

ENGLISH



K-3
Foundational
Skills



GRADE 3
FOUNDATIONAL SKILLS UNIT 2

A Talk with Animals

Reader

EDITION 1

Grade 3

Foundational Skills 2

A Talk with Animals

Reader

Acknowledgement:

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Chapter

1 Olivia the Ostrich

The pilot waved goodbye to Annie and her family. Annie stopped as they walked to the car, looked back at the small plane, and shook her head. The ride had been scary because of the engine and the wind. She heard every sound of the engine, and the wind was so loud. Annie put her hands over her ears to keep out the sounds. She was glad to be back on the ground.

Annie was ready to see the **savanna** with the flat land, low grasses, and groups of trees spread out for miles and miles. The savanna was different from the mountains where Annie and her family lived because the mountains were tall and rocky.

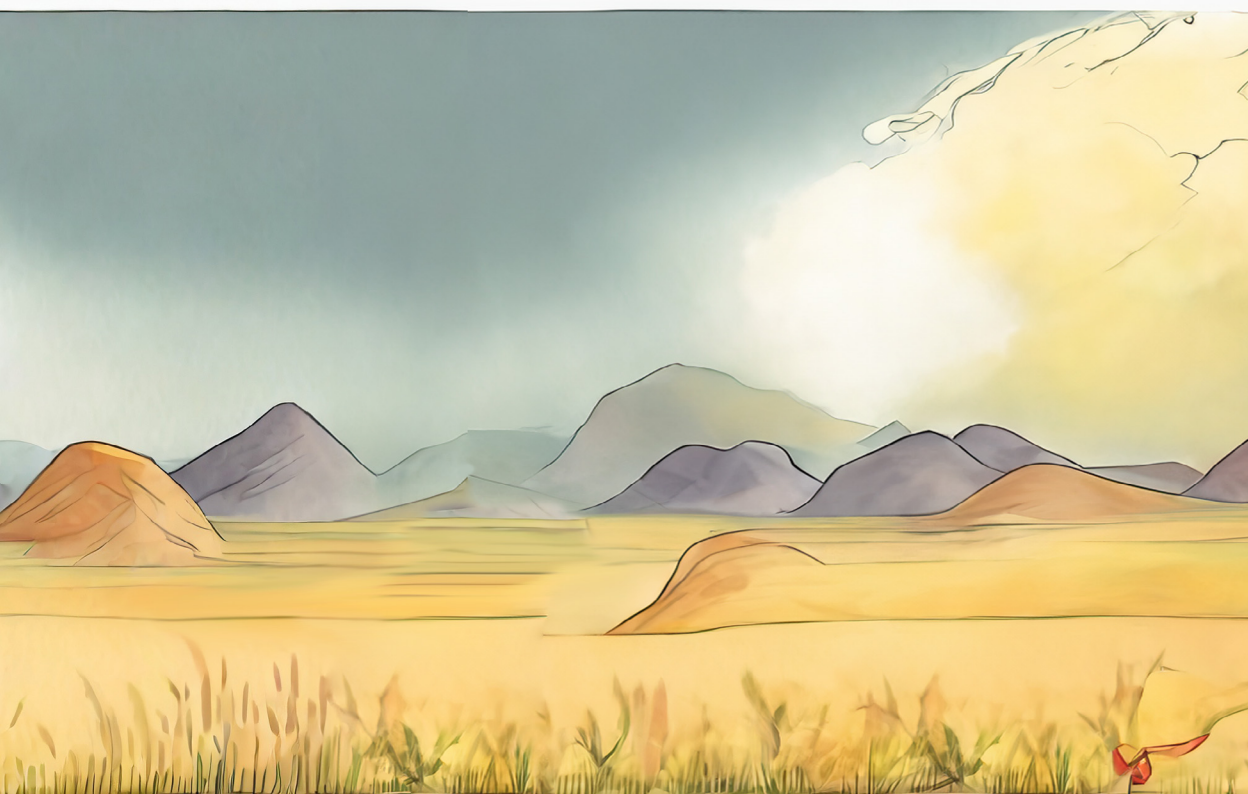
“What animals will we see? Will they get close to us? I have an animal fact book to share with everyone!” Annie was so vocal about the trip, talking as soon as they got in the car with the trip leader, that her father laughed.

Her mother placed a hand on Annie’s head and said, “Relax, Annie. Enjoy the view, or you might miss an animal.”



The car stopped, and the guide pointed to a huge dust cloud ahead. Annie said in a soft voice, “Please let it be a bunch of zebras.”

The guide told Annie, “Just wait to see what happens. You cannot imagine how special it is here in the wild because there are things you have never seen and will never see anywhere but here.”



Annie took the guide's advice and waited. The dust cloud cleared and **revealed** small heads on top of long necks. She also saw a solo lion trotting away from the dust cloud.

“What is a lion doing with those other animals? What are those other animals?” Annie said as she turned back to the small heads and long necks of the new animals she did not know.



More of the bodies were in view. Annie stood up and lifted her **spyglass** to her eye. She looked closely at the animal and noticed its big body covered in feathers. Below the feathers were two legs.

“Are those birds? They are the funniest-looking birds I have ever seen. Can they even fly?” Annie commented with a small chuckle.





“Excuse me,” said a voice. “But if you’re curious, ask questions. Do not make jokes because you do not understand.”

Annie’s mouth dropped open as she saw one of the birds standing close to the car. She felt like a tiny **rodent** next to a huge bird.

“I am sorry for saying you look funny, but I have never seen a bird like you. Will you talk with me so I can learn more about you?” Annie asked in a low voice.

“Birds like me are called ostriches. My name is Olivia. Yes, I will talk with you.”

Annie exhaled, nodded, and grinned.
“Thank you, Olivia. What a great moment! I cannot wait to learn more about ostriches!”

She took a deep breath, focused, and asked her first question. “Why are you alone and not with the rest of the ostriches?”

Olivia bowed her neck to be level with Annie. “Well, if you ask the **flock**, I have the habit of roaming around. I like to take time for myself because living with many ostriches gets loud, and I like silent time. The savanna is open land with plenty of space to move around and discover new things, so it is a great place to walk around and have time alone.”

Annie agreed with Olivia about silent time. Annie had a little brother, Nolan, who enjoyed screeching at random times of the day. The sound made Annie cover her ears.



“Olivia, why was the lion running away from the flock of ostriches? People say lions are dangerous, but that one looked scared.”

“The lion was hunting and had the silly idea it could catch and chase us. We ran swiftly, and the lion gave up. We can run up to forty-five miles per hour.”



Annie laughed, “I am sure the lion is not pleased with missing out on a meal. But you are probably glad to get away. What other traits help protect against animals that hunt you?”

“Every animal has been chased and had a close call. This is common in the wild. The lion may be back with others, and that is where my sharp eyes and keen hearing help.”

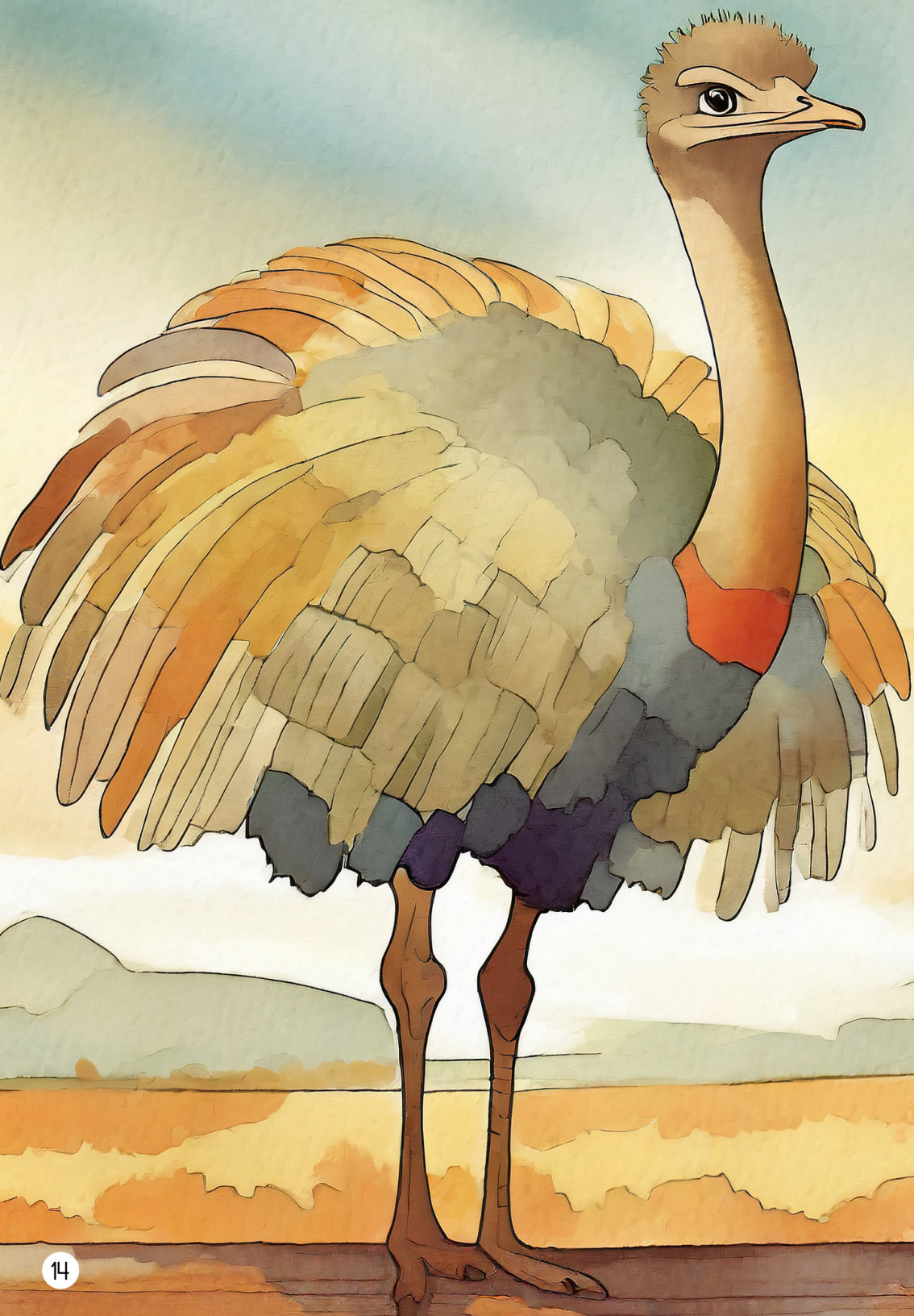


Annie needed more facts to understand.
“What do you mean by ‘sharp eyes’ and ‘**keen** hearing’?”

“Notice how my eyes are on the sides of my head? Their placement allows me to see more of the savanna. My eyesight is very good. I can spot a **predator** from far away. Keen hearing is another way I keep myself and the flock safe. My ears can detect a threat, which is vital for **survival**. Ostriches can hear very well. If we hear something, we use our muscular legs to run away quickly.”

Annie’s eyes opened wide. “Oh my! Those powerful legs kicked up all the dirt and made that dust cloud!”





Olivia's head moved up and down. "Yes! Our legs are our strongest trait. Escaping threats takes a lot of work. Being able to run fast helps a lot."

Annie checked her animal fact book for one detail. She did not **relent** in her search for facts. "My book says ostriches do not fly. Is that true? Why do you have feathers if you do not fly?"

Olivia ruffled her feathers in protest. "Feathers are used for more than flying. Ostrich feathers help with body heat and balance. Body feathers **impact** body heat, and tail feathers help with balance when running." Olivia continued, "Ostriches have feathers like other birds, but the purpose of the feathers differs. While other birds use feathers to fly, ostriches use them for running."

“Olivia, I have one more question,” Annie admitted. “What is it like being a baby ostrich in the savanna?”

“I will not deny that being a baby in the wild is tough. When I was hatched, I had to peck my way out of a hard shell. After a few days, I could walk around by myself. After a week, I was running with other ostrich chicks. The savanna is vast, so there is plenty of space to run. My parents helped me digest my food by chewing it for me first. I am happy I can feed myself now. Safety was important. I did not understand when I was younger, but adult ostriches make a sound to protect chicks from predators. The hissing sound from an ostrich is like a siren to signal a warning. I realize this now because I watch how parent ostriches are always on high alert for any threat.





Ostriches are also nomads and only stay in one place for a short time. Moving helps keep us safe, too.”

Annie thanked Olivia and settled back into the seat of the car. She glanced around at her mother, father, and the guide. Their eyes were bright, and she knew the time spent with the ostrich meant as much to them as it did to her.

Chapter

2 Cooper the Crocodile

The riverbank was busy with lots of animals. Annie had never seen so many animals coming and going so fast. They all seemed united by their fear of something hidden. The guide said the river was both appealing and dangerous. Annie did not fully understand, but she was eager to learn. She recorded many thoughts in a small notebook.

Annie saw animals look around, move to the water's edge, drink from the river, and race off. She watched for hours. Many animals **frequented** the river, but none of them stayed for long. She was concerned they did not drink enough water.

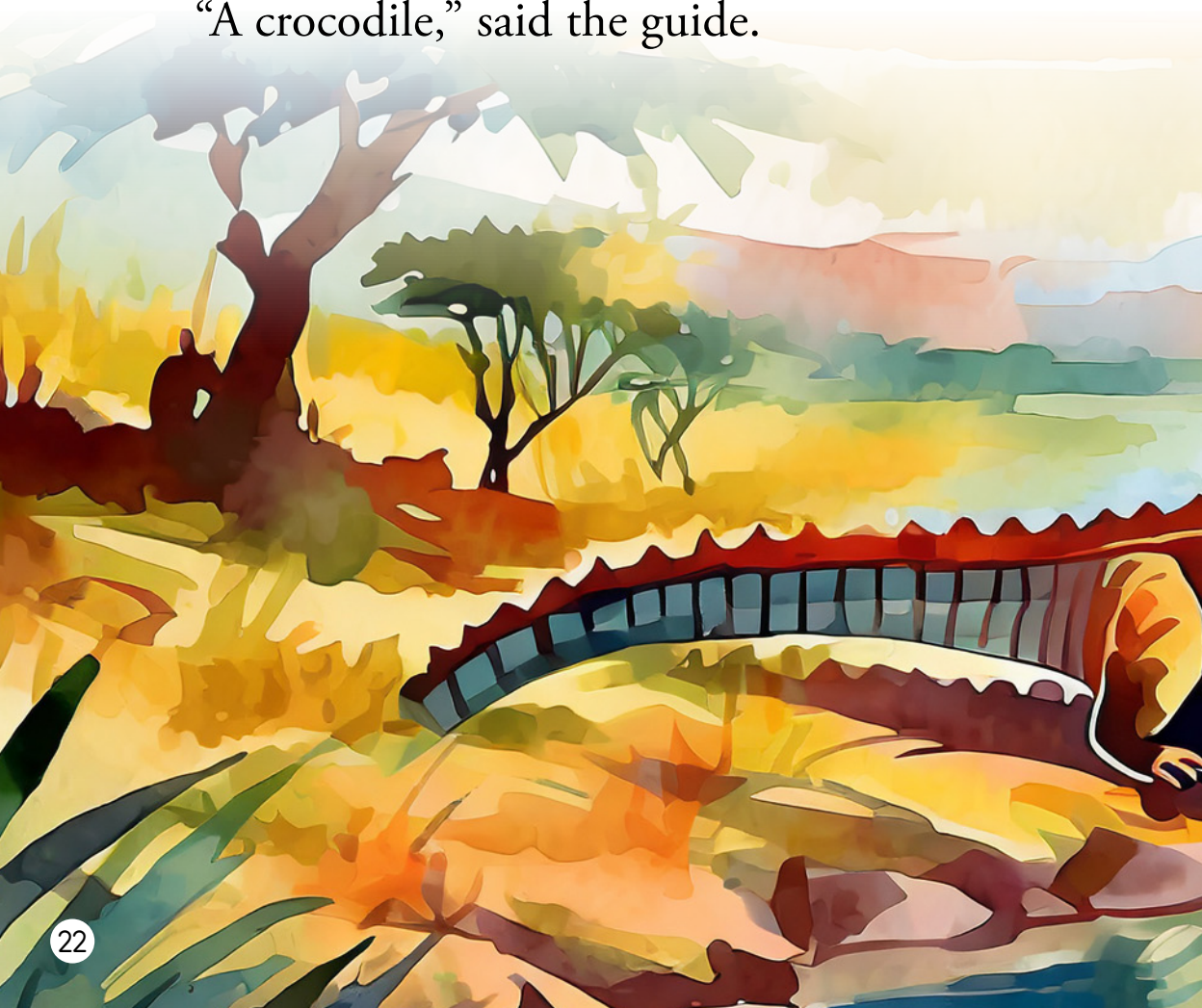


Annie finally spoke up about her concern.
“How can the animals survive in the heat when they do not seem to drink much water?”

The guide told Annie a powerful **predator** made visiting the river risky for many animals.

“What animal scares them so much?”

“A crocodile,” said the guide.



Annie checked her animal guide to find information about the crocodile.

“Crocodiles have long bodies with short legs. For protection, their skin is covered in bony plates. Crocodiles cannot run for long periods, but they are great swimmers,” Annie read the entry.



“That does not sound like an animal that would make me risk dehydration,” Annie said.

The guide warned, “Your book is missing a lot of details. Seeing a crocodile in action leaves a vivid picture in your mind.”

“Look! Look!” shouted Annie’s dad from the other corner of the river watchtower. A large group of zebras paused at the edge of the river.

“What are they trying to do?” Annie questioned.

“The zebras want to cross the river, but they need to make sure it’s safe to cross,” the guide responded.





Annie retrieved the spyglass from her bag and began to look closely at the river near the zebras. At first, she did not see any reason to be alarmed, but then she started seeing many pairs of eyes and nostrils poking out of the water.

Annie waved her arms wildly and screamed, “No! No! Something is in the river! Do not cross the river!” The zebras retreated from the riverbank and ran.

A V-shaped **snout** rose from the water. Annie froze in place. She was stunned and could not believe what was happening. It looked like a small dinosaur. A fourteen-foot-long crocodile walked along the riverbank toward the river watchtower. Annie lowered her gaze as the crocodile approached.

Looking up at the tower, the crocodile spoke eloquently, “Hello. My name is Cooper. Why did you make the zebras run away?”

“Hello, Cooper,” Annie said softly. “I was afraid you would eat them.”

“Crocodiles absolutely do eat zebras,” Cooper confessed, “but it is okay. Crocodiles do not have to eat every day. We can go months without eating,” Cooper remarked.

“I apologize for making your meal run away,” Annie stammered. “I was not aware of a crocodile’s eating habits.”

“That is why it is important to understand nature. Sometimes it is hard to know why animals do things,” Cooper said.





“Can you tell me a few more facts about crocodiles?” asked Annie. “This is my first time in the wild. But at home, I go to the city museum.”

Impressed by her curiosity, Cooper told Annie, “I am a crocodile and Crocodiles are reptiles. I rely on outside sources to regulate my body temperature.”

“What do you mean by ‘outside sources’?”

“I bask in the sun to get heat from it. That is how I warm up. I relax in the shade or submerge myself in water to cool down. My temperature will influence my actions,” Cooper explained.

“I am also great at moving in the water. My tail is powerful and **propels** me forward while I swim. Also, my webbed feet support my swimming ability.”

“Wow, Cooper!” Annie smiled. “I had no idea crocodiles could swim so well.”



“We have to breathe air, but crocodiles can stay underwater for fifteen minutes to a few hours. How long we can stay underwater depends on the heat or coolness of the water and our age, size, and what type of crocodile we are.”

“Cooper,” Annie asked. “Why are animals afraid to drink at the riverbank and cross the river?”



Cooper said, “Crocodiles hunt when food is near. We wait and adjust the way we hunt depending on the situation. One of the best ways to hunt is to wait until an animal is in or very near the water. We **lunge** out of the water and use our powerful jaws to bring the animal into the water.” Then Cooper asked, “How did you know when to alert the zebras?”

“I saw eyes and nostrils poking out of the water. The movement made tiny waves. The eyes and nostrils seemed to be waiting for the zebras to move into the water.”



Eager to help Annie understand, Cooper responds, “You were correct. Crocodiles have eyes and nostrils on the top of our heads. Our bodies can be fully underwater, but we can see and wait for our **prey**. We are no match for other animals on land. Crocodiles depend on the element of surprise, so we use the advantage of the water to hunt.”

Annie remarked, “I know so much more about crocodiles. I now know more about the behavior of animals in the wild.”

“Thank you, Annie. I will go and wait for another chance to hunt.”

Annie turned to her parents and the guide. “I have learned so much, and I know there is much more to learn!”



Chapter

3 Lenny the Leopard

Before traveling further into the forest, Annie climbed up a tree to see what it looked like. “Wow,” she said. “It’s beautiful!” Since Annie didn’t climb too high, she was able to jump down the tree and land safely on the ground. Annie planted her feet solidly and looked up to the sun. She took a deep breath and spun around to soak in all the sights. The forest was incredible, and Annie wanted to see everything.

Annie asked to pause the hike for a few more minutes. She wanted to recreate some of the wonders of the forest. Annie, her parents, and the guide sat under the **canopy** of the trees. The location was a perfect spot to rest. It was as if it had been prepared just for Annie.





Inspired by the scenery, Annie took a sketchbook from her bag and began drawing an insect trying to rebuild something on a nearby leaf.

Suddenly, Annie heard a soft voice speak to her: “You have a great eye for detail,” it said, referring to Annie’s sketch.

“Thank you. I practice every day. Wait. Who said that?” Annie looked around and, to her surprise, did not see anyone.

Annie spotted movement on a tree branch high above her. The mystery guest reappeared on a lower branch. A big golden yellow cat with black, rose-shaped spots moved into the sunlight. The cat shifted its weight and sat down.

“I remember reading in my animal fact book that leopards have spots like yours. Is that what you are?”

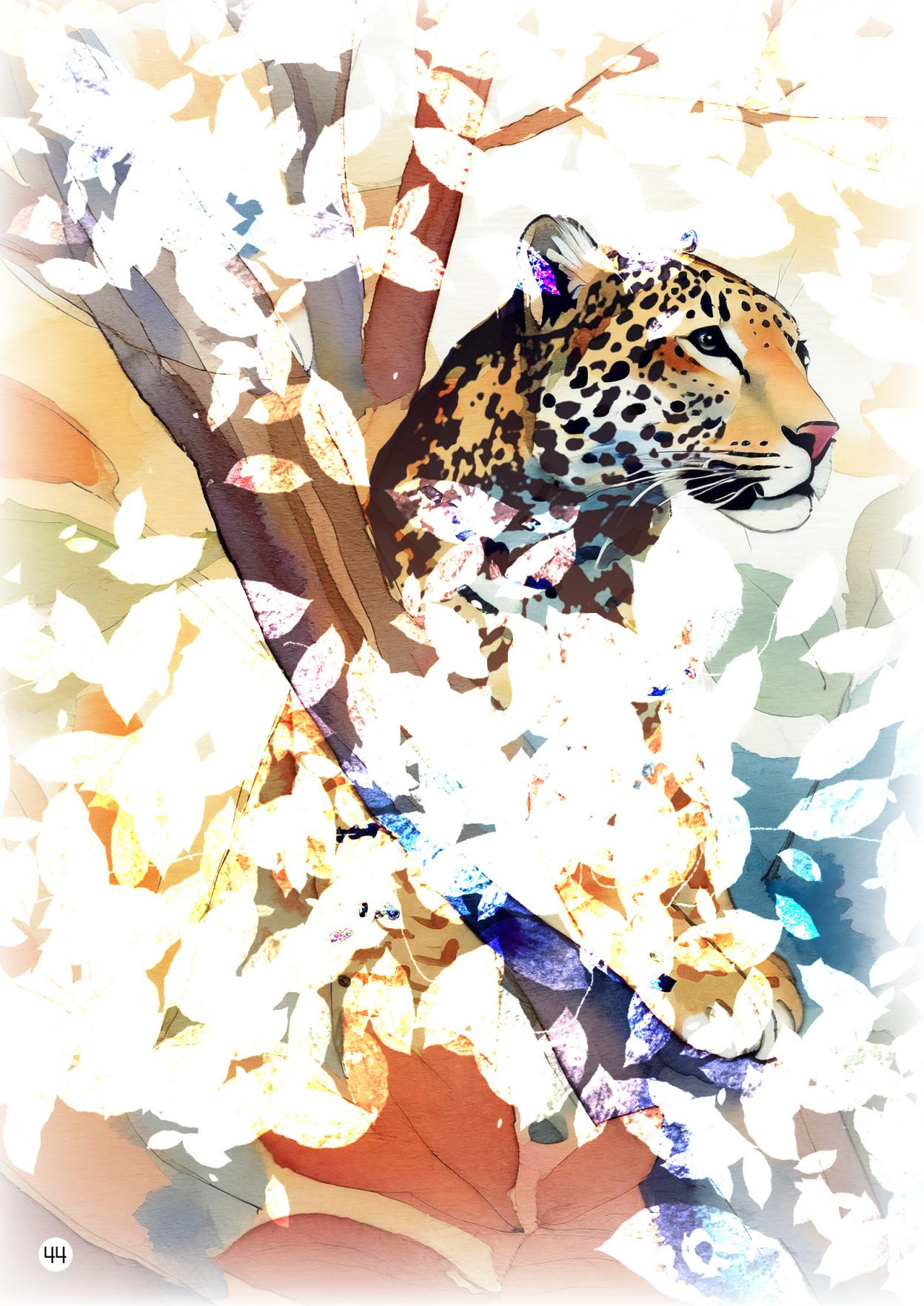
The cat replied in a deep voice “I am a leopard, and I am pleased to meet you. My name is Lenny.”

Annie’s eyes widened. “Lenny, I thought leopards were active during the night. I’m surprised to see you.”

“Sometimes, I take brief trips to explore my surroundings during the day. I finished exploring, so I climbed this tree to sleep. I **scouted** this territory yesterday and planned to sleep in this tree.”

“I don’t mean to disrupt your sleep, but can we continue discussing leopards?” Annie asked.





“Sure!” Lenny agreed.

“What else keeps leopards busy during the day?”

“If we are not exploring or sleeping, we may be keeping ourselves clean. Clean fur helps maintain **camouflage**. Camouflage is a big reason why leopards are great at hunting.”

“Can you explain what you mean, please?” said Annie.

“Leopards rely on shadows and sunlight to blend in with their surroundings. The color and pattern of our fur combined with the shadows and light of the forest to help us to remain hidden from other animals. We like to take precautions when we hunt.”

“I think I understand. Taking the time to clean your fur keeps your camouflage intact?”



“Yes! Exactly right!”

“Besides your fur, what else makes you a strong hunter?”

Lenny shook his hind legs. “My back legs are powerful. They allow me to leap off the ground and pounce. I can also run quickly in short bursts to catch my prey.”



Annie became more curious. “You can’t run fast for a long time?”

“No. Dashing for long distances is not my strongest skill. My strongest skill is being quiet and **stealthy** to sneak up on my prey.”

Annie tapped her pencil, preoccupied by her thoughts. “Why do you climb trees?”

“Trees are great protection from other animals that may be a threat. Since I rest during the day while many other animals are active, sleeping in trees keeps me safe. I can never predict what animal may enter the forest looking for prey. I also climb trees to hide food from and observe other animals.”

Lenny waved a paw. “Look at these!” Claws sprang from his paw. “My claws are great for climbing trees.”

“Any advice for a tree climber without retractable claws?” Annie laughed.

“Well, I am an expert at climbing trees. I suggest two things: Make sure you have a tight grip and always maintain **contact** with the surface of the tree,” Lenny advised.





Annie glanced at her travel group, “Lenny, do you travel or hunt with a group of leopards?”

“Leopards are known to travel and hunt alone. We are **territorial** animals and like our own space to hunt and live. Hunting can also be less effective when there is a group.”

Annie thought about driving through the savanna, observing the river, and hiking through the forest. She could not imagine doing all of those things alone. Annie was glad to share the experience with her mom and dad. She also thought differently about her bad feelings toward her brother when he tags along. It would be lonely without him.

Annie raised her hand in a pretend pawing gesture, “Thank you, Lenny, for sharing details about the life of a leopard.”

“Keep sketching and paying attention to the details.” Lenny quietly backed into the shadows of the tree and returned to his solo life.

Annie stood up and said to her parents and guide she was ready to continue the hike. She wondered if Lenny was perched in a tree, silently **tracking** their movements as they hiked out of the forest. The forest suddenly became a place of mystery and beauty. Annie wondered what other creatures hid behind the leaves.



Chapter

4 The Return

Annie boarded the plane with many thoughts **swirling** in her brain. After grabbing the sketchbook from her bag, Annie talked with her parents. She listened to her mom describe how the ostrich towered over the car. Studying her dad's face as he retold the story about the crocodile made the scene pop back into her brain.

When asked about her favorite moment, Annie said, "There were too many great moments. I can't choose a favorite." Her parents smiled and gave each other a high five. After the successful trip, they headed home.

Driving through the city, Annie and her parents talked about sharing their love of travel with others. They agreed to organize their pictures and invite family and friends over to hear about the trip.





Annie began forming ideas for sketches of the animals seen on the trip. She would draw and paint the animals on a large **scale**, then cut out the images and paste them on a background. This would be her best art project yet!

Arriving at the house, Annie and her parents decided to keep the event a surprise. The front door opened, and Nolan wrapped his little arms around Annie's legs. Annie began to think of how to share the trip with Nolan in a way he could understand.

An hour later, Annie and Nolan played “Leopard.” The game had three moves: climbing, watching, and pouncing. Nolan added his component to the game by screeching like an animal in the wild. If Lenny was observing the game, Annie knew he would not like the screeching.

Annie worked on her part of the surprise for a week. She made her animal frame and showed it to her parents. They were impressed by the level of detail in Annie’s drawings. After collecting and organizing the pictures for the slideshow, they were ready to invite friends to the event.

Everybody arrived expecting only a simple dinner. After dinner, Annie and her parents guided their friends to the backyard and asked them to take a seat. Their friends were surprised to see and hear about the trip. The pictures and stories about the trip were the **highlight** of the event. Annie knew the trip would be a memory she would cherish forever.



Glossary

B

behavior (buh-HAY-vyr): the way a person acts

C

camouflage (KAM-uh-flahj): a way of hiding something by covering or coloring so that it looks like its surroundings

canopy (KAN-uh-pee): a layer of something that spreads over an area like a roof

contact (KON-takt): touching something

D

depending (dee-PEN-duhng): trusting or relying on someone or something

F

flock (FLOK): a group of animals or birds of one kind that stay or keep together

frequented (FRI-kwent-id): visited a place often

H

highlight (HY-lyt): the best part of something, what really stands out

I

impact (im-pakt): how something affects or changes another thing

K

keen (keen): enthusiastic or eager

L

lunge (LUNJ): to make a powerful forward movement, especially take hold of something

P

predator (PRED-uh-tur): an animal that hunts other animals for food

prey (PRAY): an animal that is food for other animals

propel (PRO-pehl): to use a machine or body part to move forward

R

relent (re-lehnt): to become less strict or to give in after being very firm about something

revealed (ri-veeld): showing something that was hidden or kept secret

rodent (ROH-dent): a small mammal with long front teeth used for gnawing

S

savanna (suh-van-uh): a big, open area of land covered mostly with grass and a few scattered trees

scale (SKAYL): the size of something compared to something else

scouted (SKOW-ted): looked around to gather information

situation (si-choo-AY-shn): the state of what is going on, or circumstances

snout (SNOWT): a nose or nose and mouth area that sticks out on certain animals, such as dogs and pigs

spyglass (spy- glaas): a type of small telescope that you can hold in your hand

stealthy (STEL-thee): moving in a way so you are not seen or heard

survival (ser-VY-vuhl): the act of continuing to be alive

swirling (SWURL-ing): moving around and around in circles or squiggles, either as an object or as thoughts

T

territorial (teh-rih-TOR-ee-uhl): guarding or defending an area considered to be your own

tracking (TRAK-ing): to find something or somebody by following the arks, signs, or information they have left behind

V

vivid (viv-id): a description or image that produces a clear picture in your mind

About this Book

This book has been created for use by students learning to read with the program. Readability levels are suitable for early readers. The book has also been carefully leveled in terms of its “code load,” or the number of spellings used in the stories.

The English writing system is complex. It uses more than 200 spellings to stand for approximately forty sounds. Many sounds can be spelled several different ways, and many spellings can be pronounced several different ways. This book has been designed to make early reading experiences simpler and more productive by using a subset of the available spellings. It uses *only* spellings students have been taught to sound out as part of their phonics lessons, plus a handful of Tricky Words, which have also been deliberately introduced in the lessons. This means the stories will be 100% decodable if they are assigned at the proper time.

As the students move through the program, they learn new spellings and the “code load” in the decodable Readers increases gradually. The code load graphic on this page indicates the number of spellings students are expected to know in order to read the first story of the book and the number of spellings students are expected to know in order to read the final stories in the book. The columns on the opposite page list the specific spellings and Tricky Words students are expected to recognize at the beginning of this Reader. The bullets at the bottom of the opposite page identify spellings, Tricky Words, and other topics that are introduced gradually in the unit this Reader accompanies.

TRICKY WORDS:

camouflage, curious, dangerous, engine, favorite, leopard, successful, territorial

Code Knowledge added gradually in the unit for this Reader:

- Decoding words using the V/CV and VC/V syllable division patterns.
- Decoding multisyllabic words with open syllables.
- Identifying the meaning of and using words with the suffixes *-ed* and *-ing*.

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