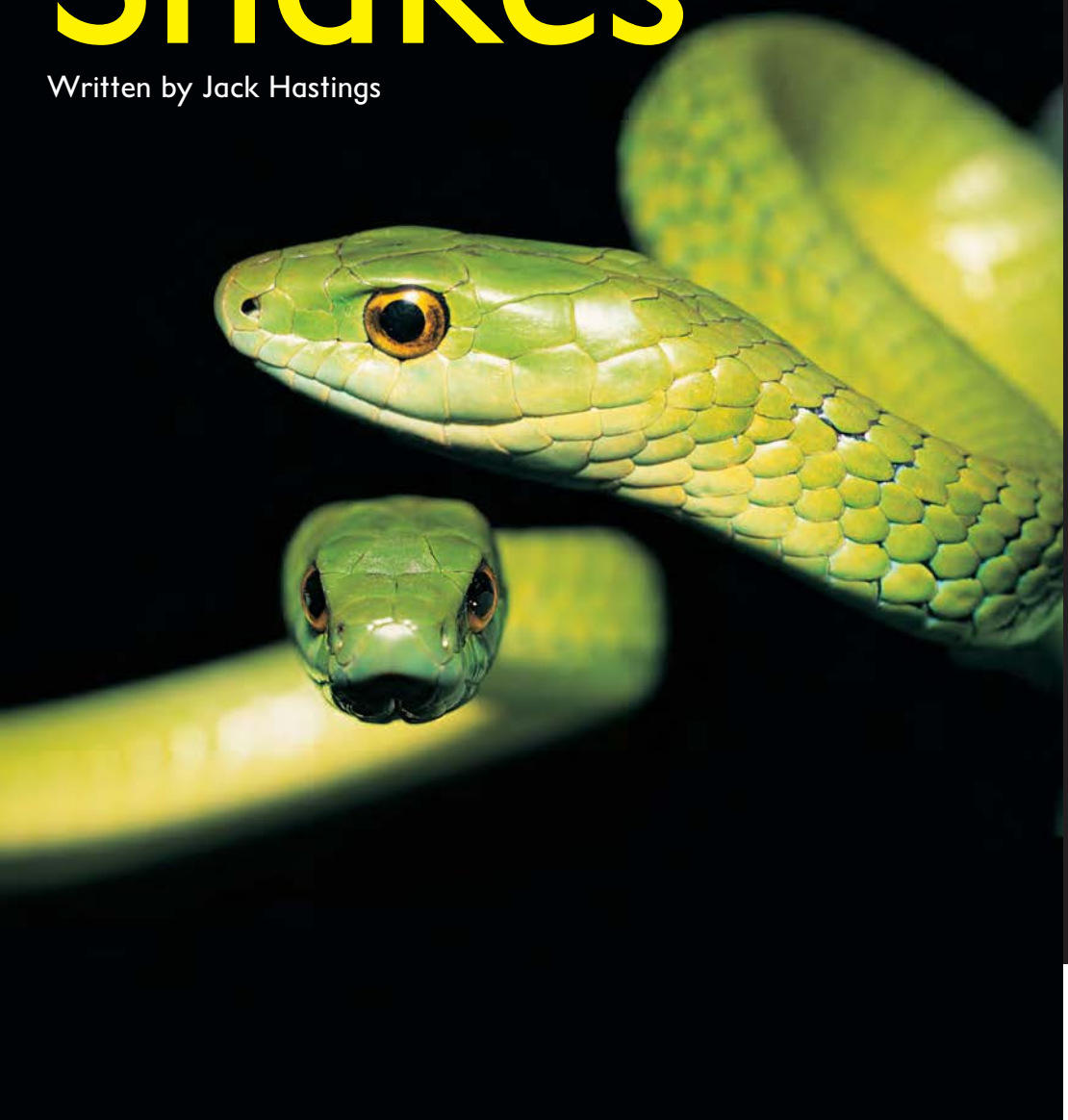
Teacher Edition

Snakes

alphakids

Written by Jack Hastings



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How to use this book

The Alphakids Plus teacher editions support teachers as they guide children's reading and thinking during one or more guided reading sessions. Teachers can observe children as they read and choose from the given suggestions to suit individual needs.

Before reading

Setting the context, front cover and title page:

The suggestions help teachers to set the scene and prepare children for reading the book. Prompts help to determine children's prior knowledge. Where necessary, background information is provided. Teachers are encouraged to check that children understand the vocabulary listed and to discuss the meanings and/or the structures of these words. Previous experiences with similar text types may also be discussed.

During reading

Predict, Read, Reflect:

Questions encourage children to engage with the text by making predictions. They then read a section of the text and reflect on what they have read. The focus is on the content, language and text features of the book.

Observe and support:

Prompts help teachers to focus on the strategies children use as they read. Teachers can then select from and adapt the suggestions according to the needs of the individual child. The suggestions aim to develop a child's reading abilities. Interruptions to the child's reading should be minimal.

After reading

A selection of reading and writing activities:

The last pages of the teacher edition provide follow-up activities and include the assessment focus.

Selected text features

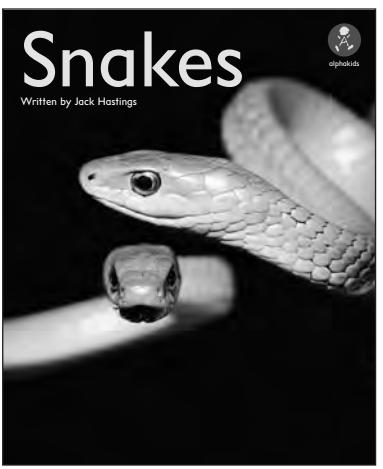
- Section headings are presented as questions
- A contents page is provided
- An index is provided
- Captions explain the photographs and extend the range of information provided

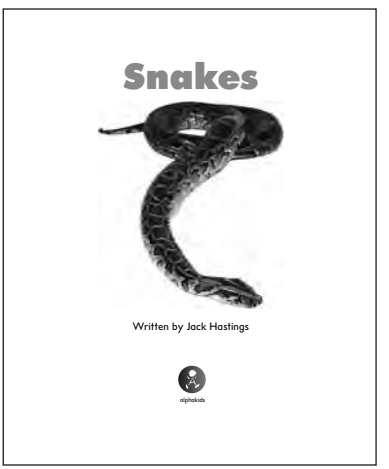
Vocabulary

accurate, climates, enemies, environment, impala, poisonous, python, reticulated, reptiles, Sahara, sensors, temperature, unhinge, viper

Setting the context

Prepare a chart prior to the reading session that lists some or all of the questions from the contents page. Ask the children to give quick responses to these questions. Record the children's ideas for future reference.





Front cover

What do you think this book will be about?
What is it called?
What kind of book do you think it will be? Why?

Title page

Who is the author of this book?
Why is there no photographer's name here?

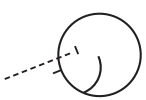
Predict

Discuss the format and purpose of a table of contents.
What does a table of contents tell us?

Read to the end of page 4.

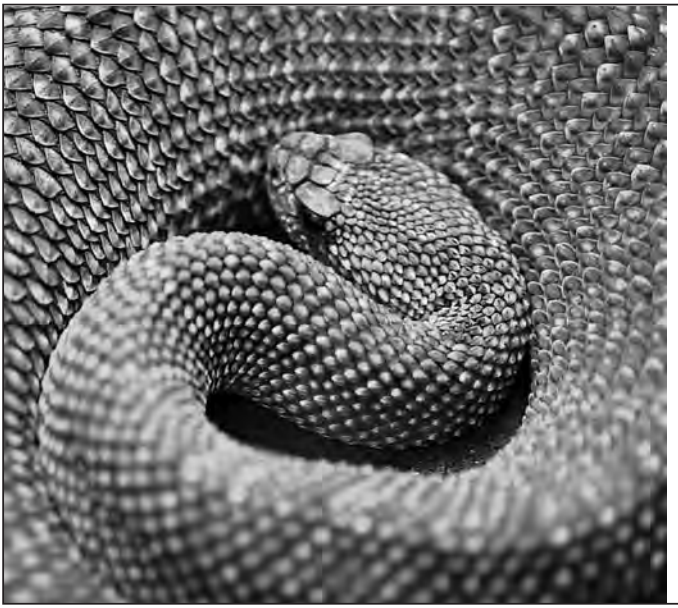
Reflect

Look at the table of contents and tell me what we will find on page 14.
How is the table of contents organised?
What do you now know about snakes?



Observe and support

Does the child understand the literal meaning of the text?
What does 'cold-blooded' mean?
How do snakes control their body temperature?



Contents

What are snakes?

Snakes are reptiles.

They are cold-blooded. Cold-blooded animals cannot control their body temperature. They are the same temperature as the air around them.

When snakes get too hot, they have to move into the shade to cool off. When they are too cold, they move into the sun.

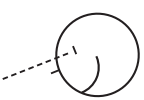
Predict

Where do you think snakes live?
How big is the biggest snake in the world? What about the smallest snake?
Point out the captions near each of the photos and explain that these provide extra information about snakes.

Read to the end of page 9.

Reflect

Where do snakes live?
What is the name of the world's smallest snake?
How big is it?
What is the name of the world's heaviest snake?



Observe and support

Ask one child to read aloud to you while the others are reading silently. Can the child read the text fluently?
I liked the way that sounded when you read it. It made it easy for me to understand.

Where do snakes live?

Snakes live in many parts of the world. They live in deserts, in rainforests, in cold climates and in very hot places.

Snakes cannot survive in places where the ground is always frozen. There are also some islands where no snakes are found.

The horned viper lives in the Sahara desert.

Snakes live on the ground, underground, in trees or in the water. Some live all their lives in the sea.

The sea snake never leaves the ocean.

How big are snakes?

Snakes come in all sizes.

Some snakes are tiny. The world's smallest snake is called the thread snake. A thread snake never grows longer than 15 centimetres. Its body is no thicker than a piece of string.

But big snakes are really big! The longest snake in the world can grow as long as 10 metres.

The reticulated python is the world's longest snake.

The heaviest snake in the world has such a heavy body that it needs to spend most of its time in water.

The anaconda is the world's heaviest snake.

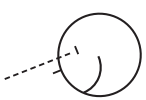
Predict

What do you think a snake's skin is like?
Look at the pictures on page 13. How is the snake moving in the bottom picture?

Read to the end of page 13.

Reflect

What happens when a snake's skin gets too tight?
How do puff adders move across hot sand in the desert?
Do flying snakes really fly?



Observe and support

Can the child explain the use of text features such as chapter headings?
Point to the chapter heading on page 12.
What does this tell you?

What is a snake's skin made of?

A snake's skin is made of scales. Scales are like fingernails which are layered over the snake's body. Scales protect the snake from sun and water.

Scales are not stretchy like our skin. As the snake grows, its skin gets too tight. Then the old, tight skin peels off like a long sock. There is a new, shiny skin underneath.

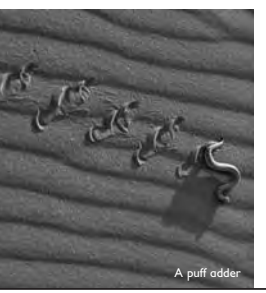
How do snakes move?

Snakes have no legs, so they slide along on their bellies. Most snakes move along by pushing against tiny bumps on logs and rocks or on the ground.

But some snakes live in trees. Other snakes live in the desert where the sand is almost too hot to touch. How do these snakes move?

The flying snake lives in tall treetops. If it sees an enemy coming, it leaps out of the tree and into the air. It flattens out its body and glides through the air until it lands in the branches of another tree.

A flying snake



A puff adder

The puff adder lives in hot deserts. It moves by winding its body into the shape of an 'S' and then jumping sideways.

The snake's body hardly touches the ground, so it doesn't get burnt by the hot sand.

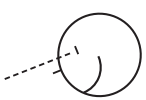
Predict

Why do you think snakes need to blend in with their environment?
How do snakes find their prey?

Read to the end of page 16.

Reflect

How does the gaboon viper blend in with its surroundings?
Do snakes have good eyesight?
Why do snakes need heat sensors?



Observe and support

Can the child understand the inferences in the text?
Why is it important that some snakes blend in with their environment?
Why is it useful for snakes to hunt at night?

Are snakes hard to see?

Many snakes blend in so well with their environment that it is almost impossible to see them. This helps them to catch passing birds, lizards or frogs, and to avoid being seen by predators.

Some snakes are almost invisible amongst the bright green leaves of a tree. Some snakes look like vines looped through tree branches. Some snakes blend in with dry leaves on the ground.

A bejuquillo snake

A green python

A gaboon viper

How do snakes hunt?

Snakes have very poor eyesight, but they are very good hunters.

Snakes have heat sensors in their heads. They use these heat sensors to feel the body heat of any animal nearby.

This helps them to find and catch animals in the dark.

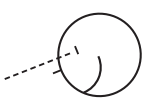
Predict

What do you think snakes eat?
Look at page 19. What is happening? How do you think this snake can swallow such a large meal?

Read to the end of page 19.

Reflect

What are some of the things that snakes eat?
How do some snakes eat meals that are bigger than they are?
Why do some snakes need to wait a long time between meals?



Observe and support

Can the child understand the literal meaning of the text?
Why do pythons that have eaten a large meal wait a long time before they eat again?
What do all snakes eat?

What do snakes eat?

All snakes eat other animals. Some snakes eat other snakes.

Small snakes eat insects, frogs and small birds or animals. Big snakes prefer larger meals.

Some snakes can eat meals that are much bigger than they are because they have jaws that can unhinge at the sides.

Snakes that eat very large meals may not eat again for a whole year. This is because snakes use a lot of energy to digest food. After eating, it may be many months before a snake's body is strong enough to digest another large meal.

This python is swallowing an impala.

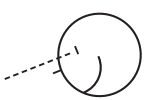
Predict

Are all snakes poisonous?
Why do snakes use poison?
How do other snakes kill their prey?

Read to the end of page 21.

Reflect

How do most snakes kill their prey?
How do poisonous snakes kill their prey?
How do pythons and boa constrictors kill their prey?



Observe and support

Does the child use text features such as commas and paragraph breaks to support expressive reading?
Example: *I noticed that you paused briefly when you saw a comma. That made it easier for me to understand the information as you were reading.*

How do snakes kill their prey?

Most snakes catch their prey in their mouths and swallow it alive. Other snakes use poison to kill their prey.

Poisonous snakes have long, sharp teeth called fangs. The fangs are hollow. When poisonous snakes bite, poison comes out through their fangs. They wait for the poison to kill their prey before they swallow it.

Some snakes also kill their prey before eating it, but do not use poison.

Pythons and boa constrictors wrap their strong bodies around their prey and squeeze until the animal has stopped breathing. Then they swallow the animal whole.

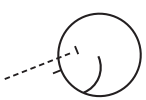
Predict

Look at these pictures. What do you think these snakes are doing?
Point out the index on page 24.
Why is an index useful?

Read to the end of page 24.

Reflect

How do snakes protect themselves? Why do snakes need to protect themselves?
Which snake would you like to read about again?



Observe and support

Can the child say what they have learned from the text?
What do you now know about snakes that you didn't know before?
Can the child find information in the book using the index?
Where would you find out about a puff adder?

How do snakes protect themselves?

Different snakes have different ways of protecting themselves.

The cobra can spit poison through its fangs into its enemy's face. It has a very accurate aim. The poison can make its enemy's eyes burn, or even blind them.


A spitting cobra


A rattlesnake

Many snakes make threatening noises to frighten away predators. The rattlesnake shakes a rattle on its tail. Other snakes rub their scales together to make a scratching sound. When predators hear these sounds, they know that a poisonous snake is nearby.

Some harmless snakes fool their predators by imitating poisonous snakes. When the king snake is threatened, it shakes its tail in dry leaves to make a sound like a rattlesnake.

Index

After reading

Being a meaning maker

Encourage the children to support their answers with evidence from the book as they discuss these questions:

What is a snake?
How do snakes move?
What do all snakes have in common?
Why are snakes dangerous?

Being a code breaker

Explore the following language features:

- using contextual information to understand new vocabulary: cold-blooded, environment, invisible, sensors
- using questions as section headings

Being a text user

Refer to the chart made before reading the book. Compare the information in the chart with the information in the book.

What things are the same?
What things are different?
Are there any things we should change?

Turn to the index.

What is this?
What does it tell us?
How is it organised?
Where do I go to find out about an anaconda?
Why does this book have an index?

Being a text critic

What does this author think children are interested in?
Has he chosen information that children are interested in?
If you were writing this book would you change anything? What?

Responding to text

Children could work in cooperative groups to create a mural showing different types of snakes. They will need a variety of materials such as shiny coloured paper and different fabric. Children can show information contained in the book by using captions and labels.

Provide children with material about other snakes. This could include books, posters, appropriate websites, pictures etc. The children can then write about other snakes and their features. These reports could then be made into a class book.

Ask children to identify technical words from the book such as cold-blooded, reptiles, scales, poison. They could then write their own definitions for these words and illustrate the list.

Writing links

Shared writing

Children could write their own question and answer report about another group of animals. Encourage them to select a range of questions to discuss before writing their piece. Ask children to share these questions with a friend to see if there is any extra information that they could include.

Independent writing

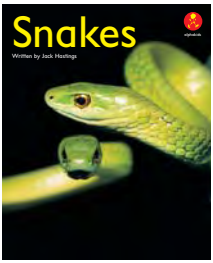
Children could use their knowledge about snakes to write a narrative piece about one of the snakes featured in the text. You might like to model the beginning of this narrative form.

Possible assessment focus

Can the child:

- explain the use of text features such as chapter headings and a table of contents?
- explain what all snakes have in common?
- say how the information in the text extends their previous knowledge about snakes?

whole text activity sentence activity word activity



Teacher Edition

Topic: Snakes
Curriculum link: Science
Text type: Report
Reading level: 24
Word count: 789
Vocabulary: accurate, climates, enemies, environment, impala, poisonous, python, reticulated, reptiles, Sahara, sensors, temperature, unhinge, viper

Possible literacy focus

Using features of a non-fiction text to support understanding: chapter headings, contents page.
Drawing inferences about the features common to all snakes.
Comparing existing knowledge about snakes with new information found in the text.

Summary

This book explores the features and behaviour of snakes.

ISBN 0-7253-3300-6
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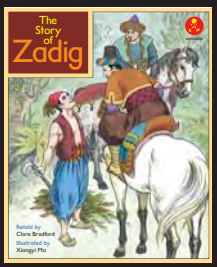
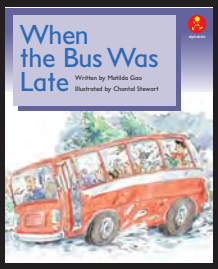
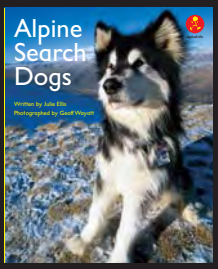
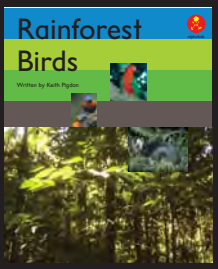
Other books at this level









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