

Hunting the Horned Lizard

by Nic Bishop



Book Summary

Nic Bishop travels to the Arizona desert to take part in a field study of the horned lizard. The information the team collects will help biologists to protect this unusual reptile species.

Features of the Book

- The example of a scientific field study
- The use of maps and illustrations to convey information
- The journal format
- The contents page, appendix, glossary, and index
- The different ways of presenting information – fact boxes, captions, photographs, and diagrams
- The author's style – a mixture of fact and opinion in the text

Purpose

Hunting the Horned Lizard can be used to introduce and reinforce the following skills:

- S** using the contents page, index, appendix, and glossary to locate information;
- S** understanding how a field study is carried out;
- S** studying the features of a non-fiction text – labelled diagrams, index, and captions;
- S** communicating factual information;
- S** writing a scientific report;
- S** drawing conclusions from the text;
- S** creating a glossary.

The Guided Reading Lesson

- S** Using the contents page, index, appendix, and glossary to locate information
- S** Understanding how a field study is carried out
- S** Studying the features of a non-fiction text – labelled diagrams, index, and captions
- S** Communicating factual information

Introducing the text

Write the word “lizard” on the board. Ask the students to brainstorm what they know about lizards. (They are cold-blooded, they are amphibians, they like warmth, they use camouflage.)

Show the group the cover of the book and ask the following questions:

- *Where might this story be set? Why do you think that?*
- *Why would people want to hunt the horned lizard?*

Explain that the book is about a field study. Ask the students what kind of information they would expect to find in a field study. (Facts about where something lives, what it eats, and data about its habits.)

Read the back cover blurb together and discuss the information it provides.

- *What is Nic Bishop describing?*
- *Why might he think it was a rock?*
- *What kind of environment does the horned lizard live in? Where is Arizona?*
- *What is the purpose of the field study? Why do you think this is important?*

Reading and discussing the text

Discuss the photograph on the title page.

- What does it show?
- What is the person in the photograph doing?
- What do you notice about the lizard?

Discuss the contents page.

- What are we going to read about in each chapter?
- What do the phrases “Lizards with Backpacks” and “Listening for the Beep” mean?
- Why would they need to count ants’ heads?
- Why is there an index and a glossary? What will you find there?

Ask the students to read to the end of page 8.

Encourage them to think about one or more of the following questions:

- Why is the text in two different kinds of box?
- How do the photographs help you understand the text?
- Which part of the field study do these pages describe?

You might want to refer the students to the appendix on page 30.

Ask the students to finish reading the story independently. As they read, they can think about one or more of the following questions:

- What things are important when undertaking a field study?
- Why did they collect information over ten days?

After the students have finished reading, ask:

- How is the data they collect going to help biologists protect the horned lizard?
- What other topics did you learn about? (dung beetles, radio tracking, other lizards, harvester ants, desert survival tactics)
- What could you teach someone else about the horned lizard?

Ask the students to create a web diagram using different categories – diet, food chain, survival, habitat, and young. They could record their facts in text or picture form and use their web diagrams as prompts when telling a partner what they know about the horned lizard.

Revisiting the Text

The suggested activities below can be used immediately after the guided reading lesson if appropriate or could be taken as a mini-lesson at a later time.

S Writing a scientific report

Ask the students to create a fact file on one of the animals discussed in the story. They should use *Hunting the Horned Lizard* and other sources of information to collect relevant facts. Their fact file could include:

- the name of the animal
- its classification, for example, reptile, bird, mammal
- a map to show where it’s found
- a description of the animal and an illustration
- some information on diet, food chain, habitat, and survival tactics
- any other interesting facts.

You might like to set a format for the layout or ask the students to refer to the book for layout ideas.

Discuss the titles, the use of photographs, text boxes, and diagrams in the book.

- Which pages are the most effective?
- Which do you like?

S Drawing conclusions from the text

Ask the students to put themselves in the place of the volunteers on the study.

- What conclusions can you draw from the information in the book?
- Having learnt about the horned lizard, what might you do to ensure its survival?

The students could work in pairs to write a survival plan for the horned lizard, based on the conclusions they drew from the text. They could present their findings to the group for discussion. Suggestions might include:

- developing harvester ant farms
- planting mesquite bushes
- creating a protected habitat for the lizard.

S Creating a glossary

Suggest that the students create an alternative glossary for the book to explain the words that they needed to find meanings for. They could use the blackline master on page 68. Before the students start, discuss alphabetical order.