Owen and Mzee
Storybook Thematic Lesson Plans
Grade Three

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A Surprising Friendship

Introduce story of Owen and Mzee by showing slide show of pictures on the official website:


Engage students in story prediction exercise by asking questions throughout slide show.

- What kind of animals do you see in the picture?
- Are these animals you would typically find together?
- How old do you think these animals might be?
- How would you describe their home by looking at the pictures?
- Do these animals look like they care about one another?
Story Introduction: The Beginning

YouTube video summary of story:

http://vimeo.com/24175704
Owen & Mzee: Dolch sight words

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Owen & Mzee: The Beginning

(Adapted from Owen & Mzee: The True Story of a Remarkable Friendship by Isabella Hatkoff, Craig Hatkoff and Dr. Paula Kahumbu, 2006)

This is the true story about two friends: a hippopotamus named Owen and a tortoise named Mzee. This was an unusual friendship for two reasons. First, Owen is a mammal and Mzee is a reptile. Second, Owen is only one year old and Mzee is 130 years old. Owen and Mzee weren’t always friends. This is how they met.

Owen used to live with his mother in a pod with about twenty other hippos. They lived near a river in Kenya, Africa. One day a tsunami hit and Owen was separated from his family. He was all alone. Hundreds of villagers worked together to rescue Owen because he would never survive on his own. It was not easy. Even though Owen was just a baby, he was not small. He weighed 600 pounds! He was frightened and did not know that the people were trying to help him. They had to be very careful because they did not want Owen to get hurt. The rescuers tried for hours. Finally, they caught him in a net. The people cheered loudly.

They decided to bring Owen to an animal sanctuary called Haller Park. The workers at Haller Park had to find a good habitat for Owen. They chose a part of
the park that had a pond, tall trees and bushes. It was perfect for a growing hippo! Mzee already lived at the sanctuary. He was not very friendly and usually kept to himself. Mzee didn’t know it yet, but his life was about to change.

When Owen arrived after the long drive, he plodded right over to Mzee. Mzee hissed at Owen and crawled away. He moved away every time Owen got close. Owen did not give up. He kept following Mzee around. Over the next few weeks, Mzee warmed up to Owen. They started spending more and more time together. This was the beginning of a great friendship!

Key Vocabulary: Africa, arrived, crawled, frightened, habitat, hippopotamus, Kenya, mammal, pod, plodded, rescuers, reptile, survive, tortoise, tsunami, sanctuary, separated, villagers
Map Study Project - Focus on geographic thinking

Using large world map (or globe) students will identify home as well as Kenya to get a sense of the distance between the two. Students will create a simple map and highlight Kenya as well as Haller Park. The lesson will emphasize relevant grade three vocabulary words including: equator, global, and hemisphere.
Where is Kenya?
Where is Haller Park?
Owen & Mzee

FRIENDSHIP  HABITAT  HIPPOPOTAMUS
KENYA       MAMMAL    REPTILE
RESCUE      TORTOISE  TSUNAMI
VILLAGERS
CLOZE Exercise

Owen and Mzee: The Beginning

(Adapted from Owen & Mzee: The True Story of a Remarkable Friendship by Isabella Hatkoff, Craig Hatkoff and Dr. Paula Kahumbu, 2006)

This is the true story about two friends: a ____________ named Owen and a ____________ named Mzee. This was an unusual friendship for two reasons. First, Owen is a ____________ and Mzee a _____________. Second, Owen is only one year old and Mzee is 130-years old. Owen and Mzee weren’t always friends. This is how they met.

Owen used to live with his mother in a ____________ with about twenty other hippos. They lived near a river in ____________, Africa. One day a ____________ hit and Owen was ____________ from his family. He was all alone. Hundreds of ____________ worked together to rescue Owen because he would never ____________ on his own. It was not easy. Even though Owen was just a baby, he was not small. He weighed 600 pounds! He was ____________ and did not know that the people were trying to help him. They had to be very careful because they did not want Owen to get hurt. The ____________ tried for hours. Finally, they caught him in a net. The people cheered loudly.
They decided to bring Owen to an animal ______________ called Haller Park. The workers at Haller Park had to find a proper ______________ for Owen. They chose a part of the park that had a pond, tall trees and bushes. It was perfect for a growing hippo! Mzee already lived at the sanctuary. He was not very friendly and usually kept to himself. Mzee didn’t know it yet, but his life was about to change.

When Owen ______________ after the long drive, he ______________ right over to Mzee. Mzee hissed at Owen and ______________ away. He moved away every time Owen got close. Owen did not give up. He kept following Mzee around. Over the next few weeks, Mzee warmed up to Owen. They started spending more and more time together. This was the beginning of a great friendship!

**Key Vocabulary**: Africa, arrived, crawled, frightened, habitat, hippopotamus, Kenya, mammal, pod, plodded, rescuers, reptile, survive, tortoise, tsunami, sanctuary, separated, villagers
Owen & Mzee

QAR: Question-Answer Relationship

Right There

1. What is the name of the tortoise?

2. How much did Owen weigh when the rescuers found him?

3. Where did the rescuers take Owen?

Think and Search

4. Why was it so hard for the people to catch Owen?

5. Why did the people cheer loudly?

6. What makes a good habitat for a hippo?

On my Own

7. How did Owen get separated from his family?

8. Why did Mzee hiss at Owen?

9. Why did Owen want to be friends with Mzee?
Fine Arts Projects

1. **Owen & Mzee puppets**

Supplies:
- Construction Paper
- Popsicle Sticks
- Pencil Crayons
- Scissors
- Glue

2. **Background Painting: “Design my home!”**

Supplies:
- Watercolour paper
- Watercolour paint
- Paintbrushes

Students will make a watercolour painting to serve as a backdrop for the Owen & Mzee puppets. Students will think of the colours and tones they want represented in their painting.

(Examples provided)
What do you think Owen and Mzee talk about? Write a dialogue.

Good Morning Mzee! I'm hungry! What do you want to eat?

Hi Owen! It's too early. I don't feel like eating anything right now.

I need to eat now!! You know how grumpy I get when I'm hungry.

Okay, let's go.
What do you think Owen and Mzee talk about? Write a dialogue.
Multi-media Project: “Owen & Mzee Make a Movie!”

Supplies:

- Empty Shoeboxes
- Scotch tape
- Owen & Mzee puppets
- Watercolour Paintings
- Dialogue Sheets
- Digital Camera (to record video)
- Tripod

1. Tape watercolour paintings to the shoeboxes so that they stand up.
2. In pairs, use the Owen & Mzee puppets to perform written dialogues from the activity “What did you say?”
3. After some rehearsal/practice time, puppet shows will be recorded.
Owen and Mzee like to spend all of their time together. They stay cool in the water together, eat together, and sleep side by side. Mzee’s friendship helped Owen feel safe in his new home. Owen and Mzee are different animals but love each other very much. Owen likes to lick Mzee’s face. Mzee rests his head on Owen’s big belly. They look very happy when they are together.

Owen and Mzee have their own way of talking to one another. When Mzee wants Owen to walk with him, he will gently bite Owen’s tail. When Owen wants Mzee to move, he will push Mzee’s feet. If Mzee doesn’t move right away, Owen may bite Mzee’s foot with his teeth until he starts to move. But they never hurt one another.

There is another hippopotamus, named Cleopatra, who was also rescued as a baby. She lives alone and would like another hippopotamus to play with. The
workers must choose to keep Owen with Mzee, or move him to live with Cleopatra. When Owen is an adult hippopotamus he will be much bigger than Mzee. When the two friends play, Mzee could get hurt because Owen is much bigger. What do you think would be best for these two best friends?

**Key Vocabulary:** alone, belly, bite, cool, friendship, gently, hippopotamus, hurt, rescue, safe
new home. Owen and Mzee are different animals but love each other very much. Owen likes to lick Mzee’s face. Mzee is happy when they are together.

Owen and Mzee want to walk with him, he will push Mzee’s feet. If Mzee wants Owen to move, he will push Owen’s feet with his teeth until he starts to move.

There is another man who lives alone and would like to adopt the baby. She must choose whether to keep Owen with Mzee, or move him to live with Cleopatra. When Owen is an adult he will be much bigger than Mzee. When the two friends play, Mzee could set.

Vocabulary Profile:
**QAR Questions for Owen and Mzee: Best Friends**

Questions should be asked during and after the read aloud of the story.

**Right There Questions:**

1. What do Owen and Mzee like to do together?
2. How do Owen and Mzee feel when they are together?
3. What does Owen do when he wants Mzee to move?
4. Who is the other hippopotamus?
5. Why would Owen hurt Mzee?

**Think and Search Questions:**

1. How did Mzee help Owen?
2. What do Owen and Mzee do to talk to each other?
3. How does Cleopatra feel about living alone?
4. How can you tell that Owen and Mzee like to be together?
5. Who would hippos normally live with?

**On My Own Questions:**

1. How can you tell that Owen and Mzee care about each other?
2. How do you think Owen felt when he first started living with Mzee?
3. Where do you think Owen should live: with Mzee or Cleopatra?
4. Why did Owen and Mzee become such great friends?
5. How would Mzee feel if Owen left to live with Cleopatra?
Owen and Mzee: Best Friends

Adapted from Owen & Mzee: The Language of Friendship by Isabella Hatkoff, Craig Hatkoff and Dr. Paula Kahumbu

Owen and Mzee like to spend all of their time _______________. They stay cool in the water together, eat together, and ___________ side by side. Mzee’s friendship helped Owen feel ___________ in his new home. Owen and Mzee are different ___________ but love each other very much. Owen likes to lick Mzee’s face. Mzee rests his head on Owen’s big belly. They look very ___________ when they are together.

Owen and Mzee have their own way of _______________ to one another.

When Mzee wants Owen to walk with him, he will gently _______________

Owen’s tail. When Owen wants Mzee to move, he will push Mzee’s feet. If Mzee doesn’t move right away, Owen may bite Mzee’s foot with his teeth until he starts to move. But they never _______________ one another.
There is another___________, named Cleopatra, who was also rescued as baby. She lives ______________ and would like another hippopotamus to play with. The workers must choose to keep Owen with Mzee, or move him to live with Cleopatra. When Owen is an adult hippopotamus he will be much ______________ than Mzee. When the two friends play, Mzee could get hurt because Owen is much bigger. What do you think would be best for these two __________ friends?
Owen and Mzee: Best Friends

Across
3. soft and careful
4. save from danger
9. large animal
10. stomach

Down
1. happy together
2. by myself
5. with teeth
6. cold
7. no danger
8. ow!
Writing Activity: “Letters to home”

Students should choose a family member or friend to whom they can compose a fictional letter.

Students will pretend they are on a holiday in Africa and have been to visit Owen and Mzee.

The letter will be a summary of what they have learned about these amazing animal friends.

Emphasis should be placed on teaching proper letter format and etiquette.

Sample letter:

25 February 2013

Dear Sofia and Thomas,

Africa is amazing! I am in Kenya and met two best friends named Owen and Mzee.

Owen is a hippopotamus who was all alone after a storm. Some people rescued him. Now he lives in a safe place where people can help take care of him.

Owen’s best friend is an old tortoise. This tortoise’s name is Mzee. He is 130 years old. That is very old. Mzee takes care of Owen and makes him feel happy.

I hope they will be best friends forever!

From,

Shannon
Inquiry Project: Hippo and Tortoise Researchers

Choose one topic.

- Hippos
- Tortoises

1. Use the questions from the handout “Hippo Researcher” to guide your research.
2. Use KWL chart to record the information you find.
1. What are physical characteristics of hippos?  
   (appearance)  
2. What animal category does the hippo belong to?  
3. What do hippo families look like?  
4. What do hippos eat? How much do they eat a day?  
5. How long do hippos live? (lifespan)  
6. Do hippos like to live alone or with others?  
7. What is a hippo’s habitat?  
8. Who are the hippos’ predators?  
9. How big are hippos when they are full grown?  
10. Do hippos like water?  
11. How do hippos stay cool?

Suggested websites:  
http://kids.nationalgeographic.com/kids/animals/creaturefeature/hippopotamus/  
http://www.sandiegozoo.org/animalbytes/t-hippopotamus.html
Tortoise Researcher (Your Name):

________________________________

1. What are physical characteristics of tortoises? (appearance)
2. What animal category does the tortoise belong to?
3. What do tortoise families look like?
4. What do tortoises eat? How much do they eat a day?
5. How long do tortoises live? (lifespan)
6. Do tortoises like to live alone or with others?
7. What is a tortoise’s habitat?
8. Who are the tortoises’ predators?
9. How big are tortoises when they are full grown?
10. Do tortoises like water?
11. How do tortoises stay cool?

Suggested websites:
http://www.planetozkids.com
http://kids.nationalgeographic.com/kids/
Venn Diagram: Compare and contrast the tortoise and hippopotamus

Teacher should recreate a larger version of the Venn diagram on either the Smartboard or on a flip chart. Teacher will ask students to identify characteristics unique to each of the tortoise and hippopotamus species and then list traits that both species share in the centre space. The first time the students engage in this activity should be prior to their inquiry lesson. The Venn diagram should be kept. The students can then do a follow-up Venn diagram at the completion of the thematic unit, after the inquiry research on hippos and tortoises has been completed. The teacher should present the two Venn diagrams to the class to demonstrate the amount of learning they have accomplished through the unit.
**Debate:** “Together Forever?”

Should Owen and Mzee be separated? Divide the class into two teams. One team will come up with 3-5 arguments to support separating Owen and Mzee. The other team will come with 3-5 arguments against separating Owen and Mzee.

**Lesson:**

What makes a good argument? (Brainstorm and list on the board).

- Fact based
- Numbers
- Examples

What goes into a conclusion?

- Restate your position
- Reword your main points. You do not need to restate the facts.
Debate: Deciding the future

Yes, Owen and Mzee should be separated because…

1. ________________________________________________________________
   ________________________________________________________________
   ________________________________________________________________
   ________________________________________________________________

2. ________________________________________________________________
   ________________________________________________________________
   ________________________________________________________________
   ________________________________________________________________

3. ________________________________________________________________
   ________________________________________________________________
   ________________________________________________________________
   ________________________________________________________________

4. ________________________________________________________________
   ________________________________________________________________
   ________________________________________________________________
   ________________________________________________________________

5. ________________________________________________________________
   ________________________________________________________________
   ________________________________________________________________
   ________________________________________________________________

Conclusion:

__________________________________________________________________
__________________________________________________________________
__________________________________________________________________
__________________________________________________________________
Debate: Deciding the future

No, Owen and Mzee should NOT be separated because...

1. ______________________________________________________________
   ______________________________________________________________
   ______________________________________________________________

2. ______________________________________________________________
   ______________________________________________________________
   ______________________________________________________________

3. ______________________________________________________________
   ______________________________________________________________
   ______________________________________________________________

4. ______________________________________________________________
   ______________________________________________________________
   ______________________________________________________________

5. ______________________________________________________________
   ______________________________________________________________
   ______________________________________________________________

Conclusion:

__________________________________________________________________
__________________________________________________________________
__________________________________________________________________
__________________________________________________________________
__________________________________________________________________
__________________________________________________________________
Websites:

Owen & Mzee Information

http://owenandmzee.com/omweb/

Venn Diagram Template


KWL Chart


Colouring Pages (for Art Project):


Vocabulary:

http://www.academickids.com/encyclopedia/index.php/Tsunami

http://www.tsunamiready.noaa.gov/media/Tsunami_know_what_to_do_Rev2.swf