

Set the Purpose

- Have students read the book to find out what happens to Owen the hippopotamus in this story. Remind students to remember to stop and reread words or sections of text that at first don't make sense to them.

During Reading

Student Reading

- **Guide the reading:** Have students read to the end of page 8. Remind them to stop to visualize as they read. Encourage students who finish early to go back and reread.
 - When they have finished reading, direct student to page 7.
Think-aloud: The first time I read about Owen being swept away by the strong current, I wanted to make sure I knew what the words meant and I wanted to know more about what was happening to him. I looked at the illustrations. Then I read the text and pictured it in my mind. I saw Owen in the water being pulled out to sea. I thought he must be very scared. I knew he got tired. I saw in my mind what it was like for him to be alone so far from his mother and his home.
 - Ask students how visualizing helped them to find out more about the story as they read. Encourage students to discuss what they learned by visualizing.
 - Have students read the remainder of the book. Remind them to stop to visualize the story to know more about what is happening.
-  Have students make a question mark in their book beside any word they do not understand or cannot pronounce. Encourage them to use the strategies they have learned to read each word and figure out its meaning.

After Reading

- Ask students what words, if any, they marked in their book. Use this opportunity to model how they can read these words using decoding strategies and context clues.

Reflect on the Reading Strategy

- Have students share any other questions they had while they were reading. Discuss how visualizing helped them stay actively involved in the reading process and helped them better understand and remember what they read.
- Have students complete the [visualizing worksheet](#) to show how they used the strategy of visualizing to help them understand and remember what they read.

Teach the Comprehension Skill: Problem and solution

- **Discussion:** Review with students what Owen’s problem was. (He was swept out to sea, away from his mother.) Ask students how the story ended. (A park ranger took him to a wildlife park where he made friends with an old tortoise who reminded him of his mother.)
- **Introduce and model:** Explain that writers have reasons for what they write. Write the following words on the board: *problem* and *solution*. Ask students to tell what a problem is. Tell students that a story is usually about a character solving a problem. Review that a *problem* is something that is difficult to deal with and must be solved (such as Owen losing his mother). A *solution* is the way the problem is solved (such as Owen finding someone to take the place of his mother).
- **Check for understanding:** Ask students to identify the point when Owen’s ultimate problem is revealed, and to tell the page number where it is written. (Page 11: *Owen lay bruised and tired, far from the Sabaki River and his mother.*) Ask students to identify the solution to the problem and to tell the page number where it is written. (Pages 13 and 14: *The tortoise was similar in color to Owen’s mother. Owen was immediately drawn to Mzee. The old tortoise didn’t seem to mind having Owen cuddle up to him or follow him around.*)
- **Extend the discussion:** Ask students if they think the solution in the story was the best solution for Owen. Ask volunteers to provide alternate solutions.
- **Independent practice:** Explain that problems can be solved in a variety of ways. Allow students the opportunity to create and analyze different possible solutions to Owen’s problem, or another problem of their choosing, by completing the [problem-and-solution worksheet](#). Discuss their responses aloud once students have finished.

Build Skills

Grammar and Mechanics: Adjectives and the nouns they describe

- Review or explain that *adjectives* are words that describe nouns or pronouns. An adjective tells which one, how many, or what kind.
- Tell students that this story is rich in descriptive words. Write the following sentence from the story on the board: *Owen spotted a large, gray, 100-year-old tortoise named Mzee.* Ask which words describe the tortoise (*large, gray, 100-year-old*). Have individual students come to the board and circle the adjectives in the sentence. Then have them underline the noun that the adjectives describe (tortoise).
- Repeat the activity using the following sentences from the story:
A white, frothy top spilled over.
But the strong current was too swift.
 Ask which words describe the top in the first sentence (*white, frothy*). Ask which words describe the current in the second sentence (*strong, too swift*). Guide students to notice that in the second sentence the descriptive words are at the end.
- **Check for understanding:** Have students work in pairs to reread page 8 and record all of the adjectives they find (*strong, salty, strange, vast, new*). Discuss the results as a group, identifying the nouns that each adjective describes.



Extend the discussion: Have students use the inside back cover of their book to write *adjective* and the definition of the term (a word describing a noun or pronoun that tells which one, how many, or what kind) to help them remember the terminology.

Word Work: Alphabetical order

- Review or explain the process of putting a list of words in alphabetical order by using the first, second, and third letter. Demonstrate how if the first letter of two words is the same to compare the second letters of each word instead. Repeat the demonstrations using the third letters of two similar starting words.
- Write the words *river* and *ocean* on the board. Have a volunteer explain which word would appear first in alphabetical order (*ocean*) and why (because *o* comes before *r* in the alphabet). Write the words *salty* and *seawater* on the board. Point out that the words begin with the same letter (*s*). Ask a volunteer to tell which word would appear first in alphabetical order and to explain his or her thinking (*salty*, because in looking at the second letters, *a* comes before *e*).
- Write the words *Kenya* and *Kenyan* on the board. Have a volunteer explain which word would appear first in alphabetical order (*Kenya*) and why. Point out that all of the letters in *Kenya* and *Kenyan* are the same except for the final *n*. Because there is no other letter to compare at the end of *Kenya*, it comes first in alphabetical order.
- **Check for understanding:** Write the words *mother* and *Mzee* on the board. Have a student come to the board and circle which word would appear first in alphabetical order. Point out that students must look at the second letter of these words to correctly alphabetize them.
- Have students complete the [alphabetization worksheet](#). Discuss answers aloud after they are finished.

Build Fluency

Independent Reading

- Allow students to read their book independently. Additionally, partners can take turns reading parts of the book to each other.

Home Connection

- Give students their books to take home to read with parents, caregivers, siblings, or friends.

Extend the Reading

Writing Connection

Have students expand upon [Owen and the Tortoise](#) by writing from the perspective of Owen's mother. Ask them to tell how her life was affected by the tsunami and what they think she did after losing Owen. Ask what they think Owen's mother's problem was and what her solution might have been.

Science Connection

Provide print and Internet resources for students to research the topic of tsunamis to find out more about these destructive natural occurrences. Ask them to find out how tsunamis happen, how powerful they can be, where they have occurred, and how they affect people and animals.

Skill Review

[Discussion cards](#) covering comprehension skills and strategies not explicitly taught with the book are provided as an extension activity. The following is a list of some ways these cards can be used with students:

- Use as discussion starters for literature circles.
- Have students choose one or more cards and write a response, either as an essay or as a journal entry.

Lesson Plan *(continued)***Owen and the Tortoise**

- Distribute before reading the book and have students use one of the questions as a purpose for reading.
- Cut apart and use the cards as game cards with a board game.
- Conduct a class discussion as a review before the book quiz.

Assessment**Monitor students to determine if they can:**

- consistently and successfully visualize as they read
- understand and effectively identify the problem and solution in the story
- successfully recognize adjectives and the nouns they describe
- understand the process of arranging words in alphabetical order

Comprehension Checks

- [Book Quiz](#)
- [Retelling Rubric](#)