



By Conor McHale

ISBN: 0-86278-705-X • 64 page

## DON'T OPEN THAT BOX

When Granny Lambert opens the box she gets a nasty surprise but is quickly gobbled up. A cunning crocodile has been posting himself to people's homes and then eating them. Next on the menu are Belzoni the cat and Greta the chicken. However the crocodile has met his match as these two manage to escape and hatch a plan to get rid of him for good. With expressive illustrations, this humorous adventure story will have the reader gripped right to the dramatic ending.

### LANGUAGE

- ◆ Prediction: Talk about the title – why we are told not to open that box?. Discuss possible contents of box. Read the blurb on back cover. Does this tell us more about the book? [When finished the book, children might write their own, alternative blurbs.]
- ◆ Prediction: 'Something smelt odd' (p6). What could be making the smell? And what do you think is in each of the boxes? Were they sent by the same person? Why might they send two boxes? Note chapter heading.
- ◆ Prediction: 'He never noticed the crocodile leaning [the ladder] up against the house and climbing up' (p47). This is a very exciting moment in the story: what is likely to happen next? Consider all possibilities!
- ◆ Vocabulary Extension: eg, ambushing, allergic, cornered, dumbstruck, lunged, allergic.
- ◆ Language of Movement: eg, leapt, sprang, darted, pounced, lunged.
- ◆ Descriptive Language: eg, snap, gulp, hissed, clattered, scattered, whimpered, plummeted.
- ◆ Descriptive Language: eg, 'razor-sharp teeth' (p42), 'teeth shone like daggers' (p52), 'jet black' (p55), 'shot out... like a rocket' (p44). Encourage children to suggest their own favourite expressions and to list others they might use to describe a different animal.
- ◆ Discussion: The crocodile escaped 'by post' (p19). How might he have done this?
- ◆ Discussion: Greta was chosen to follow as she was 'the only one who'd fit in the box' (p20). Might another animal have been a better choice? Children give reasons why other animals would/wouldn't have been better. Consider courage, speed, intelligence and size.
- ◆ Discussion: The crocodile was sent to the North Pole. Where else would be a good place to send him? Give reasons for each suggestion.
- ◆ Discussion: Read *Wolfgran* by Finbar O'Connor, pp13,14, & 21 (ISBN: 0-86278-730-0). Are there similarities and differences

between the crocodile and the wolf? List some of each.

- ◆ Discussion: Look at the double-page spread pp 60, 61. How will the crocodile answer the polar bear's question? What else might they have to say to each other? In pairs, dramatise their conversation and say what happens next.
  - ◆ Creative: Examine the addresses p37. Discuss addresses: does every child know his/her own? Working in pairs, children make up their own funny addresses.
  - ◆ Creative: Greta and Belzoni sent themselves to 'a warm country with lots of cream, fish and chickenfeed' (p62). Draw them in their new home. Where would children send themselves if they had the choice? Compile class list of all suggestions and write an advertising slogan to promote each place.
  - ◆ Creative: Surprises can be good or bad. Draw a good surprise and then a bad surprise that might be found inside the box shown on p7. Write a few sentences describing what you have drawn in each box.
  - ◆ Creative: Consider the insults Belzoni heaps upon the crocodile 'you jumped-up handbag' (p12), 'you cold-blooded fat-head' (p46), 'you curly-toothed leather-belly' (p46) and on the chicken 'you turkey' (p18). What insults might the crocodile use if he wanted to insult Belzoni?
  - ◆ Creative: This is a very hungry crocodile. Write a crocodile rap, rhyme or chant for him to sing or say as he hunts for food.
- SESE - SCIENCE**
- ◆ Living Things: Plants and Animals. Discuss and identify the differences between crocodiles and alligators. Compile simple fact or picture sheets and make a presentation to the class.
  - ◆ Living Things: Variety and Characteristics. Discuss the main differences between animals in captivity and animals in their natural environment. Have you seen crocodiles in the zoo? Watch a few minutes of video showing crocodiles in their own environment and compare and contrast their behaviour.

### SPHE

- ◆ Myself: Taking Care of My Body. '... they could smell Granny off his breath' (p26). Discuss the importance of effective dental care.
- ◆ Myself: Food and Nutrition. 'I may be allergic to feathers but I'm not allergic to fur' (p49). Allergies, understanding that food that is unhealthy for some is not for others. Looking at the illustration on p24, discuss what the crocodile is eating and what he may have eaten already. In groups, design and write nutritious menus for this crocodile. Include meals for breakfast, lunch and dinner. Remember, this crocodile is allergic to feathers!
- ◆ Myself: Feelings and Emotions. Discuss feelings of surprise, excitement and fear. Using Belzoni and Greta's reaction to the crocodile explore how feelings are expressed and coped with.

### VISUAL ARTS

- ◆ Paint and Colour: Increase colour awareness by focusing on the colour green. Discuss the colour of the crocodile looking at different tones and shades of green. Experiment with mixing various different greens. Paint your own crocodile and background foliage.
- ◆ Print: Surprise gifts are often wrapped up. Make a sheet of wrapping paper by printing a pattern – use potato prints or relief printing.
- ◆ Construction: Construct a crocodile using old egg-cartons for scales. Paint and mount.
- ◆ Drawing: Having examined the stamp on p6, examine real postage stamps and then design and draw an animal stamp.

### PHYSICAL EDUCATION

- ◆ Gymnastics: Movement eg, leaping, darting, pouncing, lunging, and scrambling.
- ◆ Dance: Respond imaginatively through movement to create the shapes, actions and pathways of the animals in the story.
- ◆ Game: Crocodile River. As a class, cross an imaginary river that has a number of crocodiles in it. If tagged, link a crocodile and become part of the crocodile chain. [For health and safety reasons, it is advisable to allow no more than three or four children in each chain]