



# The Zoo of Magical and Mythological Creatures

Sam Bowring

## Teachers' Notes

### Introduction

Sam Bowring has been writing since he was 16 and has always wanted to be a writer. In 2006, Sam was nominated for Best Emerging Comic at the Adelaide Fringe Festival, and for Best Newcomer at the Melbourne International Comedy Festival. He has written for television including *The Big Bite*, *The Ronnie Johns Half Hour*, *The Mansion* and *Rove Live*. He has also written several plays.

Zackary is the seventh son of the King and Queen of Solaris, and a reluctant knight. He would rather put anchovies in the knights' helmets, or use his sword to cut sandwiches than learn princely ways. When the castle administrator, Barnabas, sends Zackary on an errand to the Zoo of Magical and Mythological Creatures, he starts working at the zoo with the resident sorcerer, Acacia. Just as Zackary is settling in to his double life, a shadow is cast across the entire kingdom with the news that a strange creature is expected at the zoo – a creature which spreads evil and destruction in its path.



## Curriculum Links

English: Reading, Writing, Research, Presenting, Talking, Listening

Creative and Performing Arts: Drawing

Science and Technology: Living Things, Using Technology

Mathematics: Measurement

PDHPE: Interpersonal relationships, Communicating

## Learning Outcomes

Students will have the opportunity to:

- read texts independently and in groups
- respond to themes and issues in a text
- draw on a range of skills and strategies to read and comprehend a text
- analyse techniques used by authors to create certain effects and use language creatively
- discuss the benefits of friendships
- estimate and use informal units of measurement.

## Before you read

Look at the title and front cover picture of the novel. Work in pairs and write a short paragraph suggesting what the story may be about.

Read out your group's ideas to the rest of the class.

## Read the book

Read *The Zoo of Magical and Mythological Creatures* as directed by your teacher in one of the following ways:

- as a whole class
- in small reading groups
- individually.

Stop every now and then to re-evaluate where you think the story may be heading. Discuss your ideas with a friend as well as parts of the story you like and why.



## After You Read

Use the following questions to promote discussion of the book.  
Discuss these questions as a class or write the answers down.

1. What did Carson have in the ship's crate?
2. What were some of the things Zackary did that were not very knightly? (p8)
3. Why did Barnabus originally send Zackary to the zoo?
4. What are some of the animals and plants found in the zoo?
5. Why was Zackary happy to be told off by a girl at the zoo? (p34/35)
6. Why did the nine-headed hydra have 10 heads? (p38)
7. What creatures lived in the aquarium and why was the glass sound proof?
8. Why didn't the nuckelavee like fresh running water?
9. Why would the nuckelavee make the squonks feel better about themselves?
10. Why would squonks make good guardians for the nuckelavee?
11. Who was trying to let the mermaids out and why? (p158)
12. How did Acacia break the mermaids' spell over Zackary? (p163)
13. What choice did Tamas give Marlowe regarding the nuckelavee? (p168)
14. How did Zackary convince his parents to let him return to work at the zoo? (p183)
15. What made Acacia and Zackary such good friends?



## Activities

### What's in a Name?

Two of the book's characters are named Marlowe and Acacia. Use library books or the Internet to find other literary characters or the meanings of these names. Write down your findings.

### Nervous Habits

Zackary bit his nails when he was nervous (p5). With a small group of classmates share what you do when you are nervous.

### Cartoon Capers

Use what you have read about the characters in the book to sketch Sir Godfred (p6) and Barnabus (p17).

### The Zoo of Magical and Mythological Creatures

Work with a partner to design a banner for the *The Zoo of Magical and Mythological Creatures*. Choose an interesting font and style that captures what the zoo is all about. If you have access to a computer, design and make your banner on the computer. If not, use cardboard and coloured markers or pencils.

### Hungry Plants

Re-read pp32-33 then make a sketch or diagram of the giant carnivorous plant. Work in a small group and use recyclable materials to create your own giant carnivorous plant. Display the plants around the classroom.

### Friendship Qualities

Acacia and Zackary become great friends. Write down what you believe are the qualities of a good friend. Share your ideas with a small group. As an extension, discuss what things can harm friendships and how to avoid these.



## Measuring Fun

The size of Barnabus' room is described as ten paces by twenty. Estimate the size of your classroom or bedroom in paces. Measure these rooms using your paces. Compare your answers with others from your class. Did the results vary and if so, why?

## Descriptive Writing

Write a description of the mermaids for someone who hasn't read *The Zoo of Magical and Mythological Creatures*. Include their physical appearance as well as a description of their character and personality.

## Circle Meeting - Beauty is Skin Deep

The mermaids were very beautiful in appearance. As a class, sit in a large circle on the floor or on chairs. Your topic for discussion is 'Beauty is skin deep'. The first time around the circle say Yes if you agree with the topic or No if you disagree. Next time around give a short reason for your answer. Continue around the circle adding interesting facts and ideas or debating other's ideas. You may pass at any time and there are no wrong answers.

## Fantasy Creature

Invent your own fantastic creature to send to the zoo. Give a description of its physical appearance as well as personality traits. Draw, label and colour your creature. Give it an interesting name.

## Encouraging Words

The squonks needed encouragement to stay alive. Discuss the meaning of self-esteem. Write down five ways you could help or encourage someone who was down and needed a boost to their self-esteem.

## Recount

Re-read the section of the book where the nuckelavee is delivered to the zoo (pp133–137). Write an entertaining recount of what happened for someone who has not read the book. Illustrate your recount.



## Flip Book

Your teacher will cut A4 cardboard into thirds. On your piece of cardboard draw one part of an amazing creature – the head, middle or tail. Attach the pictures into a class book where you can turn over different sections of each page to create a creature by matching different heads, middles and tails. Give some of the creatures an interesting name.

## Book Review

Write a short book review for *The Zoo of Magical and Mythological Creatures*. Include the following:

- Title
- Author
- Favourite characters
- Brief plot summary
- Favourite part of the novel
- Recommendation (who you would recommend the book to and why)
- An illustration.