

# Kraken the Komodo Dragon

TEACHING NOTES



# BEFORE READING

- As a class look closely at the cover and title and discuss what you can learn about a book from its cover. What type of story do you think this will be? (The photographic cover suggests nonfiction, but the title could suggest fiction.)
- Discuss conventions of nonfiction (table of contents, glossary, page numbers, title, photographs/pictures, diagrams, and labels) and fiction (setting, plot development, conflict, descriptive language, themes, point of view, characters, characterisation).
- Where do you think this story might be set, and what makes you think this?
- Read the writing on the back cover: What is the purpose of a back-cover blurb?

# DURING READING

- Chart what students already know about Komodo dragons. Add additional facts located during subsequent research or as you progress through the text.
- Create a vocabulary wallchart to record new and interesting words as they are encountered in the text or in wider reading.



# AFTER READING

## TEXT TYPES

- Look closely at different kinds of nonfiction and discuss where this book fits with them.
  - **Traditional nonfiction** includes writing that gives readers an overview of an entire topic. It is great to use to gauge interest in or to begin researching a topic. Readers who don't need specific details but who want to get a general feel for something will enjoy traditional nonfiction.
  - **Expository nonfiction** is great for investigating a specific subject. It takes a unique point of view and examines a specialised concept. Readers who want an entertaining look at a specific topic will gravitate towards expository nonfiction.
  - **Narrative nonfiction** is a true story written in the style of a fictional story.
  - **Browsable nonfiction** allows young readers to explore topics of interest in a fun way, without the stress of longer chapter books. Based on the popular magazine format of quirky, fun facts that many young readers love.
- If possible, gather a range of information texts on reptiles and have students examine these, comparing and contrasting them to this text. Discuss how authors have treated similar subject matter differently.
- Ask students to write a fictional narrative about a Komodo dragon. Discuss how their story will differ from the approach used in this book. Highlight that the knowledge they have gained about Komodo dragons from this book could help them to write a fictional piece.

# COMPREHENSION

Test knowledge gained from reading the book by asking:

- What type of animal is a Komodo dragon?
- What do Komodo dragons eat?
- Why are Komodo dragons such good hunters?
- Where are Komodo dragons found in the wild?
- What made the reptile keepers think Kraken was clever?
- Why was it good for Kraken to wear a harness?
- Why is Kraken given food in different sizes and at different places?
- What is Kraken's favourite food?
- What is a gorge feed?
- What important work is done by The Australian Reptile Park?

# ANIMAL CLASSIFICATION

- Create a class diagram of animal classifications, identifying what traits they have in common:

- **vertebrates:** fish, amphibians, reptiles, birds, mammals (marsupials, placentals, monotreme)



- **invertebrates:** including sponges, flatworms, jellyfish, starfish, shrimp, snails, spiders, and scallops.



- Ask students where Kraken would sit in this diagram and why.

# THE AUSTRALIAN REPTILE PARK

- Have students research The Australian Reptile Park and discuss why it is such an important Australian institution.
  - See <https://www.reptilepark.com.au>
- The Komodo dragon, the world's largest living lizard, has moved one step closer to being wiped out in the wild. Previously considered a 'vulnerable' species, they have now been reclassified as 'endangered'. Ask students to find out what other animals have recently been reclassified as endangered and to prepare a fact file on their recently endangered animal of choice.
- Students could also create illustrated posters of their animals of choice, aimed at drawing attention to their plight.
- If possible, arrange for students to visit The Australian Reptile Park or an animal conservation group to see firsthand the important work they do.
- As a class, find out what is threatening Komodo dragon numbers and come up with a plan as to what can be done to help.



# KOMODO DRAGON FACT FILE



## DESCRIPTION

- Komodo dragons are the world's largest lizard.
- They have large bodies with a strong tail and powerful, bowed limbs.
- They have long, flat heads with rounded snouts.
- Their mottled black/brown scales enable them to camouflage themselves.
- Adult males can be up to 3.1 metres long and weigh up to 100 kilograms.
- Adult females can be up to 2.4 metres long and weigh up to 40 kilograms.
- Komodo dragons' tails are as long as their bodies, and strong enough to take down a deer.
- They swing their tails back and forth to scare off predators. They also do this when they are scared themselves.
- Komodo Dragons are good swimmers and have been known to swim between islands.



## HABITAT

- Komodo dragons are endemic to the Indonesian islands of Komodo, Rinca, Nusa Kode and Gili Motang (all within the Komodo National Park).
- Their natural habitat includes tropical forest, deciduous monsoon forest, savanna, and mangrove forest.

## DIET

- As a result of their size, Komodo dragons dominate the ecosystems in which they live.
- Komodo dragons hunt and ambush prey, including invertebrates, birds, and mammals.
- They use their forked tongues to smell. They can smell rotting prey from four kilometres away.
- Komodo dragons are very patient waiting for their prey.
- They use their powerful legs, sharp teeth, and claws to grab onto their prey. A Komodo dragon's venom attacks the prey, and they die a slow death.



## REPRODUCTION

- Mating begins between May and August, and eggs are laid in September.
- Up to 30 eggs are laid in a self-dug nesting hole.
- The eggs are incubated for seven to eight months, hatching in April, when insects are most plentiful.
- Young Komodo dragons are vulnerable, so they live in trees away from predators.
- Komodo dragons take eight to nine years to mature, and they live for up to 30 years.

# Kraken the Komodo Dragon

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