

How Bizarre

Title	Genre	Summary	Aspects of theme explored
Manatees – Cows of the Sea	Report	This report describes manatees and examines ways people can ensure the survival of this endangered animal.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • an endangered animal • historical explanation • making connections between real and mythical animals
Night Mission	Poem	The night comes alive in this poem about a mysterious creature exploring its nocturnal world.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • a creature with unusual abilities and attributes • the element of surprise • action
Amazing Animals	Journal (Recount)	These journal extracts describe the work of a nature photographer. In his travels, he has encountered some amazing animals.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • interactions between people and rare and unusual animals • close-up photographs of unusual features
Welcoming the Phoenix	Narrative	The legend of the phoenix comes to life for two children.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • a mythical animal • a vivid description of flight • supernatural phenomena
Survival Tactics	Report	This report examines some animals' adaptations for surviving in the wild.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • animal survival tactics • wild animals in their natural environment

Suggestions for using *How Bizarre*

Guided reading

See the following lesson plans.

Theme studies

This book could be used as part of a theme study on weird and wonderful animals, including their characteristics and behaviour and how they interact with their environment.

- Introduce the theme and look at the contents page with the students. Discuss the different genres. Ask the students to read the item summaries and discuss the way each piece relates to the main theme. The students could choose one of the items to begin the theme study.
- Use the whole book or items from it in your content-area teaching.
- Use 'Survival Tactics' or 'Amazing Animals' to engage the students in discussion about how animals are adapted to their environment. Explore how special adaptations make these animals weird and wonderful.

- Use the Find Out More section as a springboard for further independent research.

Text comparisons

The narrative 'Welcoming the Phoenix' and the report 'Manatees – Cows of the Sea' will allow the students to compare the qualities and behaviours of real and mythical animals. They can also identify the features that make a text believable.

Shared reading

Any of the double-page spreads in 'Amazing Animals' or the poem 'Night Mission' are suitable to enlarge for shared reading.

Independent reading

'Welcoming the Phoenix' can be used for independent reading for pleasure or to encourage the students to think about unconventional ways to write myths.

Manatees – Cows of the Sea

This report describes manatees and examines ways we can ensure their survival.

Features of the text

- Diagrams
- Specialised vocabulary
- Comparisons
- Descriptive language
- Subheadings

Purpose

'Manatees – Cows of the Sea' can be used to introduce and reinforce the following skills:

- making connections;
- analysing word meaning;
- examining the different ways that information can be presented;
- identifying the main ideas and supporting detail.

Introducing the text

Select one or more of these discussion starters:

- *Why do you think some animals are endangered?*
- *What important ideas would be covered in a report about an unusual animal?*
- *Discuss the purpose of presenting information in different ways.*

Reading and discussing the text

Use some of the following suggestions to guide the students through the text:

- *How can using a glossary help us make connections to our background knowledge?*
- *Look at page 8. Why do you think the life cycle of a manatee is shown as a diagram?*
- *Read the rest of the text. Discuss a main idea in this report. (relatives, diet, survival) Find a detail that supports that idea.*

Following up

The students can:

- choose a sentence under each subheading that summarises that section
- research and describe an ideal sanctuary for manatees
- use the information at the top of page 5 to create a diagram.

Night Mission

The night comes alive in this poem about a mysterious creature exploring its nocturnal world.

Features of the text

- Poem
- Figurative language – simile, alliteration, onomatopoeia, repetition
- Action verbs

Purpose

'Night Mission' can be used to introduce and reinforce the following skills:

- identifying the features of a poem;
- analysing the author's craft;
- reading aloud with fluency and expression;
- using the text as a model for writing.

Introducing the text

Select one or more of these discussion starters:

- *What features differentiate a poem from a story?*
- *Which rules of writing do poets sometimes ignore?*
- *Why might a writer describe an animal's motion through poetry rather than prose?*

Reading and discussing the text

Use some of the following suggestions to guide the students through the text:

- *Look at the title and the photograph. What other titles might be suitable for this poem?*
- *Which phrase created the most vivid image in your mind? How did the author achieve this effect?*

Following up

The students can:

- practise reading the poem with fluency and expression in small groups
- write a poem combining their own ideas with their favourite lines from 'Night Mission'
- write a poem about a different animal using the same poetic style.

Amazing Animals

This journal describes the work of a nature photographer who has photographed some amazing animals.

Features of the text

- Journal format
- Recount
- Comparisons
- Fact boxes

Purpose

'Amazing Animals' can be used to introduce and reinforce the following skills:

- identifying facts and opinions;
- drawing conclusions based on evidence from the text;
- analysing word choice.

Introducing the text

Select one or more of these discussion starters:

- *What kind of person would be interested in nature photography?*
- *What special qualities or skills would you need to do this kind of work?*

Reading and discussing the text

Use some of the following suggestions to guide the students through the text:

- *Find examples of facts and opinions in the text. How can you tell the difference?*
- *Find some introductory clauses, such as 'When I first spotted' (page 12) and 'As the frog climbed over my shirt' (page 15). Discuss their impact.*
- *How does the environment influence the development of special features in some animals?*

Following up

The students can:

- create fact files of their favourite rain-forest animals
- write a job description for a nature photographer
- write a journal account of an adventure or an experience they've had using Nic's journal as a model.

Welcoming the Phoenix

The myth of the phoenix comes to life for two Egyptian children.

Features of the text

- Descriptive and emotive language
- Imagery
- Oral storytelling within a narrative text
- Myth

Purpose

'Welcoming the Phoenix' can be used to introduce and reinforce the following skills:

- analysing the writer's craft;
- questioning the text;
- examining the use of descriptive language;
- creating visual images from information in the text.

Introducing the text

Select one or more of these discussion starters:

- *What is a myth? How is a myth different from other kinds of stories?*
- *Discuss the definition of a 'mythical creature.' Can you think of any examples?*

Reading and discussing the text

Use some of the following suggestions to guide the students through the text:

- *Read pages 20 and 21. What is different about how this myth is told? (written in the first-person)*
- *Read the rest of the story. Why does the phoenix seem so real? (the children's reactions)*
- *What are some questions you have about this myth or the way it's told?*

Following up

The students can:

- use words and phrases from the story that describe fire to write a poem about the phoenix
- rewrite this story as a reader's theatre script and perform it for the class
- research other 'sun' myths and compare them with the story of the phoenix.

Survival Tactics

This report compares the different skills and adaptations certain animals have for surviving in the wild.

Features of the text

- Captions
- Fact boxes
- Subheadings
- Comparisons

Purpose

'Survival Tactics' can be used to introduce and reinforce the following skills:

- exploring and evaluating text organisation;
- using subheadings to predict content;
- drawing conclusions;
- exploring adjectives.

Introducing the text

Select one or more of these discussion starters:

- *What does 'Survival Tactics' mean to you?*
- *What are some interesting survival tactics that animals have? Why do they develop these tactics?*

Reading and discussing the text

Use some of the following suggestions to guide the students through the text:

- *Look at the subheadings. How do they help you to predict the content of each section?*
- *How do the captions and fact boxes help the reader?*
- *Read the report. What features helped you to understand the text?*
- *What can you conclude about survival?*

Following up

The students can:

- list adjectives describing giraffes (graceful), pangolins (nocturnal) and chameleons (cunning) using information from the text
- write a poem using the list of adjectives
- research two other animals and compare their survival tactics.

