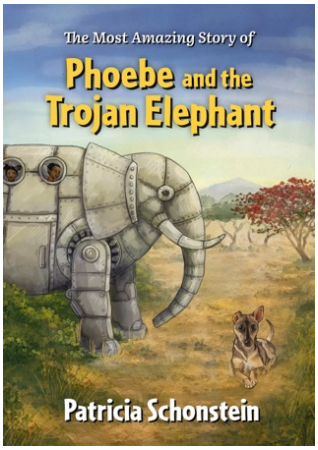


The Most Amazing Story of Phoebe and the Trojan Elephant

Author: Patricia Schonstein
Illustrator: Izak Vollgraaff
Publisher: African Sun Press

The Otto Foundation Children's Book Award 2026
Chapter Book Shortlist

This is a double adventure story in which the four members of the Cactus Crew - Jude, Vera, Dani and Rose - help in the rescue of a little dog whom they name Phoebe. With her help, they go on to save the last wild elephants which live in a secluded valley near their home.

This story is full of drama, danger, suspense and fun. It will help keep young readers enthralled and enchanted, while inspiring them to be kind to the Earth and all her creatures.

- African Sun Press

Teaching notes

These notes have been written by the Otto Foundation to provide teachers and caregivers with ideas to develop text 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 4, 5, 6 and 7 readers in mind, but teachers and caregivers will need to adapt them to the age and experience of their readers.

Themes

- Family and identity
- Community
- Friendship
- Environmental conservation
- Courage
- Overcoming prejudice

Before reading the story

- Open the discussion by allowing the children to share their initial responses to the front cover of the book. Encourage the children 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?*

- Explain that the title of the book is **The Most Amazing Story of Phoebe and the Trojan Elephant**. Make sure that the children can say the name, 'Phoebe' (Fee-bee).

- Ask the children to share their thoughts on the book cover.
  - *What kind of book do you think this is going to be, based on the title?*
  - *Is the elephant on the cover a real elephant? Why do you think this?* Explain what the word 'Trojan' means by pointing out the metal elephant with the children inside it on the cover: The idea is that something looks like something harmless but it is hiding a secret inside. In the original Greek story, soldiers hid inside a giant wooden horse. The enemy thought it was a gift, so they brought it through their gates. That night, the soldiers crept out of the wooden horse and won the battle. See page 147 for a further explanation of the Trojan Horse.
  - *Who is Phoebe? What do you notice about Phoebe?* Hint: Look at her ear
  - *Where do you think book takes place? What makes you think that?*
  - *What do you think might happen in this book?*

- Read the back cover blurb to the children. Explore how they might change their ideas about the story now that they have more information.
  - *How does reading the blurb change what you think might happen in this book?*
  - *What do you think the children will use the elephant to do in the story?*

Reading aloud discussion points

PART ONE

Chapter 1

- *The children live next door to one another. What can they hear from their houses if they are* **very quiet***?* They can hear elephants in the valley below.
- *How are* **Jude** and **Vera Ndlovu** *related to one another?*
- **Dani Rowland***'s mother works with* **Doc Liza***. Whose mother is* **Doc Liza***? What kind of doctor is* **Doc Liza***? What does* **Dani***'s mother do for* **Doc Liza***?*
- *What did* **Grampapi Hashe** *do to the* **three backyards***? How do you think it must be to live so near to your friends? Would you enjoy it? What kind of things would you do with your friends if you lived so close to one another?*
- Show the children the map of Disa Road at the beginning of the book. Ask them to compare it to the description of Disa Road on page 2.
- *What is your favourite part of Disa Road? Which house would you like to live in? Who would live there with you?*
- *At the end of the chapter, a* **forgotten** *gate is mentioned. Where do you think this gate leads to? What do you think is behind the gate?*

Chapter 2

- *Why do the friends call themselves* **The Cactus Crew***? Do you think this is a good name? What would you call your friendship group if you gave it a name? Why would you call it this?*

- *Who is* **Jack***? What does he like to do when the children are at school? What do you think your pet does while you are at school?*
- *One of the children's posters says* **Be Kind***. What does it mean to* **be kind***? Describe one act of kindness that you could do today.*
- *Where did* **Mister Lovemore** *get the clubhouse shed from? Who did he ask to come and do the repairs? What repairs did* **Gabor** *have to make?*
- **Gabor** *often starts his sentences with* **Ho! Ho!** *Who does this remind you of?* **Ho!Ho!** is an expression used by Father Christmas / Santa Claus. *What kind of voice do you think* **Gabor** *has? A deep voice or a high voice? He is described as a person who is* **always happy***. Can you act like Gabor and say* **Ho! Ho!** *in a happy deep voice?*
- *The children tell Gabor their ages. How old are they?*
- *Gabor says that the children are* **old enough to be brave about adventures***. Explain what Gabor means by this sentence. Do you think the children are old enough for adventures? What kind of adventures do you think children who are 9 to 11 years old should have?*
- *Why did the* **Cactus Crew** *write* **thank-you letters***? When should people write* **thank-you letters***? Have you ever written a* **thank-you letter***? What did you write it for? Who did you give it to? If you could write a* **thank-you letter** *to someone today, who would you write it to and why?*

Chapter 3

- *Do the children live in a city? What makes you think that?*
- **Gramami** *asks if there are enough eggs for an* **omelette***. Why do you think she would need more than four eggs to make an* **omelette***? What kind of eggs do you like: boiled, scrambled, fried, omelette?*
- *There are* **six hens** *and* **four eggs***. How many eggs would you expect to get from* **six hens***? What does Gramami think has happened to the missing two eggs?*
- *What does* **Grampapi** *love to do as much as gardening? What kind of person do you think* **Grampapi** *is? Why do you think this? Do you know other grown-ups like* **Grampapi***? What do you like about them?*
- *Who does* **Grampapi** *say he is when he stands on* **The Stage Carpet Theatre***? Who is* **William Shakespeare***?* William Shakespeare wrote plays and lived a long time ago. He was also an actor. Shakespeare's plays were famous when he was alive, but they are still famous and performed even now, 400 years later.
- *Sista Jo says that Grampapi* **is a marvel***. What do you think she means?* When you call someone a **marvel**, you are saying that they are wonderful or marvellous, and that they are always doing things that are surprising and exciting. *Is it a good thing to be a* **marvel***? How would you feel if someone called you a* **marvel***?*
- *Grampapi says that* **everyone is an actor***. Do you agree? Why do you agree or disagree? Do you think that watching plays can help us understand the world and people a bit better? Have you ever seen a play or performance (even on television) that changed the way you think? How did it make you think differently?*

Chapter 4

- *The children* **strolled** *to the Cactus Animal Clinic. Do you think they were in a hurry? Why or why not? What kind of walk is a* **stroll***?* A **stroll** is a slow walk that is relaxed and casual.
- *Why were the children going to the Cactus Animal Clinic?*

- *What did the children do to safely cross the road at the traffic light?*
- *A lady rushes into the clinic. What does she tell Sista Jo she has found? What does Sista Jo grab on her way out of the clinic to help the animal that the lady has found?*
- *What has happened to the puppy? How does this part of the story make you feel?*
- *Sista Jo lifted the dog* **very gently**. *What does the word* **gently** *mean? Why did Sista Jo act gentle with the dog?*
- *Sista Jo tells the girls to* **run back and tell Doc Liza we're bringing an emergency**. *If something is an* **emergency**, *what does it mean? Have you ever been in an* **emergency**? *What kind of* **emergency** *was it? What did you do? Who helped you? How did it feel to be in the middle of an* **emergency**?
- *Why does Doc Liza tell the children to* **go home to the Gramparents**? *Do you think it is better for children to be away from terrible events, especially when they cannot help? Why or why not?*
- *Doc Liza opens the blanket and says that it* **will be best to put her to sleep**. *What does this mean?* To **put an animal to sleep** means to give an animal a special medicine that helps them to pass away quietly and without pain. *Have you ever had to put a pet* **to sleep**? *Do you think this was a kind thing to do? Why or why not?*
- *What does the dog do that makes Doc Liza change her mind about putting her to sleep?*
- *Doc Liza says:* **"These are cruel injuries"**. *What does* **cruel** *mean? Why does she mean by saying the dog's injuries are cruel?*
- *How do you feel at the end of this chapter? Why? What do you think will happen to the dog? What do you hope happens to the dog?*

Chapter 5

- *How do the children feel about what they saw at the animal clinic? How would you feel if you had seen that?*
- *What do the children name the kittens that they are looking after? What would you have called the kittens? How did their cat, Jack, respond to the kittens?*
- *Gramami seems surprised when she finds out who hurt the dog. She says:* **"Are you sure? Not those gangster big boys near the shebeen?"** *Why do you think she is so surprised?*
- *Do you think the boys who hurt the dog have a different life to the Cactus Crew? In what ways do you think their lives differ?*
- *Mister Lovemore tells Grampapi that he knows the* **watchman** *(the person the children live with). What does he say about the* **watchman** *and the children?*
- *Grampapi says:* **"Life has many sorrows but it's very wrong to teach children to be cruel".** *What do you think this means? Do you agree that people can be kind no matter what kind of life they have? Why or why not?*
- *Why is it important that the dog's nose is* **dry**? Healthy dogs have wet noses. If the dog's nose is dry, it means that she is very ill.
- *The next morning, Doc Liza says:* **"She's made it!".** *Who is 'she'? What does 'made it' mean?*

Chapter 6

- *Mister Lovemore visits* **Sargeant Mdoko** *at the police station. What has* **Sargeant Mdoko** *already done about the people who harmed the dog?*
- *Why did the* **watchman** *hurt the dog?*

- *Mr Lovemore goes to the taxi rank and gets on a taxi. Where is he going? What do you think he will do when he gets there?*
- *Do you think the boys are to blame for the incident with the dog?* **Matron Charity** *says that she does* **not think they wanted to hurt the dog**. *Mister Lovemore says that it is* **child abuse**. *Why do you think they are being so understanding towards the children? Do you agree with their opinion? Why or why not?*
- *The boys who harmed the dog are* **orphans**. *What does it mean to be an* **orphan***?* If you are an **orphan** it means that both your parents have died. *Who do you think should look after orphans? Do you think that orphans can still live in loving and safe homes with grown-ups who care for them and love them? Explain why you think this?*

Chapter 7

- *Mister Lovemore asks the boys some questions. Why do you think the boys* **look at the floor and do not answer***?*
- *Mister Lovemore and Matron Charity promise to help the boys become* **kind and good**. *Do you believe that the boys will be* **kind and good***? Why do you think this?*

Chapter 8

- *How is* **Coco Chuma** *related to* **John and Elvis Chuma***?*
- *According to* **Coco Chuma**, *what happened to John and Elvis' parents? Who did they leave the children with?*
- *What reasons does* **Coco Chuma** *give for not being able to care for John and Elvis?*
- *Matron Charity says:* **"We must work together to get these boys into a state of happiness"**. *What does this say about John and Elvis' life? Do you think that if they were happy and safe, they would have done a cruel thing? How do you feel about John and Elvis? How do you think grown-ups could help John and Elvis live a better life?*

Chapter 9

- *Mister Lovemore and Gabor go to* **Aunty Coco***'s* **cottage in Camp Road**. *Describe* **Aunty Coco***'s* **cottage**. *Why is her front garden* **covered in gravel***?*
- *What do Mister Lovemore and Gabor bring along to help Aunty Coco take care of John and Elvis? What other* **renovations** *does Gabor do to the cottage?* (Renovations are changes made to a building that is already built. It usually entails building an extra room or, in this case, painting and fixing a building to look better)
- *How does Mister Lovemore offer to help Aunty Coco once a week?*
- *How do you know John and Elvis are happy to be with Aunty Coco and that they feel safe in her cottage? Do you think John and Elvis slept well on their first night at her cottage? How would you feel if you were always unsafe and sad, and then a kind grown-up gave you a healthy meal and a safe place to sleep?*

Chapter 10

- *Mister Lovemore tells Sargeant Mboko that he was* **swamped by *issues***. *What does to be* **swamped** *mean?* A **swamp** is filled with deep mud, so to be **swamped** means that you cannot seem to get out of whatever is troubling you.
- *Sargeant Mboko tells Mister Lovemore about* **Incident Number Two**, *which he describes as* **puzzling**. *What does it mean when something is* **puzzling***?* When something is **puzzling** it means that it is like a puzzle. It is a mystery that must be solved.
- *Why did Sargeant Mboko never post a reply to the* **travelling circus** *in* **Gloriville***?*
- *What arrived on the train? What is it made of? How big is it? What is special or unusual about it?*
- *The elephant comes from a* **circus***? What is a* **circus***? Have you ever been to a* **circus***? What kinds of things did you see there?*
- *What does Sargeant Mboko want Mister Lovemore to do with the metal elephant?*
- *Why is Sargeant Mboko* **getting a headache***?*
- *Mister Lovemore calls the elephant* **extraordinary**. *What does the word* **extraordinary** *mean?* Break down the word: extra + ordinary. **Extraordinary** means beyond the ordinary, or very special.
- *Both Mister Lovemore and Sargeant Mboko remember a teacher called* **Mrs Wanda**. *What does this tell you about Mister Lovemore and Sargeant Mboko, their ages, and where they grew up?*
- *Sargeant Mboko says that there is a* **possible Incident Number Three coming up**. *What do you think the possible incident is?*

Chapter 11

- *Who does Sargeant Mboko instruct to get the circus elephant to Mister Lovemore's house? Do you think the* **young constable** *is surprised to be asked to do this? What makes you think this?*
- *One of the* **push-buttons** *says* **Push Trumpet**. *What do you think this button does?*
- *What colour button makes the ears of the elephant flap? What colour button makes the trunk lift up?*
- *Why does* **Constable Smit** *do that makes Sergeant Mboko* **leap backwards and nearly fall over***?*
- **Constable Smit** *asks if he should work out what the buttons do. Sergeant Mboko says no. Who does he suggest should work out the buttons? Do you think the children's families will be pleased about this suggestion?*
- *Why does* **Constable Smit feel great** *while driving the elephant to Disa Road? How would you react if you saw an enormous metal elephant coming down the road?*
- **Constable Smit** *says:* ***"This was the best thing I've done since joining the police!".*** *Why is this a funny thing for him to say?* It is **Constable Smit's** first day on the job, so he has not done much else.
- **Constable Smit** *tells Gramami to look inside the elephant and that* **you could sleep in there**. *What does this tell you about the size of the inside of it?*
- *What does Gramami give* **Constable Smit** *before he leaves? What does this tell you about the kind of person that Gramami is?*

Chapter 12

- *Sista Jo tells the children that* **something marvellous** *is waiting for them at home. Do you think the children are expecting to see the elephant? If you were told that there was* **something marvellous** *waiting for you at home, what would you expect to see?*
- *Do you think the dog is feeling better? What makes you think this? What does it mean when a dog wags its tail?*
- *What is another word for a* **satchel***?* A bag/backpack/A school bag
- *Why does Mister Lovemore say* **Woh! Woh! Woh!** *when the children run home and see the elephant in the yard?*
- *What have Grampapi and Mister Lovemore done to make sure the elephant is safe? What does* **thoroughly** *mean?* To do something **thoroughly** means to do it very well or carefully.
- *What difference does Grampapi give between the* **Trojan Horse** *and the* **Trojan Elephant***? What word does Grampapi use to describe the fact that the elephant can be* **driven***? (ambulatory. What does the word* **ambulatory** *remind you of? Can you try to work out why an ambulance is called that, based on the word* **ambulatory***?* **Ambulatory** refers to moving people from place to place in a vehicle.
- *Mister Lovemore tells the children to* **be careful** *and to* **think of** [the elephant] **as a small van***. Do you think it is a good idea for the children to be driving the elephant? Why or why not? Give reasons why it may not be a good idea for children to be driving something that is like* **a small van***. What measures do the grown-ups put in place to help keep the children safe? Are there any other safety tips or measures that you would add?*
- *What happens when the children push* **Push Net** *and the* **red push-button** *together? What does* **Rose** *suggest the net might be used for during a circus performance? What do you think the children could use the net to do?*

Chapter 13

- *The first paragraph describes the passing of time. What are the two ways the authors shows that time has passed?*
- *Why does Doc Liza allow the children to visit with the puppy? Do you think this is a good idea? Why or why not?*
- *Doc Liza tells the children that they can take the puppy home. She says that she is* **through the woods***. What do you think this expression means?* To be **through the woods** means to be out of danger; the dogs health has improved enough that she is no longer at risk of dying.
- *Look at the picture on page 48. Can you name each of the characters?*
- *What has Gramami made for the puppy to eat? Why do you think the puppy needs* **soft food***? What do dogs usually eat?*
- *How does Gramami react to seeing the puppy for the first time? What does this say about how she feels about animals and dogs?*
- *Who gives the puppy her name,* **Phoebe***? How do you know that* **Phoebe** *likes her new name?*
- *The children and gramparents work out that Disa Road has* **pets a-plenty***. Name the* **fifteen** *pets they all have between them. How many pets do you have? What kinds of animals are they? What kind of pet would you love to have? What would you call your pet?*

Chapter 14

- *Doc Liza explains to the children how to care for Phoebe. What is a* **flashback***?* A **flashback** is when you remember something bad that happened to you and feel afraid again. *What does Doc Liza tell the children to do when Phoebe has a* **flashback***? What would help you if you felt afraid because of a memory?*
- *Gabor shows the Cactus Crew* **how to oil all the moving parts** *of the Trojan elephant. Why is this important? How often should the children do this?*
- *Why do Grampapi and the Cactus Crew think that the* **wild elephants** *in* **Elephant Valley** *are able to sense the Trojan elephant?*
- *What are the children working on, other than spending time with Trojan? What does it mean to* **rehearse***?* To **rehearse** means to practise something regularly.
- *The children are caring for an injured crow. What is wrong with the crow? What do the children name him? Why do they call him this? What name would you give a clever crow?*
- *What is special about crows? Why is it important to be kind and friendly to crows?*
- *Grampapi shows the children a bright star in the sky. What is the star's actual name? What else is the star called? Who do they decide the star belongs to?*
- *Who does Grampapi suggest they invite to visit them and Phoebe? What do the children promise to do when John and Elvis come to visit? What do they decide to give John and Elvis?*
- *Who will make the* **badges** *for the children? Look at the picture on page 55. What does the badge say? If you could make a badge, what would it say?*

Chapter 15

- *How many people come* **for lunch on the last Sunday of the school holidays***?*
- *What did* **Matron Charity** *bring along? Where did she buy it? What reason does she give for not baking it herself?*
- *What does* **Aunty Coco** *bring along? What does she say about the invitation? What does it mean if someone says* **it's an honour***?* When something is an **honour** it means that they feel very lucky and special.
- *Why does* **John** *cry when he holds Phoebe? Do you think Phoebe forgives John and Elvis? What makes you think this?*
- *When the Cactus Crew show their guests Trojan, John* **took hold of Matron Charity's hand**. *Why do you think he does this? What does Matron Charity say to make him feel safe?*
- *Do you think John and Elvis enjoyed the ride? Why do you think this?*
- *Doc Liza says that their lunch is* **much better** *than lunch at the* **posh Empire Hotel**. *Do you think a homecooked meal is better than eating at a restaurant? Why or why not?*
- *After lunch, Sergeant Mboko begins to tell the story of how the Trojan elephant ended up in their town. Aunty Coco says:* **"We are all ears"**. *What does this expression mean?* **We are all ears** means that they are listening closely.

Chapter 16

- *There are 14 people at lunch but Jude can only cut 12 slices of the cake that are the same size. How do they solve the problem?* You can ask the children to draw the cake and the slices, and write names for the people who get full slices (Gramami, Grampapi,

Sergeant Mboko, Aunty Coco, John, Elvis, Jude, Dani, Vera, Rose) and the four who get half slices (Matron Charity, Doc Liza, Sista Jo, Mister Lovemore).
- *Sista Jo notices that the pets seem to like John and Elvis. Matron Charity says:* **"Animals know a good person when they see one"**. *Do you think this is true? Why do you think this? Why is it important that* **Phoebe was curled up on John's lap***?*

Chapter 17

- *Grampapi and the Cactus Crew do a play for all of the lunch guests. What scene do they act out? How do you think this made John and Elvis feel?*
- *What is the main message of the play Grampapi and the Cactus Crew perform?*
- *Grampapi says that being an actor is* **magical**. *He says:* **"You can be anybody! And then be yourself again".** *Have you ever acted in a play? Did you enjoy it? Say why or why not.*
- *How can plays and acting help people understand issues and events better? Have you ever watched a play, a movie, or a television show that has made you think differently? Explain your answer.*
- *Doc Liza gives John and Elvis a very special gift. She gives them* **a small, golden puppy**. *What do they name the puppy? If you could give John and Elvis advice on how to care for the puppy, what would you say?*
- *Doc Liza gives Jinja and Teddy to Matron Charity* **for the children to look after**. *Do you think having animals to care for can be a good thing for children? What kinds of lessons does looking after pets teach people? Do you have a pet? Do you think it makes you more caring and kind? Explain your answer.*

Chapter 18

- *When everybody leaves, Gramami says:* **"There is nothing like a day of feasting and friends to make life very good"**. *Do you agree with Gramami? Say why you think this. Describe your perfect day - who is there? what are you doing? is there food? if so, what kind of food?*
- **Smarty** *does something that no one sees. What is it? What does it tell you about his injury?*
- *This is the end of Part One of the book. Give a short summary about what has happened in the story so far. What do you think will happen in Part Two?*

PART TWO

Chapter 1

- *Part Two starts with* **the first day of the school holidays**. *Gramami is making breakfast for the Cactus Crew. What do the Cactus Crew usually eat for breakfast before school? What does Gramami offer to make the Cactus Crew today? If you could eat any kind of breakfast, what would it be?*
- *The Cactus Crew explain their plan for the day to Gramami and Grampapi, who says:* **"That sounds like a good day in the making"**. *What is your perfect day? What would you do on the first day of school holidays if you could do anything?*

- *The children talk to and about Trojan as though he is a real elephant. What does this tell you about how they feel about Trojan. Do you have an inanimate* (not alive) *object at home that you treat as a living thing? Do you talk to it? What do you say to it?*
- *At the end of Part One,* **Smarty** *flew for the first time since becoming injured. Now he shows the Cactus Crew that he can fly. How do the children feel about this?*
- *The children will be* **home alone for the whole day**. *Where are all the grown-ups? Explain where each grown up will be: Doc Liza, Mister Lovemore, Sista Jo and the Gramparents.*
- *The children discuss Elephant Valley. Jude and Vera say that they* **heard a shot last night**. *What do they mean? What do you call* **hunters** *that are not allowed to hunt animals in a specific place but do it illegally anyway?* (poachers)
- **Smarty** *leads the children to a specific place in the garden. What does he show them? Where does the gate go? The children think that* **Grampapi definitely doesn't know about this gate**. *Do you think Grampapi knew about the gate? Why do you think this?*

Chapter 2

- *What birds do the children see* ***circling*** *through the binoculars that makes them realise that something is wrong or strange? Why would* **vultures circling** *be a sign that something is wrong or strange? What do* **vultures** *eat?*
- *The children spot a dead elephant through the binoculars. What is missing from the elephant's body? How do the children feel when they see the dead elephant? How did you feel when you read this part of the story?*
- *How does Phoebe react to the children being on the other side of the gate? Why do you think Phoebe reacts this way? Do you think the children should pay attention to Phoebe and come inside the gate?*
- *Once everyone is safely back inside, Phoebe and Jack go* **into the clubhouse and sat with Actor Sam**. *Why do you think the pets do this? Do your pets have a spot in the house where they feel safe? Where do you go if you want to feel safe and calm?*
- *Grampapi says that he does know about the fence. Why did he* **let the gate get covered***?*

Chapter 3

- *The next day, the children do all of their chores. However,* **Grampapi was worried**. *Why do you think Grampapi felt worried?*
- *After chores, the children go to the clubhouse. What do they do there? Why do you think they are trying to learn more about elephants?*
- *Jude reads about elephants. What does the word* **matriarch** *mean?* A **matriarch** is a woman who is in charge of a family; she makes important decisions about the family.
- *How do the children suggest Grampapi cut up the* **spinach pie***?* Encourage the children to draw a circle and follow the children's instructions to make six slices.
- *Rose asked Grampapi how they can be* **brave**. *What does* **brave** *mean? Read Grampapi's reply:* **"It's simple. Every morning when you wake up, tell yourself that you are brave".** *Do you think it is that* **simple** *to be brave? What would you tell Rose about being brave?*
- *Grampapi encourages the Cactus Crew to use Trojan to get close to the elephant herd in the valley. Why do you think this is a smart idea?*

- *Do you think that Mister Lovemore is paying attention to what the children are saying? Why do you think this?*
- *The Cactus Crew come up with a plan on how to approach the elephants without scaring them. What is their plan?*
- *Do you think it is a good idea for the children to go to into the valley to be with the elephants? What do you think could go wrong? What could happen if the poachers see them?*

Chapter 4

- *Why does* **Rose** *decide to stay behind?*
- *How do you think* **Phoebe** *is feeling about the children going off into Elephant Valley in Trojan? Explain her behaviour.*
- *Where does Phoebe go after John and Elvis arrive with Yogi?*

Chapter 5

- *Phoebe ends up following Trojan without them knowing. Why do you think she is doing this?*
- *The Cactus Crew give the* **matriarch** *a name. What is it? How do they know she is the matriarch? The name* **Luna** *relates to the moon. Do you think this is a good name for an elephant matriarch? Why do you think this?*
- *Why do the children become nervous when they see* **Mars coming towards the spot***? What does Mars do? What do the children realise they need to do? Where do you think the elephants are leading Trojan to?*
- *What do the elephants show Trojan? What does this tell you about these elephants and what they feel and remember? Vera says that she feels* **so sad** *for the elephants because they have lost a member of their family. How does this part of the story make you feel? Why?*
- *Why can the children not go home? Do you think they made a good decision by staying overnight in Elephant Valley?*
- *The children name all of the elephants in the herd. What is the theme of their names?* (They all relate to space and planets)
- *Why do all the animals at the watering hole run away back* **into the bushes***? Do you think what the children are doing is safe? Why or why not? What do you think would happen if the* **hunters** *saw the Cactus Crew?*

Chapter 6

- *The children watch people sitting around the campfire. Who do you think is the boss or the one in charge? How do you know this?*
- *The woman the children call* **Badbag** *brags about her* **little gun**. **Fatman** *tells her that she should not be carrying it and that it is* **not a toy**. *What does this expression (not a toy) mean? Do you agree with Fatman? Why or why not? Can you think of other items that are not toys, and that children should be careful with?*
- *Vera goes into the tent where the staff sleep and also prepare the food. She works out that the hunters are planning to stay* **for a week**. *How do you think she worked this out?*

- *How do Dani and Vera realise that Jude may be in trouble? What do they decide to do about it? What would you do?*

Chapter 7

- *Jude has been captured and is listening to the hunters talk about him. They say that they will* **rough him up a bit tomorrow**. *What does it mean to* **rough up** *someone?* To **rough someone up** means to beat them up so that they are scared and mildly injured.
- *Jude feels* **afraid**. *Do you think Jude regrets coming alone to Fatman's tent? How would you feel if you were in Jude's position?*
- *How do you think Jude feels when he realises that* **Phoebe** *is there with him?*
- *How did* **Rose, John and Elvis** *know that there was trouble? How did they know where to find the hunters?*

Chapter 8

- *Fatman tells Badbag that they must walk. He says that hunting is* **Walk. Stalk. Shoot.** *What does it mean to* **stalk** *something?* To **stalk** something means to follow it quietly without it noticing that you are behind it.
- *What type of person do you think Badbag is? How do you feel when you read what she is saying and doing? What would you say to Badbag if you met her?*
- *The hunters shoot a hole into Trojan. When Mars sees the hole in the elephant, he becomes* **confused**. *Why is Mars* **confused***? How do Vera and Dani help Mars understand that they are his friends?*
- *Who went back to fetch Grampapi? How did you feel when* **Grampapi, Rose and Elvis** *arrived at the camp with* **Sergeant Mboko***?*
- *When the grown-ups arrive,* **Guts and Tripe** *are polite and offer Sergeant Mboko breakfast. They tell him that they are hosting a* **photo safari**. *To this, Sergeant Mboko says:* **"I was not born yesterday"**. *What does he mean by this?* This expression means that a person is not young and gullible. He has seen enough in his life to know when he is being lied to.
- *How does Sergeant Mboko know that any permit the hunters show him will be* **fake***?*
- *Sergeant Mboko tells the children that he is* **not pleased**. *Why do you think he is* **not pleased***? How would you react if you were a police officer and you found out that children were taking matters like this into their own hands?*
- *How do the elephants thank the children?*

Chapter 9

- *Why was it more difficult to drive Trojan out of Elephant Valley than it was driving him into Elephant Valley? How did the children solve this problem?*
- *Who does Grampapi call to come and repair Trojan?*
- *Sergeant Mboko thanks the children but also scolds them. In Sergent Mboko's opinion, what did the children do wrong? What do you think the children should have done instead of trying to solve Incident Number Three themselves?*
- *What happened to the poachers? Do you think their punishment was fair? If you were a judge, what sentence would you give them for what they did to the elephants?*

Chapter 10

- *What was the next play that Grampapi and the children put on? Who played which characters in the play?*

Chapter 11

- *Why does Grampapi* **sing praise and give cheer** *to Phoebe?*
- *Why does Jude call Rose* **the Brave One***? What does this tell you about whatit means to be* **brave***?*
- *Grampapi points out the constellation* **Orion** *in the sky. How do you spot* **Orion** *in the sky?*
- *What surprising thing happens at the end of the book? Why is it surprising that* **Trojan trumpeted, all on his own***?*

Topics for discussion after reading the story

- Explore with your children:
  - *Who is your favourite character in the book? Why is this your favourite character?*
  - *Is there anything you particularly liked or disliked about this story?*
  - *Has anything that happened in this book ever happened to you?*
  - *What is something you have learnt from this story?*
  - *If the author asked you what could be improved in the book, what would you say?*
  - *What would you tell your friends about this book?*

Activity ideas for after reading the story

- Throughout the book, Grampapi and the Cactus Crew use their Stage Carpet Theatre to perform plays.

  Ask the children to perform a play
  - Choose a scene from the book and write it as a short play with dialogue, stage directions and a brief description of each character
  - Rehearse and perform a chosen scene for the class

- The book opens with a map of Disa Road, showing the homes of all the characters and the places that matter to them.

  Ask the children to draw their own map of where they live
  - Draw their street, their block, or the area around their school
  - Label the homes, shops, trees and landmarks that feel important
  - Add a short note about why each place matters to them
  - Display the maps and encourage discussion around different neighbourhoods

- In the story, the Cactus Crew discover that elephants in Elephant Valley are being poached. Ask your children to choose a South African animal that is under threat and create an awareness poster.

  The poster should include the following information:
  - The name of the animal
  - Where the animal lives
  - Why the animal is endangered
  - What people can do to help protect the animal

  Display the posters as a class wildlife awareness exhibition and give learners the chance to present their animal to the class.

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 4

- Predict what a text could be about
- Identify characters
- Name characters correctly
- Listen for main message and specific details
- Describe events
- Identify specific details
- Discuss main ideas and specific details
- Express feelings in relation to events
- Express thoughts and feelings about a story/characters/setting or theme of a text
- Relate to own life experiences
- Answer oral questions based on the text
- Participate in group discussions
- Take turns to speak
- Share ideas, opinions and participate in the discussion
- Ask relevant questions
- Keep to the topic
- Maintain discussions
- Respond to others' ideas with empathy and respect

Reading and viewing

Grade 4

- Pre reading: Make predictions for the title and cover of the text
- Predict from title and discuss related themes/content
- Make predictions
- Identify and explain central events
- Identify and comment on the plot, setting and characters
- Discuss characters
- Give reasons for the actions of characters
- Give and explain own feelings about the text
- Express emotional response to text read
- Identify and discuss values in the text
- Use reading strategies: Make predictions and use contextual cues
- Use contextual cues to make meaning
- Discuss message/moral of the story
- Reflect on text read
- Infer meaning of unfamiliar words and images
- Use reading comprehension strategies: Visualisation and making connections
- Determine the impact of visual techniques
- Discuss new vocabulary from the text
- Understand vocabulary

Listening and speaking

Grade 5

- Make predictions
- Describe events
- Identify and explain cause and effect
- Comment on social, moral and cultural values
- Ask critical questions
- Express and justify own opinion with reasons
- Use information from the text in response to questions
- Identify main ideas and specific details
- Identify central idea, plot, setting and characters
- Relate text content to own life
- Discuss and give own opinion
- Express thoughts and feelings about the storyline
- Participate in group discussions
- Ask relevant questions
- Justify own opinion
- Maintain discussion
- Take turns to speak
- Respond to others' ideas with empathy and respect

Reading and viewing

Grade 5

- Pre reading: Predict from title and pictures and discuss related themes/content
- Comment on choice of pictures in text
- Share ideas and offers opinion using speculation
- Use reading strategies: Contextual clues and prior knowledge
- Discuss characters
- Give reason for actions of characters
- Discuss the central idea, plot, characters and setting
- Discuss cause and effect in the story
- Identify and discuss feelings expressed in text
- Express own feelings and opinion
- Identify and explain how central events and characters relate to own life
- Infer the meaning of unfamiliar words and images
- Discuss new vocabulary from text

Listening and speaking

Grade 6

- Predict what will happen in a story
- Discuss main ideas and specific details
- Identify themes
- Discuss characters
- Discuss plot, conflict and setting
- Discuss messages in text
- Discuss responses to text
- Discuss social, moral and cultural values in text
- Relate ideas to own life experiences
- Ask relevant questions and respond appropriately
- Stay on topic
- Explain logically
- Interact positively during group discussions
- Respond to others' ideas with empathy and respect

Reading and viewing

Grade 6

- Pre reading: Make predictions based on title and/or graphics and related themes/content
- Make predictions about the text
- Ask questions about the text
- Make inferences about the text
- Visualise parts of the text
- Identify and explain the central idea
- Interpret and discuss the text
- Discuss plot, theme, setting and characters
- Discuss suspense and twist
- Critically discusses cultural and social values in the text
- Relate events and characters to own life
- Show understanding of the text and relationship to own life
- Identify and discuss feelings expressed in text
- Express emotional response to texts read
- Identify different perspectives
- Give own perspective based on evidence in the text
- Infer meaning of unfamiliar words and images
- Invent or describe preferred results or endings

Listening and speaking

Grade 7

- Make predictions from cover page and blurb
- Confirm predictions
- Identify main and supporting ideas

Reading and viewing

Grade 7

- Make predictions
- Make connections

- Make inferences
- Share ideas and experiences to show understanding of concepts
- Share ideas and opinions
- Identify characters
- Identify main and supporting ideas
- Use appropriate language
- Answer questions

- Identify key features of a text such as characters, plot, setting, conflict, theme and message
- Discuss main ideas and themes
- Discuss fact or opinion in text
- Infer meaning of unfamiliar words
- Infer meaning and conclusions
- Visualise parts of the text
- Identify formal/informal language in the text
- Answer questions based on text