



Superheroes of the Savannah

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Picture Book Shortlist

In the heart of the South African savannah, an unlikely duo comes together to show the true meaning of teamwork and friendship. When a timid bat-eared fox stumbles upon a fearless, gutsy honey badger, he decides to stick with him for protection. At first, the honey badger isn't thrilled about his new companion, but when trouble strikes, he soon discovers that his little sidekick has some surprising skills of his own.

Superheroes of Savannah is a lively and humorous picture book that brings to life the wonders of the African landscape through charming and relatable animal characters. It's not just a fun adventure - this story also sneaks in valuable lessons about empathy, teamwork, and the power of different talents coming together.

Teaching notes

These notes have been written by the Otto Foundation to provide teachers and caregivers with ideas to develop reading comprehension and support literacy skills. They encourage deep reading of the text and illustrations, which may happen over a series of reading sessions, not just one sitting.

These notes have been written with Grade R, 1, 2 and 3 readers in mind, but teachers and caregivers will need to adapt them to the age and experience of their readers.

Themes

- Friendship
- Adventure
- Empathy
- Courage
- Teamwork
- Creativity

Before reading the story

- Open up the discussion by allowing the children to share their initial responses to the front cover of the book. Encourage them to discuss what they see and their responses to it.
 - What do you notice about the cover illustration?
 - What does the cover illustration make you think about?
 - How does the cover illustration make you feel?
 - What do you like most about the cover illustration?

- Name the different animals on the cover.
- How do you think the animals on the front cover feel about one another? What makes you think this?
- Explain that the title of the book is **Superheroes of the Savannah**. Ask the children to share their thoughts about the title.
 - What is a **superhero**? Who do you think the **superheroes** in this story will be? What other **superheroes** can you name?
 - What is a **savannah**? Where would we find a **savannah** in South Africa?
 - Name the animals you might find in the **savannah**.
 - What do you think might happen in this story?
- Read the back cover blurb aloud. Explore how your children may change their ideas about the story now that they have more information.
 - How does reading the back cover blurb change what you thought might happen in the story?
 - What is a **bat-eared fox**?
 - What is a **honey badger**?
 - Why might a **bat-eared fox** want a **honey badger** for protection?
 - What are **useful skills**? What **useful skills** do you have? What **useful skills** do you think a bat-eared fox might have? Why do you think this?

Reading aloud discussion points

- On pages 1 – 2 we meet the bat-eared fox.
 - Look at the illustration on page 1 carefully. Which type of bird do you think the **dark shadow** belongs to?
 - Point to something **in front** of you, **behind** you and to the **right** of you.
 - How do you think the bat-eared fox felt as the shadow moved around him? Why do you think he felt this way?
 - What do you notice as being special about the bat-eared fox's ears?
 - What is unusual about the bat-eared fox's back legs? Do you think all bat-eared foxes would have back legs like this? Why or why not?
 - What sound do you think was coming out of the bat-eared fox's mouth in the illustration on page 2?
- On pages 3 – 4 an eagle tries to catch the bat eared fox.
 - Describe what was happening in the pictures on pages 3 – 4.
 - Do you think the **eagle** was dangerous? Why or why not?
 - Why do you think the bat-eared fox ran from the eagle?
- The honey badger saves the bat-eared fox from the eagle on pages 5 – 6.
 - The honey badger **appeared out of nowhere**. What does it mean to **appear out of nowhere**?
 - The honey badger and the bat-eared fox had two very different reactions to the eagle on page 5. Describe how the honey badger reacted to the eagle. Describe how the bat-eared fox reacted to the eagle.
 - There was a **whirlwind of feathers and fur** on page 6. What is a **whirlwind**? What do you think was happening inside the **whirlwind of feathers and fur** on page 6?

- On pages 7 – 8 the honey badger and bat-eared fox have a conversation.
 - The bat-eared fox called the honey badger **fierce**. What does it mean to be **fierce**? Why do you think the bat-eared fox thought the honey badger was **fierce**? Do you think the honey badger thought he was **fierce**? Why or why not?
 - Look at the illustration of the eagle on page 7. How do you think he was feeling after the whirlwind of feathers and fur? What about the illustration makes you say that?
 - The bat-eared fox wanted to ask the honey badger questions about his fierceness. What questions would you ask the honey badger about his fierceness?
 - The bat-eared fox heard an animal **hissing**. Make a **hissing**. Which animal that **hisses** do you think the bat-eared fox and honey badger will meet next?
- On pages 9 -12 the bat-eared fox and honey badger meet a green mamba.
 - What kind of animal is a **green mamba**? How did the bat-eared fox feel about meeting a **green mamba**? How would you feel if you met a **green mamba**?
 - The bat-eared fox felt that he **stood no chance** with a green mamba. What does it mean if you think you **stand no chance**? Do you think the bat-eared fox **stood a chance** with the green mamba? Why or why not?
 - Were you surprised when the honey badger attacked the green mamba? Why or why not?
- The bat-eared fox learns more about the honey badger on pages 13 – 14.
 - What is a **secret ninja**? Why do you think the bat-eared fox described the honey badger as a **secret ninja**? Do you think the honey badger felt he was a **secret ninja**? Why or why not?
 - The bat-eared fox imagined some skills the honey badger might have. What does he think he can do with **crocodiles, hippos** and **giraffes**? Which other savannah animals do you think the honey badger would be able to fight well?
 - The bat-eared fox was interrupted by a roaring sound. Which savannah animal roars?
- On pages 15 -18 the bat-eared fox and honey badger meet a pride of lions.
 - How many lions are in the illustration of a pride of lions on pages 15 – 18?
 - Look at the illustration of the bat-eared fox on page 15 and the honey badger on page 16. How are their responses to the pride of lions different?
 - The bat eared fox **froze**. What does it mean to **freeze**? Why do you think the bat eared fox **froze**? Ask your children to **freeze**.
 - The bat-eared fox thinks the honey badger would be **defenceless** against a pride of lions. What does **defenceless** mean? Do you think the honey badger is **defenceless** against the lions? Why or why not?
 - Describe the way the honey badger fights each of the lions in the illustrations on pages 17 – 18.
 - Look carefully at the pride of lions in the last illustration on page 18. How do you think the lions are feeling? What about the illustration makes you think this?
- The bat-eared fox announces he wants to stick with the honey badger on pages 19 – 20.
 - The bat-eared fox described the honey badger as **absolutely unbelievable**. What does it mean for something to be **absolutely unbelievable**? Why do you think the bat-eared fox described the honey badger as **absolutely unbelievable**?
 - The honey badger **sprinted** off. What does **sprinted** mean?

- Why do you think the bat-eared fox wanted to stick with the honey badger?
- On pages 21 – 24 the bat-eared fox visits the honey badger's den.
 - What is the special word used for the honey badger's home? (a den)
 - Look carefully at the illustrations of the honey badgers **den** on pages 21 – 22. Which other animals lived alongside the honey badger's **den**? (mole, meerkats, earthworm, ants and snails)
 - Do you think the bat-eared fox would be welcome in the honey badger's den? Why or why not?
 - Why do you think the honey badger fell asleep so quickly?
 - The bat-eared fox wanted to hear more about the honey badger's **other powers**. What **other powers** do you think the honey badger might have?
 - The bat-eared fox believes the honey badger would be able to fight off any danger. Can you name a danger that you think the honey badger might not be able to fight off?
 - The bat-eared fox has very large ears. What superpower do you think having large ears gave the bat-eared fox?
 - What do you think was happening when the bat-eared fox heard **cracking sounds**?
 - Look at the expression on the bat-eared fox's face in the illustration on page 24. How do you think he is feeling? Why do you think he feels that way?
- The bat-eared fox shows he is also a superhero from pages 25 – 30.
 - Describe what has happened in the illustration on pages 25 – 26.
 - Look at the expressions on the honey badger and the bat-eared fox's faces on page 26. How do you think they feel about the collapse of the den?
 - Name the other animals in the illustration on page 26. How do you think they are feeling about their homes collapsing too? What makes you think this?
 - On page 27 the honey badger called the bat-eared fox a **giant eared genius**. Why do you think the honey badger called the bat-eared fox a **giant eared genius**?
 - Why do you think the honey badger and the bat-eared fox will make a good team?
 - What do you think the bat eared fox's superpower is?
 - What do you think the honey badger's superpower is?

Topics for discussion after reading the story

- Ask your children:
 - What did you like most about this story?
 - Which superhero of the savannah was your favourite, the bat-eared fox or the honey badger? Why?
 - What is something you have learnt from reading this story?
 - If you were writing this story, what would happen to the superheroes of the savannah next?
 - Who do you think should read this story next and why would you recommend it to them?

Activity ideas for after reading the story

- Look at the illustrations on each page of the story. Ask your children to spot the blue bug hiding on each page.
- At the end of the story there is information shared about honey badgers and bat-eared foxes. Discuss this information with your children and ask them to draw an illustration to accompany each of the following facts:

Things you should know about honey badgers

- *Honey badgers are brainy*
- *They will eat just about anything*
- *They are fearless (but not mean)*
- *They are thick-skinned*
- *Watch out for the stink bomb!*

Things you should know about bat-eared foxes

- *They love eating termites*
 - *Their ears are ginormous*
 - *Males are babysitters*
 - *They are digging machines*
 - *They are on the menu of large predators*
- Brainstorm ideas with your children about other savannah animals who could also be superheroes. *Which animal would you choose? What would its superpower be? What adventure would it have?*

Please see the following pages for Grade specific CAPS aligned skills covered in these teaching notes.

CAPS skills covered in teaching notes

Listening and speaking

Grade R

- Listen to stories
- Listen and respond to simple questions
- Listen without interrupting
- Talk about pictures
- Participate in discussion and asks questions
- Ask questions
- Give explanations

Reading

Grade R

- Use pictures to predict what a story is about
- Predict what will happen in a story through pictures
- Recognise and point out common objects in pictures
- Interpret pictures
- Make up own story by 'reading' pictures
- Pretend to read
- Make links to own experience when reading with teacher
- Discuss and describe characters in a story
- Describe characters in stories and give opinion
- Answer questions based on the story read

Listening and speaking

Grade 1

- Listen to and express feelings about a story
- Listen without interrupting, taking turns to speak and asking questions of clarification
- Respond to pictures
- Listen to stories with interest and enjoyment, drawing on a picture to show understanding
- Listens for the detail in stories
- Talk about personal experiences and feelings
- Answer closed and open-ended questions
- Participate in discussions

Listening and speaking

Grade 2

- Listen to stories and answer higher-order questions
- Listen to a story with enjoyment and answer questions related to the story
- Listen to stories for a longer period with enjoyment
- Listen without interrupting showing respect for the speaker
- Use ever increasing vocabulary when answering questions
- Understand and use appropriate language in context
- Ask questions and comments on what was heard
- Talk about personal experience
- Express feelings about a story
- Answer closed and open-ended questions and justify answers
- Participate in discussions, asking and answering questions and suggesting ideas

Listening and speaking

Grade 3

- Listen for main ideas and detail in stories
- Listen to story for cause and effect
- Ask questions for clarification
- Express feelings and opinions about text and gives reasons
- Talk about personal experiences
- Answer open-ended questions and justify answer
- Answer higher order questions based on text
- Participate in discussion
- Engage in conversation as a social skill, accepting and respecting the way others speak
- Listen without interrupting

Reading

Grade 1

- Develop book handling skills (holding the book and turning pages correctly)
- Uses book cover to predict what a story is about
- Use pictures in the book for understanding
- Make up own story by 'reading' pictures
- Discuss a story identifying main idea and characters
- Ask questions related to a story told and read
- Recognise cause and effect in a story
- Give an opinion on what was read
- Answer open-ended questions based on text read
- Interpret information from pictures

Reading

Grade 2

- Read books as a class with teacher
- Use the cover of a book to predict what a story is about
- Use pictures in the book for understanding
- Identify key details in what was read, such as main characters and setting
- Express whether a story was liked and justify response
- Express personal response to a text read
- Give opinion on what was read
- Answer open ended questions based on text
- Answer higher order questions based on text read
- Recognise cause and effect in a story
- Describe main ideas in a text
- Identify key details in what was read
- Discuss different cultures represented in a story

Reading

Grade 3

- Read books as a class with teacher
- Discuss main idea, characters, plot and 'problem' in a text
- Answer a range of higher order questions based on text
- Express whether a story was liked and justify answer
- Interpret information from pictures
- Use illustrations in text to increase understanding