



The Last King of Angkor Wat

Graeme Base

SYNOPSIS:

Tiger, Gibbon, Water Buffalo and Geeko are sitting amongst the ruins of ancient Angkor Wat, wondering which of them would have made the best king. The appearance of a mysterious visitor leads them to discover their true selves in a race to a distant hilltop. A timeless fable full of adventure and beauty from a much-loved storyteller.

WRITING STYLE:

- Graeme Base is an internationally published author/illustrator with sales in the millions. *Animalia* alone has sold more than three million copies.
- The artwork in this picture book is superb - it captures the mystery of Angkor Wat beautifully and will enrapture young readers.
- Perfect as a first reader, as a read-aloud picture book and as a book for the whole family to share.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR:

Graeme Base is one of the world's leading creators of picture books. His alphabet book, *Animalia*, received international acclaim when it was first published in 1986 and has achieved classic status with worldwide sales of over three million copies. It has now inspired an animated TV series.

Other favourites by Graeme Base include *The Eleventh Hour*, *The Waterhole*, *Jungle Drums*, *Uno's Garden*, *Enigma*, *The Legend of the Golden Snail* and *The Jewel Fish of Karnak*. Graeme's latest picture book is the warm-hearted, magical story *Little Elephants*.

In 2003, his first novel for younger readers, *TruckDogs*, was released. It was shortlisted for the Children's Book Council of Australia Book of the Year Awards the following year.

Graeme lives in Melbourne, Australia, with his artist wife, Robyn, and their three children - James, Kate and Will.

STUDY NOTES/ACTIVITIES FOR TEACHERS

Pre-reading:

- Find images of and research the temples of Angkor Wat.
- What sort of images are carved into the stones?
- What does that suggest about the sort of society?

THEMES:

Leadership

- What qualities does it take to be a good leader?
- Tiger, Gibbon, Water Buffalo and Gecko all think that they would have made a good king.
- Make a list of all the positive qualities each of these animals has that would make them a good leader.
- What negative qualities might they have?
- Which of these four do you think would make the best king? Why?
- Can you find any clues on this page as to which animal was sacred in this temple?
- Elephant tells them that a good leader needs strength, compassion, resilience and courage. What does each of these mean?
- Do you agree that these are good qualities for a king?
- How can the other animals not have noticed the elephant before when he is such a big animal? What might this suggest about the elephant?
- What qualities do the four animals display when they first set off for the temple at the top of the hill? Are these admirable qualities?
- Which of these animals do you think will be most successful? Why?
- How does each animal prove to be an unsatisfactory leader?
- How does Elephant get to the temple before the others?
- Does Elephant possess the qualities needed to be a great king?

Teamwork

- Does any one person possess the qualities needed to be a great leader?
- In what way can leadership be seen to be a situation for teamwork rather than individuals?
- Tiger, Water Buffalo, Gibbon and Gecko become great friends. Why would they work together so well as a team?
- How does our own system of government rely on teamwork rather than individuals?

SYMBOLISM:

Speed

Each of the animals rushes off, believing they need to win the race

- Do you think any of the animals stops to consider the journey to the temple?
- How can speed be a negative characteristic?

- Consider the saying ‘slow but steady wins the race.’ What does this mean? How might it apply to leadership?

Fear

The Snake can be seen to represent our fears.

- What sorts of things are you afraid of?
- What can you do to overcome these fears?
- Why can a leader not be fearful?
- How does Tiger react to the Snake? Will a display of aggression help in this situation? How might it cause more problems?
- How does Water Buffalo react to the Snake? How does this make things harder for her?
- Gecko manages to avoid the Snake, but is quite boastful in doing so. Why was this not a good way to deal with the situation?
- What sort of fears might a king or a leader have to overcome in order to succeed? (eg threat from other leaders, fear of failure etc)
- What qualities does it take to be able to overcome fear?

Compassion

The injured Crane represents compassion (the desire to help others less fortunate)

- Why is compassion an important quality for a leader?
- What would a society be like if the leader showed no compassion?
- Can you think of historical leaders who lacked compassion for others? What happened under their rule?
- What does it take to be able to have compassion for others? (eg understanding, empathy, lack of greed etc)

Laziness

The Gibbon riding on the Pangolin represents the idea of using others to get ahead

- How can leaders be seen to be carried by others?
- Why is this wrong?
- Which people in society are often the carriers?
- What are the dangers of having a leader who needs others to do the work for him?
- What type of leader is this person likely to be?

Animals

- Each of the animals can be seen to represent types of people in our society.
- What sort of people would be represented by:
 - Tiger:
 - Water Buffalo:
 - Gecko:
 - Gibbon:
- Think of other types of people in society. What animals might be used to represent them?
- What people would be represented by the Elephant?

WRITING STYLE:

This story is written in the style of a fable – a short, quick tale that uses animals to present a moral about how humans should behave.

- Read some other fables (eg Aesops’s fables)
- Why do we use fables as a way of educating children?
- Why is it sometimes easier or more effective to convey important messages through stories about animals rather than people?

ILLUSTRATIONS:

- How do the illustrations add to the sense of greatness and reverence of Angkor Wat?
- Why is everything overgrown or in ruins?
- How do the illustrations reflect the geography of Cambodia?
- How is colour used to add impact to the illustrations?
- Each illustration is incredibly detailed and intricate. Choose one illustration and study it carefully. Try to identify and note every detail on the page. Share your findings with another student.
- Select your favourite illustration and explain/ justify your choice.

ACTIVITIES:

- Make a poster about the qualities needed for a good leader.
- Choose 4 Australian animals and write a similar story about their competition for leadership. Consider what qualities each of these animals has, and what qualities they lack.
- Write your own fable that teaches people how they should act in a certain situation.

Marketing / Publicity

- Celebration of 4 million book milestone TBC
- Cover of November Off The Shelf
- Wide promotion across Penguin Teachers social platforms and key title at ALEA 2014
- Full page catalogue feature
- Review copies sent to key educational consultants and reviewers