



A spellbinding adventure series about a young orphan girl as she starts a new life in Africa and discovers she has a special healing talent.

TEACHERS' NOTES

The White Giraffe is part of a series of books by Lauren St John, which follow the adventures of Martine as she starts a new life in Africa. The problems of growing up, loss, love and friendship are sensitively explored as she learns about Africa and its wildlife.

These cleverly crafted novels are an excellent way to develop key literacy skills and introduce conservation issues to Key Stage 2 and lower Key Stage 3 pupils (7–13 years).

The following lesson plans and resources explore the issues surrounding the protection of endangered species and include opportunities to learn key scientific terminology. The lessons are also designed to develop key literacy skills with a focus on comprehension, story-writing structure, creating settings and developing characters.

SYNOPSIS

When she is eleven years old, Martine is orphaned and sent to live with her grandmother on an animal sanctuary in South Africa. The adventures that follow are exciting and moving, as Martine discovers the magic of Africa and a love of its rich environment and ancient peoples.

One night Martine, lonely and feeling slightly rebellious too, looks out of her window and sees a young albino giraffe – silver, tinged with cinnamon in the moonlight. Could this be the fabled white giraffe – a trophy for hunters everywhere?

So begins Martine's magical adventures which lead her to discover a gift of healing and a secret valley which she travels to with the giraffe, where she'll find clues about her past and future.

THE WHITE GIRAFFE – TEACHERS' NOTES



MEET THE AUTHOR



© Joe Bloggs

Lauren St John grew up on a 1,000 acre farm in Africa with a 100 acre game reserve. Along with a pet giraffe called Jenny, Lauren's family had warthogs called Miss Piggy and Bacon, pythons and a goat named, um, Goat, as well as lots of horses, dogs and cats. Most of the animals were adopted or rescued or came to them injured. Lauren remembers her childhood escapades with her animal friends fondly, 'when I think back to it, it is a miracle that I survived – there were crocodiles in the river and snakes in the undergrowth!'

Lauren has always loved reading and with the support of her inspirational English teacher, she had it in her head that one day she would write a book. Persuaded by her mother, Lauren went to journalism school when she was 18, after which she relocated to England and became golf correspondent to the *Sunday Times*. She is now the author of several books on sports and music, as well as her award-winning children's books, which include *The White Giraffe*, *Dolphin Song*, *The Last Leopard* and *The Elephant's Tale*. Her new mystery adventure series for children, *The Laura Marlin Mysteries*, will be launched in August 2010 with *Dead Man's Cove*. Speaking of *The White Giraffe*, Lauren says: 'I really want this book to inspire people to go to Africa and to inspire children to think about animals.' Though Lauren now lives in London, she visits Africa often, and her attachment remains strong.

LESSON IDEAS

Getting started

- The first dramatic chapter is a great example of how to get the reader hooked straight away. Having read the first chapter discuss with the class what they think of the story so far? What have they found out already?
- Ask children to work in pairs to look carefully at the first chapter and pick out the information the author has already given the reader. To break this down, ask children to focus on different aspects, for example what do we find out about Martine's personality, family life, parents and friends, the setting in her dream and in reality?
- Children share their ideas and back them up with evidence from the text.
- Then ask all the children to compile a list of questions that the reader is left with after the first chapter.
- Finally children share their ideas on what they think makes a good first chapter.

Building tension

- Look closely at the second section of chapter 1 where Martine becomes aware of the fire. Ask children to consider the specific language the author uses to add tension to the scene.

THE WHITE GIRAFFE – TEACHERS' NOTES



- Split the children into small groups and give each one some sticky notes. Ask them to find examples of key vocabulary and phrases which they think create tension and write them on the sticky notes.
- They should then sort these words and phrases into the following categories: sounds, smells, sights, feelings, movement, touch, other.
- Ask children what they think is the effect of using all these different descriptions.

Endangered Species Crossword (Activity Sheet 1)

- In the story Martine comes across many animals, some of which are endangered. Ensure the class understands the terms endangered, extinct and vulnerable. Discuss the range of threats to animal populations (see links for background information).
- Children then complete the crossword about African animals.
- Finally children create an endangered animal crossword. First they will need to do some research to find out about animals from around the world which are considered endangered.

Background information:

Vulnerable: a species that is likely to become endangered unless the circumstances threatening its survival improve.

Endangered: A species present in such small numbers that it is at risk of extinction.

Extinct: the last remaining member of the species has died, or is presumed beyond reasonable doubt to have died. An animal is considered extinct if it hasn't been seen in the wild for 50 years.

Please see below for the crossword answers.

Fact file (Activity Sheet 2)

- Look at the Giraffe fact file and ensure pupils understand the meaning of each sub-heading.
- Ask children to complete the Giraffe fact file.
- Then create a fact file for an animal of their choice.

Hunting Debate

- The novel provides a starting point for discussion about animal hunting.
- To ensure children understand that this is not just an issue in Africa you may like to relate the argument to issues closer to home, for example fox hunting.
- Before the debate, split the class into two groups. Explain that one side will argue for and the other against hunting. Allow children some time to prepare their arguments before the discussion (see *Useful Links for background information*).
- Follow this up by asking children to create a piece of persuasive writing giving their own opinion on the subject.

THE WHITE GIRAFFE – TEACHERS' NOTES



Travel guide

- Remind children that before travelling to Africa, Martine didn't know what to expect. Explain that they are going to prepare a leaflet about the Sawubona game reserve and wildlife sanctuary that would help a visitor prepare for their visit.
- Discuss the key elements of an information leaflet. Show children a range of examples from your local attractions and make a list of the common features.
- Children make a plan for the leaflet showing how the information will be arranged.
- They could include some of the following: maps, pictures, description of the landscape, information on tours or activities offered, list of wildlife they might see, information about the climate, facilities and safety advice.
- Children use the information in the novel and their own research to produce their finished leaflet. If possible allow children to work on computer.

Newspaper report (Activity Sheet 3)

- Ask children to look at real life reports of people who have seen the rare white giraffe. (Articles are available from the National Geographic website – see *Useful Links*).
- Then ask them to imagine they are reporters in Sawubona writing a story about Martine riding the White Giraffe through the town (chapter 24).
- Before they begin, discuss the key features of a newspaper report and create a checklist of features. Children use the checklist to help them create their report.

Reading comprehension

- Set children a selection of reading comprehension questions about the story; include some literal and some inferred questions.
- Discuss the answers and decide what type of questions they are.
- Then ask children to write a quiz for other people in their class about the novel. They should include some literal and some inferred questions.

Who is your favourite character and why?

Lauren St John has said that her favorite character is Ben.

Read her reasons to the class and see if they agree.

Who's your favourite character in the White Giraffe series? Ben, because he's an outsider who's had an awful time with bullies and yet he's stayed true to himself and never stooped to their level. He's honourable, brave and kind and doesn't waste a minute of his day worrying what other people think of him. He's also an incredibly loyal friend, which I think is important.

- Ask children to choose their own favourite character and write a paragraph explaining their reasons.
- Think of other questions you would like to ask the author about the novel.
- For the full interview with the author see www.laurenstjohn.com.



FURTHER IDEAS

- Write a diary entry for Martine after she meets the White Giraffe (chapter 9) or after she first rides the Giraffe (chapter 14).
- Write a post card from Martine to Mr and Mrs Morrison explaining how different her life is in Africa.
- Ask children to act out the Kirstenbosh Gardens drama when the Five Star Gang start picking on her (chapter 11). This should be combined with a discussion on bullying. Ask children if they think she did the right thing. What would they do?

USEFUL LINKS

www.laurenstjohn.com

Animal issues:

www.bornfree.org.uk – working to keep animals in the wild:

www.allaboutanimals.org.uk/SK-Issues.asp – good for discussion about animal hunting

www.kidsplanet.org

www.iucnredlist.org

Giraffes:

www.bbc.co.uk/nature/species/Giraffe

<http://animals.nationalgeographic.com/animals/mammals/giraffe/>

Real White Giraffes:

<http://www.npr.org/templates/story/story.php?storyid=4961893>

http://news.nationalgeographic.com/news/2005/09/0913_050913_whitegiraffe.html

THE WHITE GIRAFFE – TEACHERS’ NOTES



FURTHER READING

The White Giraffe	9781842555637
Dolphin Song	9781842556115
The Last Leopard	9781842556672
The Elephant’s Tale	9781842557853

Also available as eBooks

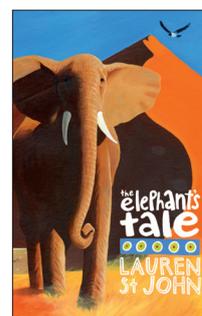
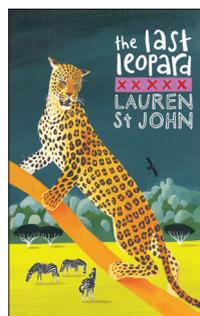
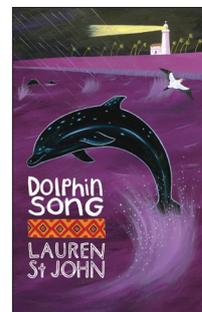
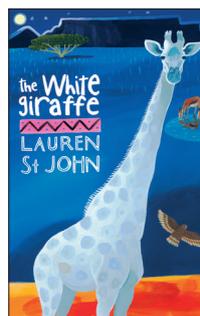
The White Giraffe	9781444002102
Dolphin Song	9781842557686
The Last Leopard	9781842557655
The Elephant’s Tale	9781444002119

Also available in audio CD

The White Giraffe	9780752888477
Dolphin Song	9780752897707

NEW by Lauren St John

Laura Marlin Mysteries: Dead Man’s Cove 9781444000207



Crossword Answers:

Down

1. Giraffe
2. Ostrich
3. Zebra
5. Springbok
6. Lion

Across

4. Wildebeest
6. Leopard
7. Elephant
8. Bushbaby
9. Jackal