



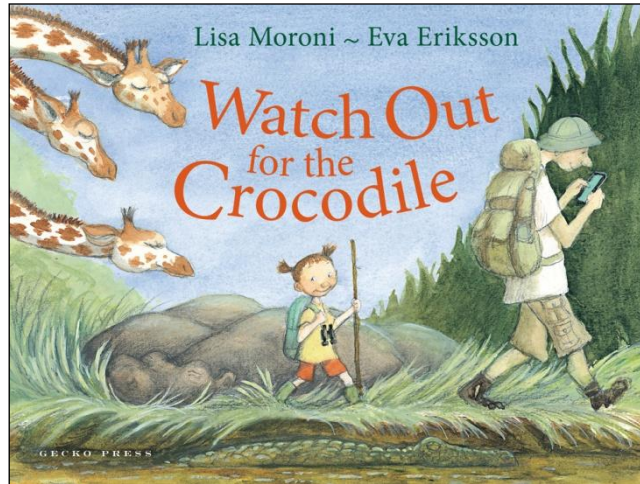
GECKO PRESS

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## Teaching Notes

### *Watch Out for the Crocodile*

by Lisa Moroni and Eva Eriksson



## Synopsis

It's the first day of Dad's vacation and he is taking Tora camping. It's about time they did something fun. All Dad does is work, drink coffee, sit at the computer and talk on his cell phone. He is a very boring father. Now at last they're off to the forest to see some wild animals. But will Tora be able to drag her Dad away from his GPS and cell phone and show him that with a bit of imagination anything can be an adventure? Will she be able to get him to leave his urban mindset behind to embrace nature and to see the world in a different way? Will her enthusiasm manage to rekindle his imagination, allow him to delight in the wonder of the world and, release and free his child within?

## The Author

Lisa Moroni was born in Sweden in 1983, and has been writing and illustrating since she was a child. This is her debut as a picture book author. She is Eva Eriksson's daughter.



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### **The Illustrator**

Eva Eriksson is one of the best-loved illustrators of children's books in Sweden. Her awards include the Astrid Lindgren prize and the prestigious August award. She illustrated *My Happy Life* by Rose Lagercrantz (Gecko Press).

### **Themes**

This delightful picture book about a father and daughter's trip into the wilderness has several themes.

These include the realistic portrayal of a father and daughter relationship and how through quality time spent together they can reconnect and strengthen their bond. Another theme is the importance of escaping the urban environment and experiencing the rejuvenating benefits of nature even if it is merely a brief trip out of the city to camp in a forest.

The theme of a love of wildlife is also evident in the book, whether it is an ant or a lion, a delight in wildlife is illustrated through Tora's rich imaginings.

The book also explores the theme of technology and how it is important to have a break from the dependence on the modern day gadgets that we rely on and embrace a simpler way of life for a while in order to appreciate both the natural world and the advances humans have made.

A final theme demonstrates the importance of imagination and play. Tora shows her father and the reader that a fertile imagination and a playful personality can not only make an adventure out of the ordinary, but also bring people together through the wonder and joy they can evoke.



## Activities

1. Look at the cover image and title. What do you think this story might be about?
2. Tora loves her father but thinks he's boring. In groups, list the reasons why she thinks this. Do you agree with Tora? Discuss if you think her view of her father changes by the end of the book? If so, how does it and which events in the book help this change?
3. Before they go camping Tora's father insists they go to the supermarket to buy food, but Tora thinks they should be living on food foraged from the forest. In groups, design a survival safety campaign highlighting what native flora and fauna of your home country you can and cannot forage and eat. The campaign could include elements such as pamphlets, scripts for school talks, radio jingles, posters, slogans, etc.
4. Look at the picture of Tora in the car. What emotions are evident? How do you think Tora is feeling? How has Eriksson achieved these feelings in the illustration? (Think about colour, size, composition, etc). Draw your own picture that expresses another emotion, such as sadness, anger or love.
5. While her Dad spends his time glued to his GPS and cell phone, Tora looks for and discovers wild animals. List the animals Tora 'sees' throughout the book and the objects her imagination creates the animals from. Look around your classroom. What animals can you create from the everyday objects you can see around you? Write a description and illustration of two of your imagined animals. Present your animals to your class and see if the class can guess which everyday objects in the classroom inspired you.
6. The author uses alliteration when she describes a log that Tora imagines is a 'river crocodile with a craving for crunchy child-legs'. What is the definition of alliteration? Using ten animals each starting with a different letter create an



alliterative nonsense description for each, for example, 'an advark with an appetite for anxious ants'.

7. The story is told in third person narrative. Choose an event from the book and write a one page summary of this incident from either Tora or Dad's point of view using first person narrative, for example, when they lose each other in the fog. Think about how they would describe the physical scenes, as well as their feelings when they lose each other and then find each other again.
8. Tora and her Dad imagine that they see different mythical creatures in the forest, such as fairies, trolls and a water dragon. Choose one of these mythical creatures as a main character and inspiration for a short story. Write, illustrate, bind and publish your own children's picture book of your story.
9. Examine the illustrations in the book. Do you like the style? What colours are used? What kinds of lines and textures are used? Choose your favourite illustration from the book and create your own artistic interpretation of it, for example, a painting, drawing, photograph, model, poem, etc. Or, design your own illustrations for the cover and/or one page of text. Find another book illustrated by Eva Erikson. Compare and contrast the illustrations. Are there many similarities or differences?
10. In groups, adapt the entire book or an episode from the book for a performance in your classroom. Devise a script, create scenery, choose music and make costumes or puppets to represent each character. Act your adaptation out for your class. If you have access to a video camera, tape it.
11. Write a plot summary of the book.
12. Review the book for your favourite magazine or website. What do you like about it? Why? What did you dislike about the book? Why? Give it a rating, such as stars or a number out of ten.