

Extract 2A

...Bertie would often be left to his own devices.

There was a waterhole downhill from the farmhouse, and some distance away. That waterhole, when there was water in it, became Bertie's whole world. He would spend hours in the dusty compound, his hands gripping the fence, looking out at the wonders of the veld, at the giraffes drinking, spread-legged, at the waterhole; at the browsing impala, tails twitching, alert; at the warthogs snorting and snuffling under the shade of the shingayi trees; at the baboons, the zebras, the wildebeest, and the elephants bathing in the mud. But the moment Bertie always longed for was when a pride of lions came padding out of the veld. The impala were the first to spring away, then the zebra would panic and gallop off. Within seconds the lions would have the waterhole to themselves, and they would crouch to drink.



From the safe haven of the compound Bertie looked and learned as he grew up. By now, he could climb the tree by the farmhouse, and sit high in its branches. He could see better from up there. He would wait for hours on end. He got to know the life of the waterhole so well that he could feel the lions were out there, even before he saw them.

Bertie had no friends to play with, but he always said he was never lonely as a child. At night he loved reading his books and losing himself in the stories, and by day his heart was out in the veld with the animals. That was where he yearned to be. Whenever his mother was well enough, he would beg her to take him outside the compound, but her answer was always the same.

"I can't Bertie. Your father has forbidden it," she'd say. And that was that.

Questions to discuss A

Read the extract silently, before discussing the questions with your partner/group.

- 1) Which animals does Bertie like to watch at the waterhole?

- 2) Watching the animals is very important to Bertie. Which words show or tell you this?

- 3) Find some powerful verbs which are used to create strong images of the animals.
Find one you think is effective. Why does Morpurgo use powerful verbs?

- 4) Morpurgo uses powerful language to create images for the reader (imagery).
Find an example below (HINT: there are 2).
What is impossible about the statement and what image does it create?

At night he loved reading his books and losing himself in the stories, and by day his heart was out in the veld with the animals.

- 5) Do you think Bertie is happy? Can you give reasons why you think this?