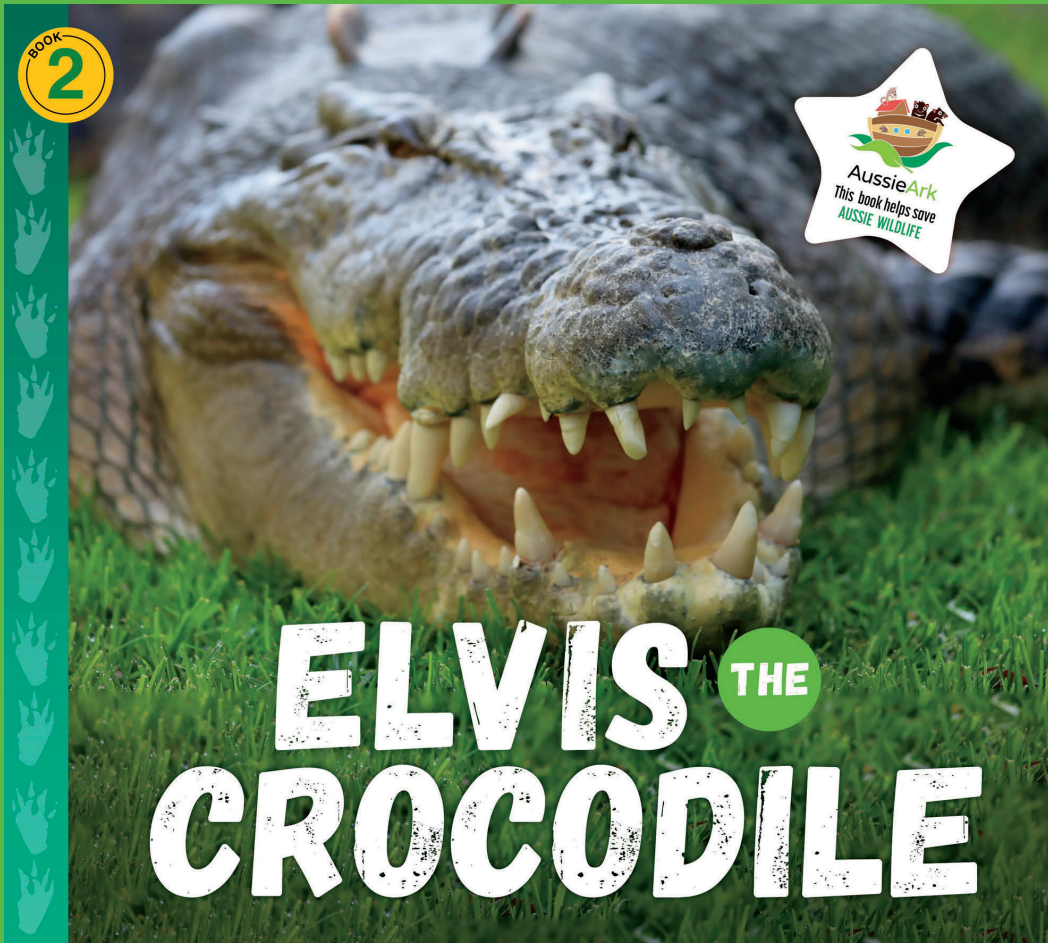


# Elvis the Crocodile

TEACHING NOTES



# BEFORE READING

- As a class look closely at the cover and title and discuss what you can learn about a book from its cover. What type of story do you think this will be? (The photographic cover suggests nonfiction, but the title could suggest fiction.)
- Discuss conventions of nonfiction (table of contents, glossary, page numbers, title, photographs/pictures, diagrams, and labels) and fiction (setting, plot development, conflict, descriptive language, themes, point of view, characters, characterisation).
- Where do you think this story might be set, and what makes you think this?
- Read the writing on the back cover: What is the purpose of a back-cover blurb?

# DURING READING

- Chart what students already know about crocodiles. Add additional facts located during subsequent research or as you progress through the text.
- Create a vocabulary wallchart to record new and interesting words as they are encountered in the text or in wider reading.



# AFTER READING

## TEXT TYPES

- Look closely at different kinds of nonfiction and discuss where this book fits with them.
  - **Traditional nonfiction** includes writing that gives readers an overview of an entire topic. It is great to use to gauge interest in or to begin researching a topic. Readers who don't need specific details but who want to get a general feel for something will enjoy traditional nonfiction.
  - **Expository nonfiction** is great for investigating a specific subject. It takes a unique point of view and examines a specialised concept. Readers who want an entertaining look at a specific topic will gravitate towards expository nonfiction.
  - **Narrative nonfiction** is a true story written in the style of a fictional story.
  - **Browsable nonfiction** allows young readers to explore topics of interest in a fun way, without the stress of longer chapter books. Based on the popular magazine format of quirky, fun facts that many young readers love.
- If possible, gather a range of information texts on crocodiles and have students examine these, comparing and contrasting them to this text. Discuss how authors have treated the same subject matter differently.
- Ask students to write a fictional narrative about a crocodile. Discuss how their story will differ from the approach used in this book. Highlight that the knowledge they have gained about crocodiles from this book could help them to write a fictional piece.

# COMPREHENSION

Test knowledge gained from reading the book by asking:

- What type of animal is a crocodile?
- Where do crocodiles live?
- Why do crocodiles like to lie in the sun?
- What do crocodiles eat?
- Why do we need to be so careful around crocodiles?
- Why is it so important to obey signs saying, 'Beware of crocodiles: don't swim here'?
- Why does Elvis's pool need to be heated?
- How big is Elvis?
- How do we know Elvis has won most of his battles with other crocodiles?
- Why do the keepers at The Australian Reptile Park change where and how Elvis is fed?
- Why do crocodiles wait and watch their prey?
- Why do you think Elvis is so popular?
- What important work is done by The Australian Reptile Park?

# ANIMAL CLASSIFICATION

- Create a class diagram of animal classifications, identifying what traits they have in common:
  - **vertebrates:** fish, amphibians, reptiles, birds, mammals (marsupials, placentals, monotreme)



- **invertebrates:** including sponges, flatworms, jellyfish, starfish, shrimp, snails, spiders, and scallops.



- Ask students where Elvis would sit in this diagram and why.



# THE AUSTRALIAN REPTILE PARK

- Have students research The Australian Reptile Park and discuss why it is such an important Australian institution.
  - See <https://www.reptilepark.com.au>
- The Australian saltwater crocodile is the largest living reptile, and one of the most aggressive and dangerous crocodiles. These incredible animals have been on the planet, unchanged, for over 65 million years. Ask students to prepare a fact file on another reptile.
- Students could also create illustrated posters of their reptiles of choice, aimed at drawing attention to what makes them unique.
- If possible, arrange for students to visit The Australian Reptile Park or an animal conservation group to see firsthand the important work they do.
- Celebrate **World Crocodile Day on June 17 each year.**



# SALTWATER CROCODILE FACT FILE



## DESCRIPTION

- Saltwater crocodiles are the largest reptile on the planet!
- They have webbed feet and muscular tails that are flat on both sides. This allows them to move through water at high speed.
- On land, however, they can only run short distances.
- Their eyes and nostrils are on top of their heads. This allows them to remain hidden beneath the surface of the water, but still able to see, hear, smell, and breath.
- When they dive, their muscles shrink their nostrils, and their throats are closed off with a large fleshy flap of skin.
- Saltwater crocodiles communicate using several sounds, including barking, hissing, growling, and chirping.
- There are a lot of tall stories about crocodiles being larger than eight to nine metres long. The truth is that the biggest crocodiles measured in recent years are all under 5.5 metres long.
- The only other crocodile that inhabits Australia is the freshwater crocodile.
- Saltwater crocodiles (salties) are different from freshwater crocodiles (freshies). Salties are larger, and their snouts are more rounded.
- Crocodiles have between 40 to 60 large teeth, designed to rip flesh off their prey. They have the greatest bite pressure of any animal on Earth. One tooth can be up to 13 centimetres long!
- They sometimes ingest stones which they hold in their stomachs to help break down their food. This makes digestion easier.
- Salties remain motionless for very long periods of time. Due to this, and their camouflaged colour pattern, they are often mistaken for logs.

# HABITAT

- Saltwater crocodiles inhabit mangrove swamps, coastal marshes, and river mouths around the top of Western Australia, the Northern Territory, and Queensland.
- They travel as far up stream as they can swim. They take advantage of floods to access areas normally too difficult to reach.
- Salties are able to live in the open ocean for periods of time. They will cross large waters to reach new areas. This is why they can be found across South-East Asia, New Guinea, and some of the Pacific Islands.
- Crocodiles are very territorial and will attack other crocodiles, animals, and people if they come into their territory.
- Crocodile attacks on humans take place because people don't respect how dangerous Australia's northern waterways are.



# DIET

- Saltwater crocodiles are carnivorous. They eat fish, birds, and mammals.
- Young crocodiles eat smaller fish and insects.
- Adult crocodiles eat almost anything that comes too close to the water's edge. This includes wallabies, water buffalo, cattle, flying foxes, crabs, and turtles.
- Humans are not a regular part of a large crocodile's diet. But a person at the water's edge looks like any other mammal to a crocodile!

# REPRODUCTION

- A female crocodile lays around 50 eggs in a small nest of rotting vegetation. These nests are found above the flood line during the wet season.
- Cooler nests produce mostly females, while warmer nests produce mostly males.
- A mother crocodile guards her eggs for about 12 weeks.
- After the eggs hatch, she carries her babies to the water to keep them safe.

# Elvis the Crocodile

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