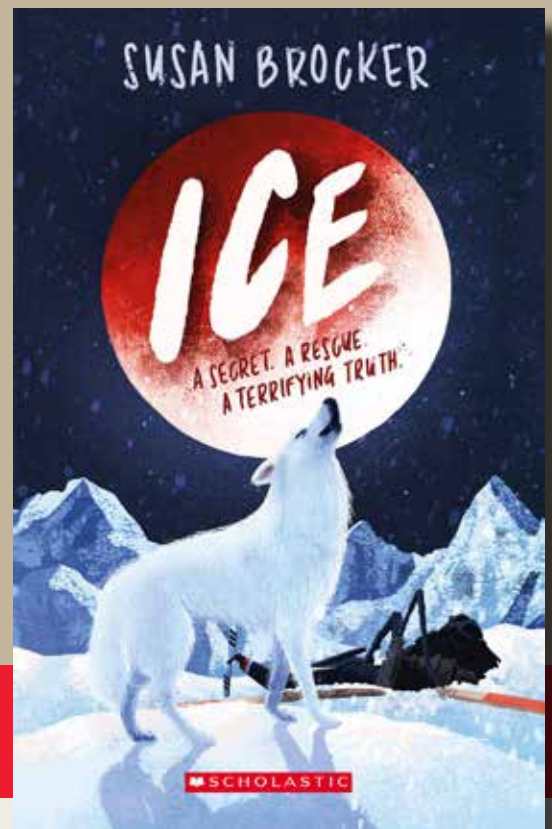


ICE

By Susan Brocker

• Reading • Writing • Thinking Skills • Social Studies



Synopsis

A troubled boy and his rescued dog discover a ghastly secret buried beneath the mountains and must face their darkest fears to uncover the truth. *ICE* is an action-packed mystery-adventure set in the wilds of southern New Zealand. The story opens with a helicopter crash in the mountains which leaves a white German shepherd dog as the only survivor. We then meet Zac, a 14-year-old city boy sent to live with his father in the lakeside town of Wanaka. Although Zac's second family make him welcome, Zac feels his father, Jim, disapproves of him. Jim's an outdoors bloke. Zac is a self-proclaimed geek. Zac's stepmother, Anna, decides Zac needs a dog to get him active. They visit the pound and meet the white shepherd that was found in the mountains. Zac names the dog Ice and they become best mates.

Zac's father works for a wealthy man, known as "the Boss," who runs a wildlife sanctuary. Jim wants Zac to join him hunting, but it's not Zac's thing. So, his father suggests Zac work the school holidays at the wildlife sanctuary, to get him away from gaming. At the sanctuary, Zac meets his father's boss whom he dislikes, and the gentle African keeper, Lwazi, who cares for the big cats and elephants. Meanwhile at home, Ice doesn't settle and Zac musters the courage to go into the mountains with Ice to find out where she came from. The dog and boy make several startling discoveries, including a crashed helicopter, a dead body, and a smashed van full of illegal wild animal parts in an underground cave. Zac uses his geek skills to research what he's found and comes up with a theory, which he shares with his disbelieving dad. When Jim notices that Ice is frightened of the Boss, he heads out with Zac and his step-brother, along with Ice to find the crash site. But the Boss is prepared to do anything to protect his valuable, grisly stash and Zac and Ice must work together to save the family from destruction. It turns out that Zac has learnt valuable problem-solving skills from gaming after all.

About the Author

Susan Brocker has written over 50 fiction and non-fiction books for older children and teens, which have been published worldwide. She has a history degree and a love of social history that is reflected in her books. Susan also has a close affinity with animals. She lives with her husband and many pets in a lovely old villa on a small farm near Tauranga. Other Scholastic titles by Susan include *1914 Riding into War* for older readers and picture books based on true NZ animal tales including: *Bess the Brave War Horse*, *Friday the Rebel Dog* and *Mrs Chippy the Cat*.

Writing Style

ICE is a page-turner of a mystery-adventure story, which exposes the dark world of international illegal wildlife trading. It is equally the story of a city boy and his rural dad, who are struggling to build their relationship in a blended family setting. Perhaps, most importantly, it is the story of the deep, trusting bond that can exist between a pet and its owner.

The writing is descriptive, action-packed, and well-crafted. Themes include the domestic: family dynamics, the forging of relationships, trust, and honesty; wildlife: stewardship and responsibility; and personal growth and challenge.

The story is plot-driven and will appeal to animal-lovers, but contains significant character development that will resonate with young readers who may be questioning their place in the family or in the wider world. Told in the third-person, *ICE* is an exciting, thought-provoking adventure for 8–12-year-old readers.

Shared Learning and Discussion Points

The novel has been divided into 35 chapters all of which have two word titles beginning with the conjunction ‘The’.

Ask the students to think about why the author may have chosen to use this consistent format. Does it tell the reader what the chapter is about or does it add to the mystery?

During the shared sessions, encourage the students to check their understanding of key events and the characters’ motivations. Encourage them to make predictions and inferences and relate these to their own experiences. Discuss the themes of the novel and how they develop throughout the book. Either read the chapters aloud with the students reading along or have the students read independently, stopping for check-ins and discussion.

BEFORE YOU START:

Look at the cover and read the blurb.

- Where is the story set? How can you tell?
- Who are the main characters in the story?
- What do you think this story is about? Why do you think that?
- What genre do you think this book is?
- What do you know about tracking dogs? What do they track?

Comprehension questions

- What has the dog been trained to do? (Chapter 1, p.12)
- Zac describes the dog’s eyes as looking ‘haunted and lost’. Why is this an accurate description? (Chapter 2, p.17)
- Why does Anna want Zac to get a dog?
- Compare and contrast the relationship between Mason and Zac’s dad with Zac and his dad. Why do you think Zac’s relationship with his dad is strained? (Chapters 2–3)
- What kind of person is Zac? How would you describe Stevie or Anna? How do you know?
- Why does Zac lie to his dad? Why does he agree to help out at the wildlife park?
- What does the word ‘sanctuary’ mean?
- Why is the wildlife park more exciting than Zac had expected? Would you rather sit at home gaming or work for free at an animal sanctuary? Explain your choice.
- Jim describes Mr Slagter as a ‘great conservationist’ and says he’s ‘crazy about animals’ but Lwazi says that Mr Slagter ‘understands little about caring for wild animals, only what they are worth to him’. Why do you think their opinions vary? Whose opinion would you trust and why? (Chapter 6, p.43)
- Lwazi says Shaka is at the sanctuary for ‘only one purpose’. What do you think this might be?



- Why does Zac say ‘though I’m not really her owner’? (Chapter 9, P.61)
- How might Mr Slagter and Ice already know each other? (Chapter 10)
- Why do you think Lwazi works for Mr Slagter even though he knows about the illegal tiger farm?
- Why does Zac want to go into the mountains with Ice? Would you go if you were Zac? Why or why not? Why doesn’t Stevie tell on Zac? What do you think will happen?
- What does Lwazi mean when he says, ‘It is not the wilderness you should fear’? (Chapter 13, p.78)
- Why has nobody seen the crashed helicopter before Ice and Zac found it? How would you feel if you found a dead body at an accident site? Why does Ice lift her paw after sniffing the badge Zac finds?
- What literary device has the author used on p.89 (Chapter 14) to show that Zac’s mood has changed and he’s now seeing the snowy mountains as a treacherous, dangerous environment? What effect does this have?
- What does Ice leaving the crash site and returning to Zac signify about their relationship?
- Why did Ice ignore the tahr pelts but bring the tiger pelt to Zac? (Chapter 16, pp.96–97)
- How does Zac’s experience as a gamer help him?
- How does Zac’s phone dropping into the cave and smashing change the possible outcomes of the story?
- Why didn’t Zac show his dad the badge he had found at the helicopter crash site? Why didn’t he contact the police? (Chapter 17) Do you think he made the right decisions? Why/why not?
- Why doesn’t Zac’s dad believe him?
- When Klara, who lives in South Africa, replies to Zac’s emails she uses some Afrikaans words. (Chapter 18, pp.113, 115–116) What do you think ‘Dankie’, ‘Tannie’, and ‘Beste’ mean? What does Zac learn about Ice? Who does he think the boss of the crime syndicate is?
- On p.120, the author describes Lwazi as ‘unhappy and fettered’, which means restricted or confined. What similarities are there between Shaka and Lwazi?
- Why has Lwazi done nothing to stop Mr Slagter?
- How does Mr Slagter get away with smuggling wildlife?
- On p.125, Jim starts to believe Zac. Why has he changed his mind?
- Reread p.127 and note the changed dynamic between Zac and his dad. How is it different? What has changed and why?
- On p.137, Stevie calls the Butcher ‘evil’ and ‘vile’. What do you notice about these two words? Hint: You can find the answer in the Butcher’s reply.
- What piece of text on p.137 tells you that Zac and his family are in serious danger?
- What do you think Jim planned to do after snatching the rifle from the Butcher? (p.141)
- The Butcher says ‘the world revolves around money’. Do you think this is true or false? Why?
- What does the Butcher mean when he says, ‘Let’s say it’s insurance’? (Chapter 24, p.144)
- Why does Skull question his boss? What does this say about him? (Chapter 24, p.145)
- Are the police more likely to believe a ‘wealthy, respected conservationist’ over a ‘petty crim’? Why/why not?
- Why has the author described the passageway underneath Shaka’s cage as ‘like a morgue’? What is a morgue? What literary device has the author used? What effect does this have? (Chapter 25, p.149)
- What text on p.151 tells you that the Butcher doesn’t look after his animals?
- What is Zac’s worst fear? (Chapter 25, p.151) What do you predict will happen?
- Why does Ice follow Zac and Stevie into Shaka’s cage?
- Why are Zac, Stevie, and Ice not at as great a risk from Shaka as Zac first thought? (Chapter 26, p.155)
- What does Lwazi mean when he says to Zac, ‘You may be a kid, but you have the heart of a lion’? (Chapter 26, p.159)
- What does ‘We’re all shades of grey’ mean? (p.162)
- How does ‘We’re all animals’ support one of the themes of this book? (Chapter 27, p.162)
- Why did the author choose to use the simile ‘like a corpse emerging from a coffin’? (Chapter 28, p.171)
- Why does Zac go back for the tiger skins? (p.173)
- When Zac says, ‘Go, my girl! Fly!’ he wonders where the words had come from. Who else used these words at the start of the book?
- How do you know that Zac has earned his father’s trust and respect? (Chapter 31, p.185)
- Explain what the sergeant means when he says, ‘Poetic justice, wouldn’t you say?’ (Chapter 34, p.199)
- Do you think ‘The Goodbye’ is an appropriate name for Chapter 35? Who or what is being said goodbye to?
- What is the climax of this story?
- What fears does Zac overcome and how does he develop as a person? What part did Ice play in Zac’s character development throughout the book?
- Is Zac or Ice the real hero of this story? Why do you think that?



Activities

ACTIVITY 1: WHO IS ZAC?

Work in pairs to come up with at least five adjectives to describe Zac at the beginning of the book (student A) and then five adjectives to describe him later in the book (student B). Students might like to make a chart basing their adjectives on the text from the book or Zac's actions, like the example below. Compare the two charts. What caused Zac's character development? What did he have to overcome? Write a paragraph using your adjectives to describe Zac and what happens to make him grow and change throughout the book.

TEXT / ACTIONS	ADJECTIVE
'Zac walked along the path feeling even more depressed' (P.15)	depressed
'Zac stood helplessly' (P.20)	unsure/lacking unconfidence

ACTIVITY 2: YOU'RE UNDER ARREST!

Imagine that you are the police officer who arrests Mr Slagter/the Butcher. Write a police report detailing his crimes. Include who he is, what he has done wrong, and possible laws he may have broken.

ACTIVITY 3: AND THE WINNER IS . . .

Design a poster promoting Ice for an animal hero award. Include a heading, a portrait of Ice, and bullet points describing what Ice has done and why she deserves to win.

ACTIVITY 4: BE A WILDLIFE WARRIOR

As a class, research to learn more about the illegal trade in wildlife and what is being done to stop it.

Investigate websites such as:

- www.worldwildlife.org/threats/illegal-wildlife-trade
- www.onegreenplanet.org/environment/shocking-facts-about-how-the-illegal-wildlife-trade-drives-species-extinction/
- www.worldanimalprotection.org.nz/cites.

There are also classroom resources available from:

- www.wwf.org.uk/get-involved/schools/illegal-wildlife-trade
- www.worldanimalprotection.org.nz/education/cubsclub/activities.

Write research reports explaining the issues around illegal wildlife trade and what people can do to help stop it.

ACTIVITY 5: LETTER SCRAMBLE

How many words can you make from the letters in the words 'sanctuary', 'conservation', or 'helicopter'?

Written by Frances McBeath



teacher toolkit

 SCHOLASTIC