

Saving the Baghdad Zoo: A True Story of Hope and Heroes

Written by Kelly Milner Halls and Major William Sumner

Photographs by Major William Sumner

Teacher's Guide Created by Cassandra Reigel Whetstone

Story Summary: Captain William Sumner works with an international team of zoologists, veterinarians, civil engineers, soldiers, and volunteers to save neglected zoo animals in Baghdad during the Iraq War.

Kelly Milner Halls writes from her home in Spokane, Washington. Learn more about her at: <http://www.wondersofweird.com/>

Major William Sumner served as a Captain with the U.S. Army during his tour of duty in Iraq. He has since been promoted to Major. Learn more about him at: http://www.harpercollins.com/authors/35458/William_Sumner/index.aspx

Pre-Reading: Locate Iraq on a map. Help students find the capital city, Baghdad. Note that Baghdad is the largest city in Iraq. The Baghdad Zoo was the largest zoo in the Middle East. Explain that the Iraq War began in March 2003. By April 2003, Baghdad was severely damaged by bombings. Have students discuss what it may have been like to be in Baghdad at that time. Ask students, "How would the war have affected the Baghdad Zoo?"

Discussion Questions

1. What was Captain Sumner expecting to do when he arrived in Iraq and how did that change? What character traits would help someone in Captain Sumner's situation? *Introduction and Chapter One*
2. What obstacles did Captain Sumner and his team need to overcome to take care of the animals' needs for food and water? What might you have done in their situation? *Chapter Two*
3. On page 22, Captain Sumner tells about a protest that occurred when Dr. Maas tried to take the bear to a reserve. What was significant about this demonstration? *Chapter Three*
4. What makes the Arabian horses unique from other horses? How are they important to the Iraqi culture? *Chapter Four*
5. What impact did the pelicans at Luna Park have on the efforts to help zoo animals in Baghdad? *Chapter Five*
6. What words would you use to describe Lumpy's evacuation from Luna Park? Look at the photographs in this chapter. What do you notice about the faces of the people working with Lumpy? What does that tell you about their experience with Lumpy? *Chapter Six*
7. Page 44 describes conflicting ideas about the best placement for Uday's lions. Where do you think lions should have been placed? Why? *Chapter Seven*
8. How did "cheetah time" help the zoo's efforts? What is appealing about hanging out with cheetahs? *Chapter Eight*

9. Malooh is described on page 50 as “*A showcase animal.*” What does that mean? Page 52 explains how the tigers Hope and Riley arrived at the Baghdad Zoo. What do you think about this goodwill gesture? *Chapter Nine*
10. On page 61, Captain states that “*But in this one place, at the zoo, we could fix something. We could do something good for the people we were trying to help. [...] It was an oasis in a shattered, concrete world.*” Do you think it was important to spend time and resources to repair the zoo and help the animals? How might this project have impacted the relationship between the Iraqi people and the American soldiers? What are the places in your community that would be important to rebuild in the event of a disaster in your region? Identify places needed for survival but also the places that are important to your community for other reasons, (such as central parks, city halls, libraries, museums, etc.) *Chapter Ten*

Response to Story: Animal Presentations (Writing, Oral Language Skills)

Grades: 3-8

Materials: Large sheet of butcher paper; Drawing paper and markers; Copies of Animal Facts Sidebars: Brown Bear (p20), Arabian Horse (p26), Pelican (p32), Dromedary (p37), Lion (p42), Cheetah (p48), Tiger (54)

Directions:

1. Divide class into seven teams. Give each team a copy of the animal facts for one animal.
2. Have students use the animal facts page and other resources to create a presentation that teaches their classmates about their animal.
3. Have each group draw a picture of their animal
4. Draw a large circular path on butcher paper to represent the Baghdad Zoo, or draw a map based on the map on page 56.
5. Have each group present their animal, and then attach it to the map of the zoo.
6. When presentations are finished, invite students to add illustrations of people, other animals, food vendors, signs, and labels to the map.

Closure: Ask students how they feel when they look at their zoo. Ask students how it might feel for the citizens of Iraq to be able to visit the Baghdad Zoo.

Feed the Animals (Math)

Grades 3-5: Review “Feeding a Wartime Hunger” sidebar on page 14. Have students calculate the food needed to feed a brown bear for a week, a month and a year. Repeat with the Bengal tiger.

Grades 6-8: Review “Feeding a Wartime Hunger” sidebar on page 14. Using the internet or other resources, have students find the average weight for adult pelicans and camels. Help them to calculate the amount of food each would need for one day, one month, and one year.

Extension for all students: Put together a shopping list that would cover the needs for the animals at the zoo for one week.